

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. ³ 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. ⁴ 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, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ 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. ⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” ⁹ I, John, both 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. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” ¹² Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. ¹⁴ His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵ His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; ¹⁶ He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength. ¹⁷ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. ¹⁹ Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

In verses 1-3 we are given an introduction to the book of Revelation.
For the benefit of those people who missed the teaching last week I will ask three questions about Revelation.
The first question is;

Q. - WHERE DID THE VISION COME FROM?

In verse 1 it tells us that God the Father gave the contents of the book to Jesus Christ who gave it to His Angel to give to the Apostle John. It is important that we have the assurance that this book is from God. It contains some very challenging material, both to Churches and Christians and also to those who have yet to believe in their heart the gospel message about Jesus Christ.

(When I studied the Bible at the Faith Mission Bible College over 30 years ago one of the visiting lecturers, a man by the name of Alec Hardie used to say this:

“When a miracle happens you need to ask the question, “where did come from?” The reason he said this was to make us discerning in checking out spiritual activity. Not all apparent miracles come from God. The devil is able to produce a miracle in order to deceive people into following him.

Exodus 7: v. 12.

¹² For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.

We need to be discerning in the world of the supernatural.

However, what we do know is that the book of Revelation came from God.

In verse 2 it tells us that John actually saw the contents of the book of Revelation unfold before his eyes.

Physically John was on the Island of Patmos, but somehow God transported him to Heaven that he might witness these events and record them down for us.

My second question is;

Q. - WHO BENEFITS FROM THE VISION?

In v. 3 it tells us that those people who read the book are going to be blessed and those people who hear the book will be blessed also.

This is a reference to the style of Church worship that was around when John wrote this book. It was common practice when the Church gathered to worship for one person to read the scriptures aloud for all to hear. (1Tim.4:13)

Writing materials were expensive and scarce so were copies of the books that were parts of the Biblical Canon. Usually there was only one copy per Church assembly.

The most that people could hope for was to listen to a portion of God's word.

The promise was to bless the reader and the congregation.

Today the promise from God still exists and it is a promise from God to bless me as I teach Revelation and it is a promise to bless you as the congregation.

It is however not an unconditional blessing. Verse 3 tells us that it is a blessing for those who keep those things which are written in it.

It is a case of READ, HEAR and OBEY in order to obtain the blessing. Sometimes that is the missing ingredient in Church life today, people read and hear but do not always obey.

I hope that is not the missing ingredient in our lives.?

May I encourage you not just to read and hear God's word but also to obey it.

John 14:21 is an important verse, Jesus said "He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." (N.K.J.)

There are 7 promised blessings in the book of Revelation, I will just mention two.

- a) Rev. 14: 13 "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on"
- b) Rev. 19:9 "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

P.P. - WHEN IS IT GOING TO HAPPEN?

In v. 3 it also informs us that this book is a "prophecy". It fore -tells future events. It is God's last prophetic word. God is not going to speak again to believers about the future. This is His last word to us.

Also in verse 3 we have the words "for the time is near". The Greek word that is used here is the word "kairos ". It is not the Greek word for time on a clock it. It is the word that refers to seasons or eras.

To put it another way, it is the next great era of God's redemptive history.

The return of Jesus Christ is near because it is the next event in God's prophetic calendar.

In Luke 12 v. 40 it teaches us to be ready for the second coming of Jesus.

There are more references to the second coming of Jesus in the New Testament than any other doctrine. I won't read out these references but if you get a copy of this sermon in English or Japanese, some of these references are quoted so that you can look them up yourselves.

(References to second coming in the N/T.

By Jesus Christ Himself – Matthew 24:30, Mark13:26, Luke 21:27, Matt.16:27 & 25:v.31, Mark 14:v.62, Luke 12:v. 40, John 14: v.3, 28.

By the Angels at Jesus Christ's ascension – Acts 1: v.11.

By the Apostles – Philippians 3: v. 20-21, Acts 3: v 20-21, 1 Corinthians 1: v. 7, 11: v. 26, 1 Thessalonians 1: v.10, 3:13, 4:16, 2 Thess.1: v.7, Hebrews 9: v. 28.)

Having answered the questions from the text in the first three verses we now coming to the Greetings.

2. GREETINGS

Our first greeting is from John – v. 4.

When we write letters which is not very often today, we put our names at the end, but ancient letters put their names at the beginning. So John identifies himself and tells us who he is writing to.

He is writing to 7 Churches.

These 7 Churches were in the province of Asia, which is modern day Turkey.

(show map – of where these Churches were – see internet for map)

The next greeting is from the Trinity.

2. FROM THE TRINITY – v. 4-5

John describes God in a way we can understand. He uses time dimensions.

Past, Present, and Future. God is the God of the Past, God is the God of the present and God is the God of the Future.

John mentions the 7 Spirits, this refer to the Holy Spirit, not because there are 7 Holy Spirits but because the number 7 describes Him in all His fullness.

The Holy Spirit is perfect. The number 7 is the perfect number.

(Reference to Isaiah 11: v. 2.)

And of course greetings from Jesus.(v.5)

P.P. 3. A REMINDER OF THE TITLES OF JESUS – v. 5.

Jesus is described as a FAITHFULL WITNESS - someone who always represents the truth.

He is also described as the FIRSTBORN OF THE DEAD.

(This is a reference to the resurrection of Jesus)

Finally ,Jesus is described as - The Ruler over the Kings of the earth.

This title puts Jesus as having absolute charge over all the affairs of the earth. We have a prime minister in Japan and all over the world there are governments and rulers in every country.

Jesus is in charge of all these governments.

They may not acknowledge this fact but it is true because he Bible says so.

This truth is repeated throughout the Bible.

Ps. 2:6-8

⁶“Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.” ⁷“I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give *You* The nations *for* Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.

John closes his greetings by reminding his readers about the work of Jesus.- v.5.

1. Jesus Christ loves believers with an unbreakable love.

Rom 8:35-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” ³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. Jesus has washed us from our sins in his own blood.
This is reference to the gospel message. Sinners are forgiven by God and set free from death and hell by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. He is our substitute sacrifice.
3. Jesus Christ has made us Priests. We have the privilege of direct access to God. If you are a born again believer, God is able to communicate with you through the Bible, He is able to use you in ministry wherever He has placed you and your prayers are as effective as mine.

4. THE VISION OF JESUS IN HEAVEN – v.9-20

John received his vision while he was in the Spirit. This means that his experience went beyond normal human understanding.

Ezekiel, Peter and Paul had similar experiences.

(Ezekiel 2:2, 3;12, Acts 10:9, 22:17)

John received his vision on the Lord's Day. It came as a loud voice.

(like a Trumpet) It is interesting to note that the word "loud voice" in Revelation indicates that something serious and solemn is about to happen.

(There are 15 other references like this.)

John was commanded to write in a book what He saw. This is the first of 12 commands to write down something. John was only told once, NOT to write down what he saw. This is in chapter 10: v. 4.

After he had written it down he was to send it to the 7 Churches which are named in verse 11.

¹¹ saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

In verses 12-16 we have a description of what John saw.

P.P. JESUS EMPOWERS (helps) HIS CHURCH (v. 12-13a)

John saw 7 Golden Lampstands = these are identified in v. 20 as the 7 Churches.

These lamps were the common portable oil lamps used to light rooms at night.

In Phillip. 2:15 the Church is encouraged to shine as a light in the world.

Gold is the most precious metal, and the Church is the most precious thing to Jesus. He purchased it with His own blood. The Church is the people of God and be assured today that YOU are precious to Jesus.

7 is the number of completeness and we will see all Churches reflected in the types mentioned. – The challenge for us is which Church are we going to reflect in Revelation? I hope that it is the Faithful Church. May God help the people of O.I.C. to be the "Faithful Church" that is described in Revelation.

In the middle of the lamp stands John saw "one like the Son of Man"

This was Jesus in the middle of His Churches.

Jesus promised while on this earth that He would never leave His people. (Matt.28:20)

Here we see a picture of Jesus Christ empowering His Church.

Christians do not worship a Martyr or a famous dead person.

Christians worship a living Christ who indwells His Church to lead and empower it.

So this means that Jesus Christ is able and willing to empower you for life and ministry in O.I.C.

It is no wonder that the Apostle Paul said in Phil. 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." We draw on that power through prayer and really believing and trusting God's word, the Bible.

P.P. - JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS CHURCH (v. 13)

In v. 13 the first thing that John noticed about Jesus was that he wore a garment or robe down to His feet and He had a Golden Band tied across His chest.

The word translated garment/robe in the first translated Greek Bible is the same word most frequently used for the garments worn by the High Priest.

The High Priest always wore a golden sash. (Ex.28:4, Lev.16:4)

Hebrews 7:25 points out that Jesus always lives to make intercession/prayer for His people.

Jesus will be praying for US as we go through Revelation and as we work and live in Japan.

We know about one of His prayers. John 17 – He prays for unity.

The fact that JESUS is praying for us is a great comfort to all those people who are having a difficult time in life.

P.P. - JESUS PURIFIES HIS CHURCH (v.14-15a)

John describes Jesus clothing and then moves to His person.

The features that John describes represent a parallel to disciplining and purifying of His church. That means you and me.

Jesus is interested in making you and me Holy through His purification process.

He disciplines those He loves.

The New Testament teaches us about the Church that Jesus wants to have.

Matt. 5:48

⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Ephesians 5: v. 25-27.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Peter said Judgement must begin in the household of God. (1Peter 4:17)

Therefore, all of us at O.I.C. have a responsibility to co-operate with the Holy Spirit as He purifies us and sets us apart for God's Glory.

It is never easy to go through the refining fire of the Holy Spirit, but it produces a result that we can't do ourselves.

Living Example to encourage you:

My Father had a very strong temper and he often abused me, sometimes just verbally but at other times it was physical. I am sure that I inherited something of his temper. When I was at Bible College over 30 years ago, the Holy Spirit convicted me about my temper. I was desperate to have this temper removed from my personality.

One night I got down on my knees and cried to God that His Holy Spirit would remove this temper from my life. I prayed for a long time and quoted the Bible verse in 1 John 1: v. 9 back to God. I confessed my need to God.

I was expecting a light from Heaven and a wonderful experience from God. It did not happen. So I decided just to TRUST GOD and HIS WORD and believed that He had done a work in my heart.

Two night later I was in a position where normally I would get angry and my temper would come out.

However, I was at peace and did not manifest my usual behaviour. I realised that by FAITH, God had dealt with my temper and set me free. That was over 30 years ago.

Maybe you have something in your life that you are not happy with. God is able to set you free from that habit or thing that you most desire.

We will NOT be PERFECT until we get to HEAVEN, but God can perfect the things concerning us that He wants to perfect.

If the Holy Spirit convicts us about something in our lives, then He is able to deal with that thing and set you free too.

We now notice in v. 14, the description of Jesus head and hair.
It is the same as described in Daniel 7:9.

⁹“I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment *was* white as snow, And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool. His throne *was* a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire;

His eyes reflect the deep searching eyes of Jesus.

(Matt. 10:26 – There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed.)

v.15 Jesus feet were like fine brass as if refined in a furnace. What is that all about?

Kings in ancient times sat on elevated thrones.

Therefore those who were being judged were always below or beneath the kings feet.

The feet of a King came to symbolize his authority.

The red hot feet of Jesus may well be a symbol of Him exercising the purification of His Church.

(Hebrews 12:v. 5-10)

⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” ⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness.

We are living in days when Jesus is purifying His Church.

Sadly many Christian Denominations are moving away from being faithful to God’s word. The result is that some Churches are breaking away from their Denominations and forming new independent Churches. This is happening in the U.K. at the moment, especially in Scotland. Ever since the Church of Scotland voted to ordain gay ministers and take Gay Marriage services, it has challenged evangelical ministers to form their own Churches. These Churches are growing and God is blessing them.

Compromising God’s word, always results in the decline of the Church. Being faithful to God’s word results in blessing to individual Churches.

Let us be determined at O.I.C. not to compromise God’s word, even though the world declines in its moral standard.

P.P. JESUS CONTROLS AND PROTECTS HIS CHURCH. (v. 16)

Finally, we move to Jesus holding 7 stars.

It is explained what the seven stars are in v. 20. The N.K.J. calls them “angels”. Most modern Greek translation describes the word as messengers.

All good translations make reference to messengers.

These messengers were instruments through which Jesus Christ controls His church.

Now as angels don’t run Churches I am opting for messengers.

One commentator suggests that these 7 messengers could represent the Pastors or Elders of the 7 Churches.

These 7 messengers demonstrate the function of Spiritual Leadership in the Church.

They are to be instruments through which Jesus Christ, the head of the Church operates His rule.

There are two challenges here. One for the leadership of Churches and one for the Congregation who operate under those leaders.

The leaders are challenged to both a high standard and responsibility of carrying out the purposes of Jesus.

The Congregation are always to be aware that rebellion against leadership is always rebellion against Jesus and His purposes for the Church.

The two edged word that came out of the mouth of Jesus is explained in chapter 19. The sword is used for the protection of the Church.

In those verses in chapter 19 it is used to defend the Church against external threats.

Satan is always trying to divide the Church with LIES, and He uses people who create DIVISION to make the Church weak. However, Jesus will protect HIS CHURCH against this.

In closing we are reminded about the countenance of Jesus.

“Like the Sun shining in its strength”

What was John’s response to all this, what is our response to all this.?

John fell at his feet as DEAD. If we had the same experience then we would have done the same.

We can be encouraged today that Jesus is ALIVE and that He is;

1. He is available to empower you for ministry in His Church
2. He is praying for you as you move in this direction
3. He is interested in purifying your life.
(Perhaps you need prayer for something today in this area of your life?)
4. He operates through the leadership of Churches
5. He will protect His Church from harmful characters.

Jesus said “ I will build my Church and the gates of Hell will nor prevail.”
(Matt. 16:18)