

For Such a Time As This

September 20, 2020

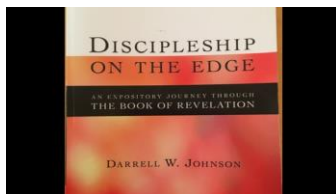
Introduction to the book, The Revelation of Jesus Christ



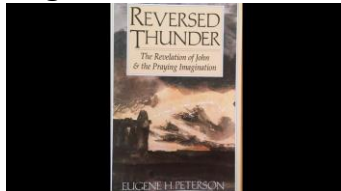
As we begin this study of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, it is important to say that I am indebted to other authors who've studied this letter and who are serving as my mentors.

There are four I want to mention to you.

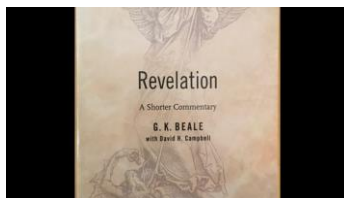
Darrell Johnson



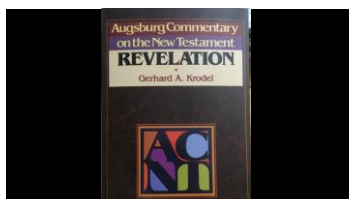
Eugene Peterson.



G.K. Beale.



Gerhard Krodel





v.1 - "The revelation from Jesus Christ..."

The word revelation literally means apocalypse.

Our understanding of this word is different than it was for John's original audience.

We hear the word apocalyptic and think...devastations.



But to John's original audience they understood apocalypse in the sense of...



... revealing, disclosing, bringing to light.

Look at how the word “apocalyptic” is used in other Bible passages.

Matthew 10:26

“...there is nothing concealed that will not be **disclosed**, or hidden that will not **be made known**.”

Philippians 3:15

“...God will **make [it] clear** to you.”

1 Corinthians 2:10

“...these are the things God has **revealed** to us by his Spirit.”

v.1a - “The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place.”

Some way read this phrase and think that the letter is a blueprint of the future. Eugene Peterson writes:

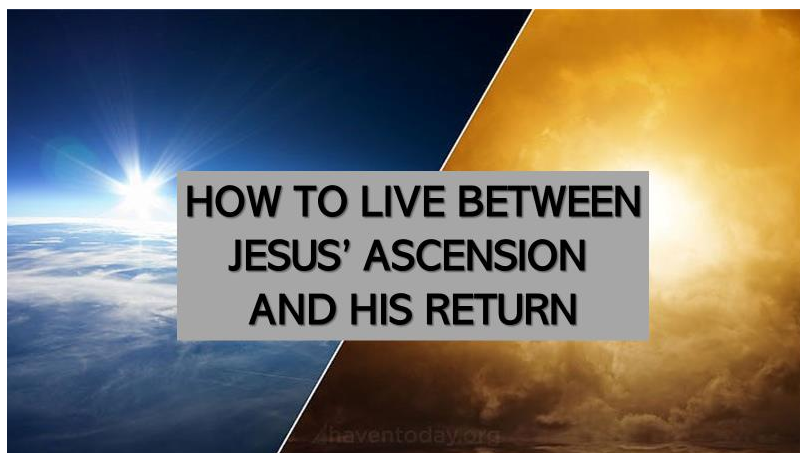
“In this letter we are immersed not in prediction, but eschatology: an awareness that the future is breaking in upon us now.”

Eugene Peterson

Yes, history is moving towards God’s predetermined plan, but this letter is all about Jesus – who he is... where he is and what he is doing right now.

v.1b-2 – “He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Jesus reveals himself to his church in order that his followers might know:



v.3 – “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

This is the first of seven beatitudes in the letter.

1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14

- Because of what this verse instructs us to do, as we did today, we will read aloud... each week... that week’s particular passage, believing, that in doing so, there is a blessing of God to be received.
- Because of what this verse says, as each week’s passage is read, we will endeavor to listen carefully in order that we might take God’s word to heart, believing, that when God’s breathed out word is obeyed, it actively transforms us.

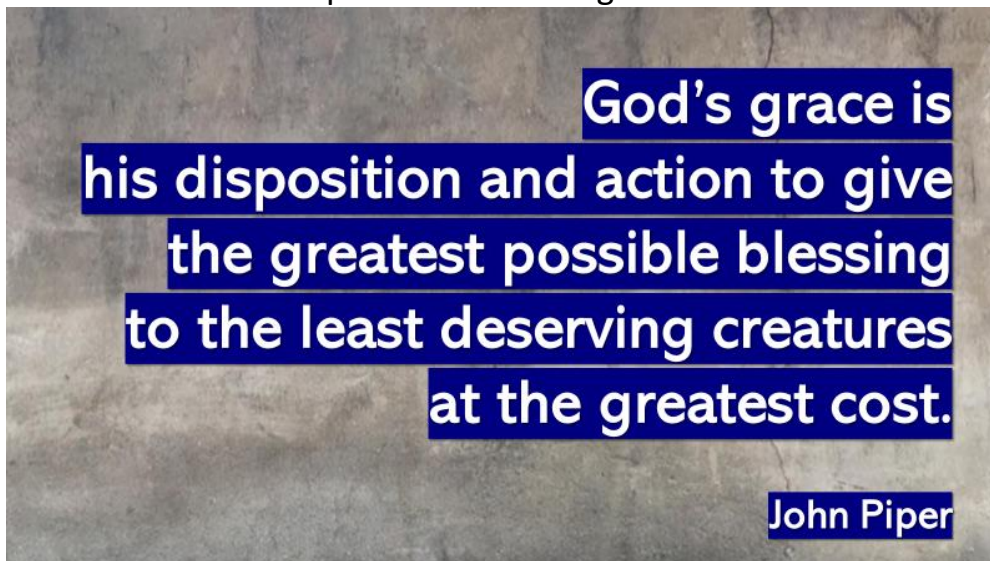
Our motivation for listening to God’s word and then obeying God is the declaration made in v.3, that is repeated at the end of this letter... that...



v.4 – “John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia:
Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come,
and from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne, and from Jesus Christ,
who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings
of the earth.”

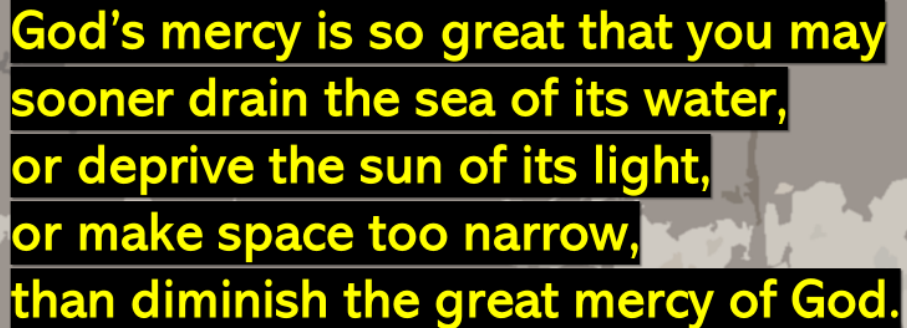
John reminds the churches in the province of Asia that it is through the Triune God... they receive grace and peace....the Father who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Spirit who is before the throne of God, and Jesus, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of heaven and earth...

Listen to how John Piper describes the grace of God.



By the grace of God, we are saved and by the grace of God we live.

Charles Spurgeon said this about the mercy of God:



**God's mercy is so great that you may
sooner drain the sea of its water,
or deprive the sun of its light,
or make space too narrow,
than diminish the great mercy of God.**

Charles Spurgeon

Can we drain the sea?

Can we deprive the sun of its light?

Can we constrict the vastness of the universe?

Just as it is impossible to do any of these things, neither can the compassion and kindness of God, that is, his mercy, be diminished or exhausted.

As with his grace, God's mercy is undeserved; it cannot be earned.

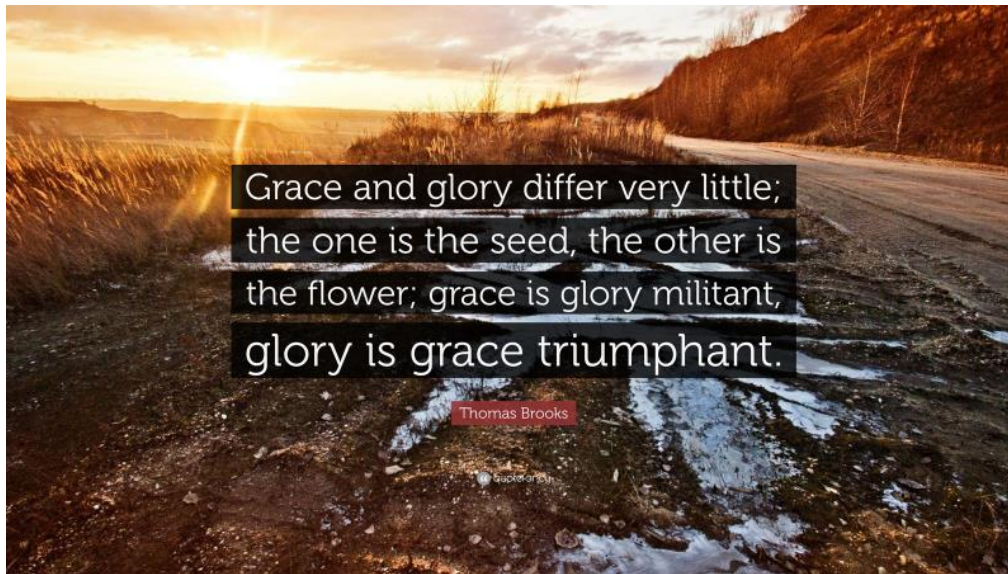
v.5b-6 – To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Oh, the glory of God that is demonstrated in his grace and in his merciful love!

Thomas Brooks was a pastor who lived during the time of the Great Plague that struck England in 1665.

He was a Puritan and a non-conformist.

He said this about the glory and the grace of God demonstrated at the cross, where and when Jesus Christ died for our sins.



Jesus faced the powers of hell and death on our behalf...and he overcame them.
What glory! What grace!

Jesus made us to be a kingdom... and priests.

In Exodus 19:6, this was a promise made by God with a future fulfillment – “You will be to me a kingdom of priests...”

Here in the letter, this promise is stated in the past tense – “...and made us to be a kingdom and priests...”

This is who the followers of Jesus now are!

What glory! What grace!

v.7-8 – “Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him,” and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was and who is come, the Almighty.”

This word “look” is also translated “behold,” and it is used 27 times in the letter. This word is meant to get our attention.

Two different OT passages are combined in this verse – Daniel 7:13 – “Look he is coming with the clouds,” and Zechariah 12:10-12, “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him,” and they “will mourn because of him.”

Jesus himself joined these two verses together in Matthew 24:30...

Matthew 24:30

Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

As surely as Jesus came to the earth the first time – born in weakness and in humility, so he shall come a second time... in glory and triumph. And when he comes again, he will come as the Judge of all the earth. This is why the peoples of the earth, those who reject Jesus... will mourn.



The One who is and who was and who is to come... the One who was at the beginning, who is the Sustainer of the present and who will come to make a new heaven and a new earth.... this is who we yield our lives to; this is who holds the place of prominence in our lives; this is who directs our lives and who is renovating our characters to be like that of our precious Savior.

This is who our hope is in.

He has come and he is coming again!

Right now, as followers of Jesus, you and I live in an in-between time where, in the words of Eugene Peterson, we experience disappointments, contradictions, not-to-be explained absurdities and bewildering paradoxes.

In this letter, Jesus Christ, speaks encouragement to his church in order that we might be emboldened to live courageously.

The time is near.

This present age is ending and a new one is dawning.

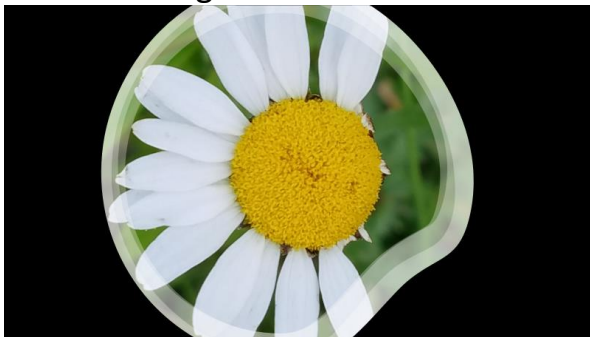
There are **six things** we need to be mindful of as we study the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

1. We acknowledge to God that we need his help to understand his word.
2. We have the assurance from Jesus that the Holy Spirit will teach us... all things and remind us... of everything that Jesus said.

John 14:26

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

3. It is important in our interactions with one another as we discuss the message of this book...

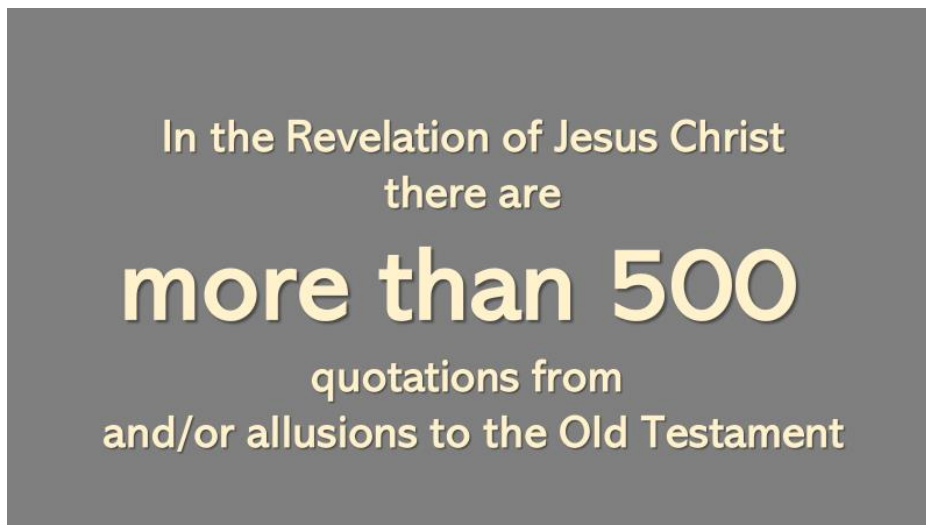


...that we commit ourselves to do so with grace.

We are all learners.

Not one of us has it all figured out.

4. Darrell Johnson says, “John saw what he saw and heard what he heard through his Old Testament informed imagination.” DJ, p.23



This is huge.

Even more so when you realize there are 404 verses in this letter.

Eugene Peterson says, “The Holy Spirit presented to John the images from the OT Scripture that he knew so well, but in doing so, showed him their significance in fresh ways.”

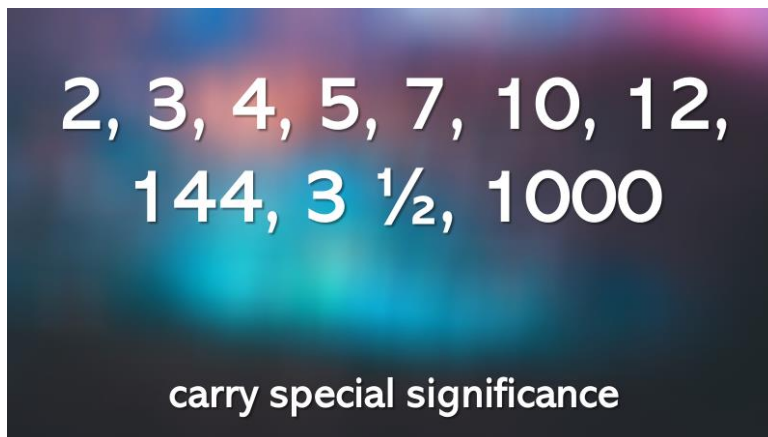
5. There are unique features about this letter that are important for us to understand.



- a. People are often represented in the likeness of animals... “the Lamb,” “the beasts,” “the dragon.”

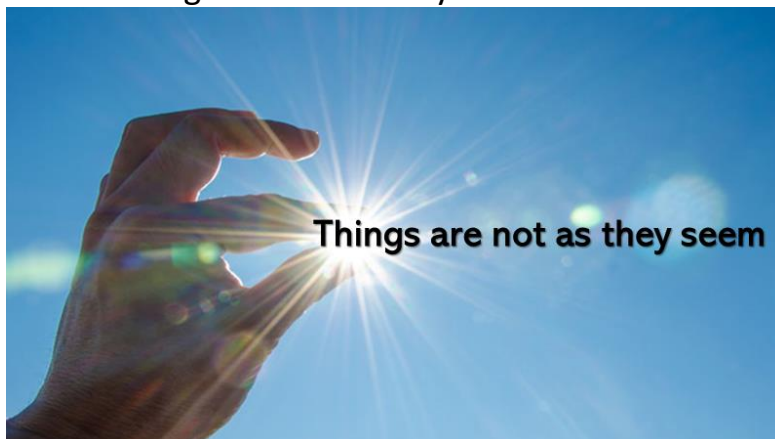


- b. Historical events are represented in the form of natural phenomena – ie. earthquakes, floods, the sun darkened; stars falling.



- c. Numbers have meanings.

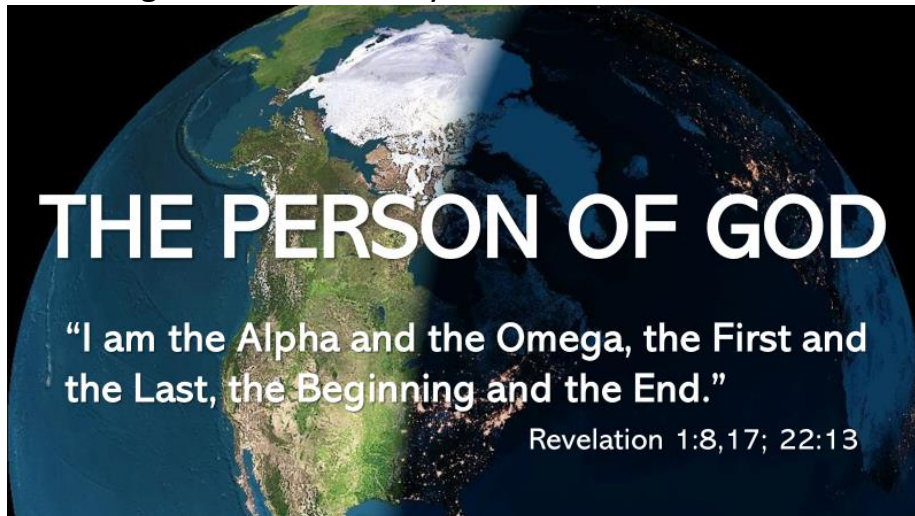
6. “Things are not as they seem.” DJ



Forty times John wrote, "I saw."
Thirty-two times he wrote, "I heard."

What John was shown and heard, makes known three great unseen realities...that impact this present time.

The first great unseen reality is...



God was at the beginning.
He will be at the end.
And he is there in every moment in-between.

The second great unseen reality.



The third great unseen reality.



Some may ask...really?

It's been almost 2000 years since Jesus revealed himself to John on the island of Patmos.

The word "near" which John used in Revelation is the same word used by Jesus in Mark 1:15.



The kingdom of God is near because... the King is near.

"Because the King is always near... the time for the final in-breaking of the new creation is always near." DJ

In Revelation 22:16, Jesus described himself as...



"The morning star is the star that only appears when the night has reached its greatest darkness. Although it is still dark, and will be for some hours yet, when the morning star is seen, you know the night has ended." DJ

John wrote of this reality in his first epistle, 2:8:



The Revelation from Jesus Christ, v.1, is going to challenge you and I to live, not in response to the daily news that can stir up anxiety within us; nor to the circumstances of our lives that can provoke fear or timidity.

This letter is given to us that we might live with courage... in light of the unseen reality that God is, that Jesus is coming soon and that the end is near...that the time for God to make all things new through Jesus Christ is almost here.

For those of us who follow Jesus, our prayer through these next weeks and months of study is that God by his Spirit may revive us again.

The repeated invitation that will be voiced to those who have not yet received and believed in Jesus is the compelling, startling, mind-boggling invitation given at the end of this letter.

Come!

Revelation 22:17

“Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”

The Blessing

Jude 24-25