

Rev 25-09-14a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning service here at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 14th of September, 2025. We're in our ongoing study of the book of Revelation.

We're in chapter one. We have quite a bit to see this morning in anticipation of getting to the letters in chapter two and three. This chapter one introduction is essential for setting the scene, creating the context and the background, establishing the authority of the message and reminding us of why it is such a valuable study to undertake.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study and we'll begin. Father, how grateful we are for this time of nourishment and encouragement and building up in the faith through the fellowship we enjoy in your word, the presence and power of your Holy Spirit. We pray that he will find us ready and teachable and can impress these truths on our hearts in a way that is meaningful, that transforms the hours, the undertakings, the tasks, the decisions and words that we speak in the days ahead so that we can redeem the time, rescue them from the default of evil that defines them.

We pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus, our savior will be glorified and we ask it in his name, amen. Let's read our passage by way of review. It's always good to sort of clear the decks and load up our recent understanding, recent observation here in the book.

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants things which must shortly take place, must soon take place. He sent and signify it by his angel to his servant, John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it for the time is near.

Second emphasis on the proximity of the fulfillment of these things, the importance of knowing them and keeping them. This is us, this is now and it's soon. John to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler over the kings of the earth, to him who loved us and released us from our sins by his own blood and has made us a kingdom and priests to his God and father, to him glory and dominion forever and ever, amen.

Behold, he is coming with clouds and every eye will see him, even they who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him, even so, amen. I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end says the Lord, scratch out the beginning and the end, I need to do that on mine, I keep reading it and it's not there. Verse eight says, I am the alpha and the omega says the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty.

The speaker in verse eight is God the father. The beginning and the end has been imported from a later verse, this is associated with the Lord Jesus, this is not the Lord Jesus speaking, it is

God the father, we'll see why when we do our quick review here. And then in verse nine, I, John, second time he has named himself as author, your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Referring back to verse two, this is what defines John. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice, we will get to that shortly. Let's begin by consolidating everything that we have observed here in the last several sessions somewhat quickly, but I want to be sure this first chapter is so important and it is often sort of given short shrift because everyone wants to get to the seven letters.

First of all, this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Turn back to Romans chapter one, Romans chapter one, how important is the revelation, the apocalypse? When you go back to Romans chapter one, you can begin at verse 16, where Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, the good news of Jesus Christ, the message of Jesus Christ, which of course we are looking at from a different angle, perhaps in the book of Revelation. It is the power of God with a view toward deliverance, salvation for everyone who believes, the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Verse 17 now, have your pencil or your pen ready for in it the righteousness of God is revealed. Revealed, apocalypse, this is the verb form, revealed. The root is the same as the noun, apocalypse.

How is it revealed? From faith to faith. He who reads, he who communicates needs to be faithful to the word. He who hears and who keeps needs to be faithful in that hearing and in the keeping.

Hearing is only half the battle. As it is written, the just shall live by faith. The righteous, to lay hold of righteousness, we live by faith.

How important is that as we go through Revelation? It is a message to us, for us, in many cases about us. Four, verse 18, the wrath of God is revealed. Apocalypso, once again, second use of the word in as many verses.

The wrath of God, what was revealed in verse 17? The righteousness of God, what is revealed in verse 18? The wrath of God, righteousness and wrath. What would you say about the book of Revelation? What's revealed in the Revelation? You have a righteous and holy God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future, present in the now. Now, it is his righteousness that undergirds and defines his justice, his judgment.

His righteousness is revealed from heaven. That's where our message comes from, through the angel, through John, through the Lord Jesus. But in verse 18, the wrath of God is also apocalypso.

It is revealed. It is, apo means away from and kalupsis, this is a veil or a covering, a lid. The lid is

taken off, the curtain is pulled aside.

Righteousness first. The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

When you look to the Lord Jesus, you see righteousness. When you look at the fallen human race, the ungodly and the unrighteousness, you see the wrath of God revealed. Why is it revealed? Because these people suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Because what may be known of God is manifest. This is another way of talking about revelation from God. What may be known of God has been revealed.

It is visible. It is observable. What may be known of God is observable in them.

We saw this back in Kohelet. God has put the knowledge of himself in the heart of every man. What may be known of God is observable in them.

It has been communicated to them. We come, all normal human beings who reach an age where they can think in a sentient fashion, come to realize that there is a God. It is innate.

Yeah, you can go many directions once you come to that realization. This is why we have so many world religions. We studied that a few years back in Why the Bible and deep questions of the Bible and so on.

But notice the emphasis on God communicating. His righteousness is revealed. His wrath is revealed.

What may be known of him is made observable, why? For God has shown it to them. God is a God of communication. He's not inscrutable.

He's not veiled and far off. He's not so high that we can't understand anything. He has shown it to them.

Verse 20, Romans 1. For since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes are clearly seen. Now, the second witness. The first is the witness that God places in the hearts of men.

We have an innate stamp of God, presence of God, awareness of God that is an inner witness to the human soul. Every single person that has ever been born and come to any sort of ability to think and choose has come to this realization. We call it the point of God consciousness.

I am suddenly aware that there is more to life than meets the eye there. And the second witness is the creation of the world. What is invisible has been expressed and made manifest.

If you lay a magnet on a table, you can't really tell it's a magnet. How can you determine that something is magnetized? You bring something that is susceptible to magnetism near it and you observe the effect. It sticks to the refrigerator.

It grabs things that are impossible to reach with your hand. I've got two or three long rods and they've got a magnet on the end and you can just stick it down there and pull it out. I can stick my flashlight to the iron plate in a piano and aim it any way I want with its flippable light because it's a magnet.

I can't look at it and tell it's a magnet but I can see by its effect. This is what we have in creation. What may be known of God has been shown.

Since the creation of the world, what is invisible is clearly seen being understood. I have highlighted these in my text. Verse 17, revealed.

Verse 18, revealed. Manifest, shown in verse 19. Clearly seen, understood in verse 20 by the things that are made.

This is the design points to a designer truth. Being understood by the things that are made, what is understood? His eternal power and his deity is understood. In creation, someone is all powerful and the more we learn from science, the more exponentially vast we realize God's eternity and his power really is.

That he can fling the galaxies into space, that he can create a universe this big, this complex, this sophisticated on this planet, so balanced to support life. The fine-tuned constants in the universe in physics and the fine-tuned environment on this planet. There is no way that an almost infinite series of happy accidents can bring this about.

It is to deceive oneself, to believe that a series of unguided accidents have brought about this sophistication. Just look at the human body and all of its checks and balances, its control systems, its monitoring systems. I learned by watching untold stories of the ER that there are pressure sensors on each side of our neck and if it determines a drop in pressure, it will send a signal to the heart to beat faster.

If it senses that the pressure is high in a normal human body, it will slow the heart down to regulate the pressure. There was a man who seemed to be perfectly fine and healthy but every once in a while, he suddenly lost consciousness and his heart stopped and they couldn't figure out why. And then he would be gone and then seconds later, he would be back.

And they finally realized that every time he turned his head to the left, his heart stopped because there had been an injury that affected the sensor on the left side of his neck. As long as he kept his head straight, he was fine and it wasn't until his heart had stopped four or five times that they finally correlated this insult to the left side that was causing this problem. So they had to steady his head and keep him facing perfectly forward so they could get him to the hospital and fix this other problem.

But there, I mean, just one of an infinitude of examples of what has been revealed about God, His eternal power and His Godhead clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. But in verse 21, although they knew God, this is another one you can circle, reveal, revealed,

manifest, shown, clearly seen, understood. What is the emphasis here? We have no excuse.

People say, well, God hasn't sufficiently revealed Himself for me to believe in Him. That's not what scripture says. Scripture says you've got abundant, ample reasons to know that there is a God and to claim His promise of relationship through Christ.

Why? It's manifested, it has been shown, it is clearly seen, it is understood in creation, it is understood by the witness in the heart. But in verse 21, they know God. He doesn't say, well, for those who don't ever come to know God, there's a different plan.

All of these people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness started with knowledge of God. They knew Him, but when they came to that knowledge, that's a decision point. If you wanna talk in theological terms, there is a decision made at the point of God consciousness.

You can be giving out free tickets to a sporting event and here's someone at the gate and there's a big sign that says free tickets, come in without charge, you're driving by and you see that there's a game, you see that there are free tickets. The first decision you make once you come to that realization is, am I going to turn in and head for that gate to claim that free ticket? Or I'm not interested in that particular sport on that particular day, I'm too busy, I've got other concerns and you drive by. That's a rough analogy to what decision is made at the point of being conscious of God.

We tend to not want there to be a God because we love darkness rather than light and God is light and in Him is no darkness because He is a just God. Righteousness is on offer, but we have to decide that we want it. We have to decide that the God revealed in creation, revealed in our hearts and revealed in Scripture and through Scripture, revealed in Jesus Christ is a God we want to draw near to, that we want to be related to, that we want to serve and to please and to have an eternal life with.

There are people who just don't. Everything about the God of the Bible turns them off. It is repellent, it's repulsive, it's uncomfortable.

I choose my own comfort rather than entering into the realm of light, the kingdom of light, leaving the kingdom of darkness. I enjoy my sins, I enjoy the predilections of my heart, I enjoy self-gratification, I don't want to give it up. This God threatens what I like about my life right now.

Decision at the point of God consciousness. Now, if someone drives on by and doesn't turn up toward the gate, is someone going to come running down from the gate and chase them down the road and say, wait, wait, and wave the free tickets, come on in. There is no point in further discussion or further revelation at the point that someone says, I don't like this whole notion.

And so you find many who perhaps you say, well, how can they make a decision if they have not heard? The ones that God ensures hear, how shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach except they be sent? Also in Romans, if you are negative at the point of God

consciousness, as it's sometimes put, God has no obligation to throw pearls before swine. You have to have an initial positive response at awareness of God. Anyone who is positive at that point is going to get the information by God's grace, by God's power, God's omniscience, knowing here is a seeking heart, here is a pliant or a willing heart, here's someone who wants to hear more, who isn't averse, who isn't hostile, who doesn't immediately reject the whole notion of God, more information will come.

To him who has, more will be given. To him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And you find people who might say, well, I'm agnostic and they move toward atheism, or I was a superficial Christian, I grew up in church, but once I really started thinking about it, all of that went out the window.

But it is revealed, revealed, manifest, shown, clearly seen, understood. They know God in verse 21, they do not glorify him as God. Whatever brought this about, it's not God.

They don't glorify him and they're not thankful. This is one of the characteristics of a seeking heart, of a learning heart, is gratitude, thankfulness, appreciation, and therefore, they become futile in their thoughts. This is the darkness, this is self-delusion, this is being led about by others, falling for the lie, continuing to live in the kingdom of darkness.

Their thoughts are futile and their foolish hearts are darkened. Now, if you're going to darken something, there has to be some light, right? If you look at, if you're shopping window blinds, they've got some that are translucent, even when you close them, light comes in. There are others and they call them room darkening shades or room darkening blinds.

And when you close those, they are opaque, light does not come through them. And you have a room where you can see pretty well, there's sunshine coming in. If you close the room darkening blinds, it can be black as pitch in there.

So if their foolish heart is darkened, what does that tell you? The light communicating the existence of God, his eternal power and Godhead, that is both an inner witness and a witness in nature recedes, no longer confronts, no longer compels a decision. Their hearts are darkened, that goes away and they no longer feel a sense of conviction. And they will tell you, I have no sense that there's a God.

I'm utterly convinced that evolution and survival of the fittest and whatnot accounts for the apparent design in the universe. And their hearts are darkened, that light shines for a time, but God does not continue to chase someone who makes a firm, hard decision. No, don't like that whole idea.

Their hearts are darkened, professing to be wise, they became fools. And look at verse 23, they exchange the glory. The glory was visible, the glory was manifest, but they change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man.

This is science as a replacement for God. Science is wonderful. We love science, we benefit from

science.

Science is great in its place. But like so many other things, if you move a good thing out of its place, it becomes bad. Marital relationships.

If you try to have that kind of relationship outside of a marriage, that's a good thing that you have perverted and corrupted and made evil. Eating food and so on. If you push things to an extreme, if you are immoderate and out of control and self-indulgent and you let your passions carry you away, something that is harmless becomes harmful.

You exchange the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man. Birds, four-footed animals, and creeping things. You will notice that evolutionary science isn't content to observe the wonderful design by which organisms can adapt and survive and have hidden resources in their genome that will emerge under pressure to enable them to meet God's command to be fruitful and multiply.

God built in the capacity of adaptation. It is a changing of what you have. It doesn't create new design.

It doesn't create new capabilities. It adapts what is already there. You look, as I did yesterday, at a little Yorkshire Terrier and you think, that was inside a wolf genome.

If the stories can be believed, early man domesticated wolves that became dogs and then we started playing and breeding these dogs and we've got everything from mastiffs and Great Danes and St. Bernards to these chihuahuas and Yorkies and other kinds of terriers. And you think, look at the amount of information that is available by way of adaptation so that these God-given companions can be adapted to our needs, to our uses, to our desires for entertainment and so on. But you can't keep breeding dogs until you get something else.

Whatever they are, they are always dogs. It is a canine genome. You can take that DNA, take it to a lab.

They'll say, well, that's a dog. It's not any other kind of four-footed beast. But you come down to verse 24 and I have this underlined.

After all of this from verse 18 through verse 23, the decision point to reject God's self-revelation, the revelation of His righteousness and the revelation of His judgment. What did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do? He was talking to His disciples in the upper room. When the Holy Spirit comes, what will He do? He will convince the world of what? Sin, righteousness, and judgment, the wrath of God revealed against unrighteousness.

But there is righteousness. Sin is the problem. Righteousness is the solution.

Judgment is the consequence of rejecting the solution. The Holy Spirit makes that clear to the world. But because of that rejection detailed in verse 18 through verse 23, look at verse 24.

Therefore God also gave them up. I emphasize this because we are looking at a revelation of God. We are endeavoring to take time at the beginning to understand its purpose, what kind of application we personally should make of it.

And if we fail, if we don't take seriously this revelation, what happens to the world when they don't take seriously God's self-revelation? Judgment follows, verse 24. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness. There is a period of revelation, of appeal, if you will, of making the opportunity clear.

When that is rejected, God stops. It doesn't say, behold, all day long I have held out my hands to those who reject the very idea of my existence, the God who is, who was, and who is to come. Israel, they are God's people.

God continues to appeal to his children. He works with us from the time we are born again onward, from the time we claim relationships with him by faith onward, he will work with us all day long. He will hold out our hands.

We never lose the Holy Spirit. We are constantly convicted if we go astray as believers. Now we can harden our hearts.

We can be calloused over. You can draw back unto perdition, as Paul puts it, but God gave them up. Be aware there is a time of opportunity, and then it passes.

The door of the ark shuts. After the opportunity is presented and rejected, the door will shut. It's a very sobering thought for the unbeliever.

Those who suppress the truth, motivated by unrighteousness, God gave them up to their uncleanness, the lust of their hearts, and they dishonor their bodies among themselves. There is always going to be promiscuity. There is going to be abuse in the physical realm of one form or another, but look at verse 25.

It's another thing I've highlighted, along with knowing, understanding, clearly seeing, they have exchanged the truth of God for the lie. You can't exchange something you don't have. They possess the truth of God for a time, and they give it away.

A loose example is Esau, possessing the blessing of the firstborn and exchanging it for a bowl of stew. These people, the most important revelation in the universe, the existence of a righteous, holy, and loving God is exchanged for the lie, and they worship and serve what is created rather than the one who created it, who is blessed forever, amen. Verse 26, for this reason, God gave them up.

Vile passions, talks about the nature of those passions. Verse 28, they did not like to, highlight it, retain God in their knowledge. They had the knowledge.

They didn't want to retain it. Next phrase, God gave them over. Verse 24, God gave them up.

Verse 26, God gave them up. Verse 28, God gave them over to the debased mind that they have chosen. It is a choice and it has consequences.

So in verse 30, they are, among other things, haters of God. Interestingly, you can't hate something that you don't believe even exists. You want to talk about flying toasters or spaghetti monsters or whatever.

Can you hate the flying spaghetti monster when you don't believe there is such a thing? Can you hate Zeus or hate Athena or hate Diana of the Ephesians? You might hate what people do with the concept, but the thing itself, you can't hate it because it's a figment, it's imaginary. How can you hate an imaginary thing unless you're not well mentally? But these people are haters of God because somewhere deep in their soul, they still know there is a God. This is the bumper sticker for an atheist.

There is no God and I hate him. You get to verse 32. These people who are undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful, who knowing the righteous judgment of God, here's what they still know.

They know there's a God, they hate him, and they know that he is a righteous judge and his righteous judgment is coming. They know that those who practice such things are deserving of death. They do the same thing and approve of each other.

There's a mutual admiration society, there's a support group for those who are rejecters of God. They compare notes, they refine their arguments, they want to go debate Christians who don't know their Bible well and embarrass them in public. Almost always, when you see a debate format, it's all heat and no light.

A conversational, non-confrontational exchange of ideas, and this is something I am still trying to learn because I tend to think when I'm right, the harder I push, the better it sounds. It is better to let the weight of the argument express truth, you don't help it by saying it loudly, forcefully, inconsiderately, sucking all the air out of the room. Some of us, this is a lifelong process of trying to learn.

But they know the righteous judgment of God. They know that there is a death penalty for it, but they just reject the whole concept. They say, even if there were such a God, how can you worship a God that tortures his son on a cross and demands blood and wants everybody to worship him? And what kind of an arrogant being is he that everybody's got to bow down in abject humility? And there's bloodshed and violence and he can't just forgive sins, he's got to have blood.

And this distorted, twisted view is what they choose. It's a choice. We tend to stop at the end of chapter one, but if you look at chapter two, just read quickly in Romans, look at verse two.

We know that the judgment of God is according to truth. This is the difference between believers and unbelievers, between those who are asking and seeking and knocking and those

who are God rejecters. We know the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

And this is one of the ways we will reconcile the fulfillment of God's righteous judgment. And even in the eternal future, we will have the balanced understanding that it was necessary that God eliminate unbelievers, those who love and practice the lie from existence, and we will have no tears. It is a sorrow, it's a regret.

We will have loved ones who are not moving forward into the eternal future, but we will understand the necessity, God's righteousness in executing this judgment. It is all the same as removing a metastasizing malignant tumor. It will kill the body if it is allowed to continue.

If you have gangrene moving in a limb and you have to amputate that limb to save the body, as Jesus said parabolically, it is better to enter into life minus something that you loved and appreciated than to keep it and end up being destroyed by its presence. It's a difficult truth. We have to remember God loves every human being more than we ever possibly could.

Our love is often based on familiarity, on exposure, on experience, on time spent, common things. There's many other people that we could love as dearly if we had been in their family or in their periphery or had them as friends. Our love in some ways for people near us I use this word carefully, but accidental.

It is a consequence of circumstance. And there are many other people we could have been equally close to or even closer, but we have to remember that our love is subjective. It is human.

It is limited in that we don't have a balance. As a child, I don't wanna go to the doctor and face vaccination or a needle. Now here's a stranger with a sharp thing and he's gonna poke it into me.

And I look at my mom and say, how could you let this happen? How could you let this stranger assault me? She knows and he knows and the rest of the world knows it is necessary to prevent polio and rubella and measles and some of these other things. And so the fact that I don't understand it and I have emotional reaction to it, when I grow up, I'd put away childish things, childish fears, and I'd come to a better and balanced understanding. And it doesn't fill me with fear.

If I need to go get medical attention that involves sharp objects, I'm reconciled because I'm mature. This will be our experience. People say, how can you imagine people in hell and no more tears? Well, that's how.

Judgment of God is according to truth, Romans 2.2. We will not escape the judgment of God at the end of verse three, we ourselves who are not in the realm of unbelievers, but God's judgment is just as righteous for his own people. Judgment begins at the house of God, we're told in another place. And the goodness of God in his forbearance and long suffering and not

judging us too soon leads us to repentance in verse four.

But if our hearts are hard and unrepentant in verse five, to that extent, in accordance with hardness of heart and lack of self-analysis, lack of change of mind, repentance is metanoia, change our mind, you store up, you treasure up wrath in the day of wrath and revelation, apocalypse, this is our word, Romans 2.5, the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each according to his deeds, eternal life to those who by patient continuance and doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality. What are you looking for? What are you seeking? Glory, honor and immortality belong to God. Those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth don't respond in a positive way to the revelation, what comes? Indignation, wrath, tribulation, philipsis and anguish on every soul of man who practices evil.

Jew first, also the Greek, glory, honor and peace. Grace to you and peace, we have in the introduction to our letter. Glory, honor and peace to everyone who practices, who works, what is good, Jew first, also the Greek.

There is no partiality with God and praise God that he is impartial, he is fair, he is just, he doesn't suffer the righteous to be moved, he doesn't allow wickedness to continue unabated, unchallenged or unjudged. We don't always understand his timing, but there is a day coming when we will realize in spiritual maturity and resurrected glory why God has done what he's done and it will all make sense and we will praise and glorify him as we will see the white robe throngs doing, not many pages hence in revelation. That is the revelation.

We got one word into the book and notice how important revelation is. It is determinative for everyone's future. How important is it for us? We'll pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll move forward and again, consolidate what we have observed, make sure we understand its application in our own lives as we approach these terrific letters to the seven churches. Let's pause here and take our break.