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Series: For the Time is Near
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Intro to Revelation
Revelation 1:1-8

[Prayer] *Father, we come to you this morning thanking you, Lord, for the work that you've already done in our lives up to this day. Lord, we know we are here to hear from you. Not to argue with you, not to come with our thoughts of what we think Your Word is, but to actually get into Your Word and understand and learn the truth as it is set forth in the Bible. I pray, as we go through Revelation, that we understand that this is a revealing of Jesus Christ. Although, many things will be spoken about, Lord, I pray that we will always think of the one Person that is revealed in the end, and that is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ Himself, who will reign on earth just as He does in heaven. And so, Father, we commit ourselves to you this morning. We ask a blessing upon this study. We ask that You would give us ears to hear, hearts to obey, and hands and feet to do Your work, Lord. We praise You, and we love You, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

How many of you have actually studied the book of Revelation? A lot of pastors actually shy away from teaching the book of Revelation. They won't touch it. But here's my crazy way of thinking; if someone can do it, I can do it. We can do it. We can go through it. I can tell you that what I studied in just this first chapter is so much more than I can ever stand up here and deliver to you. We're going to learn together as we go through the book of Revelation, and we're going to be blessed as we go through it. We're going to learn about some special things that are unique to the book of Revelation that are not really covered in the rest of the Bible. We'll bring those to your attention as we go through.

Let's start out by reading the verses that we're going to be covering this morning. Beginning in Revelation chapter one, verse one:

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

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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 of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

The rest of the verses in chapter one John is commanded to write these things that he is about to be shown. But we're not going to get into those verses this morning. We're just covering the first eight verses that we read.

Now, most people like the experience of having something revealed to them. Like a surprise. I know some of you say, "Well, I don't like surprises." But I know you like surprises deep down within. You hear, "Surprise!" and then you perk up, right? "Oh! What is it? I don't like surprises...but what is it?" I believe that we all like good surprises. A revealing of something that's good, whether it's the revealing of the gender of a baby, revealing of an engagement of a couple, or the selection of a college, are all things we love to have revealed to us. "Tell me more, tell me some of the good news, tell me what's going on", and you want to hear the good news. Generally, we don't like to have bad news revealed to us. If someone comes up to you and they tell you, "I have bad news and I have good news. Which one do you want to hear first?" Give me the bad first, because the best is saved for last. Well, that's my mentality. Tell me the bad, and then let's get better from there.

One thing that is for sure, there are many things that are revealed within the book of Revelation that I said are unique, right? But some things that are also laced throughout the whole Bible. It reveals the Antichrist, angels, and demons. God is warning of the Great Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, God's judgment and cataclysmic events as we have never seen before on planet earth.

But if we miss the revealing of Jesus Christ, then we have missed the central and most important revealing of this book, and really nothing else matters. There are many people who study the book of Revelation and look at Jesus Christ, not as the Messiah, not as the One who came to save, not as the One who will reign once again here on earth, but they look at Him as just some historical figure. It really makes no sense to study the book of Revelation outside of understanding that His revealing is for our benefit. His revealing is to point back at His redemptive work, but to also look forward to what is to come. You see, He may redeem us from sin and death, but really what do we look forward to? To reigning with Him in all of His glory.

Did you know that we're not going to be in heaven for eternity? No, you didn't, huh? Now, you're going to learn something new. We're actually going to be coming back with Him. You know, if you die today...*to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord* (2 Corinthians 5:8), right? But, one day we will return to this earth and it'll be a completely different place than what we know today. We'll study that in the book of Revelation and we'll understand what it means in context. Not as the Jehovah's Witness say, but what it actually says in context.

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It's amazing to me how God exists outside of time. Just think about that. He exists outside of time, and at the same time He exists within time. He's not constrained to time, He's not withheld in time because He's outside of time. He's eternal; He is sovereign; He is Almighty. We're going to learn what *Almighty* means. Within the pages of this book, He gives us a glimpse of the realities of God's realm; an eternal realm. Because God exists outside of time, He sees the future just as clear as He sees the past and present because He is in all places at all times.

We may have a tough time recollecting even yesterday. Guys are really notorious for forgetting everything, right? "How did it go yesterday?" And what do we say? "Good." What does *good* really mean? So really what you're saying is that you don't remember the details of what happened yesterday. I don't know if we actually forget, or maybe we just don't want to say what happened yesterday. We forget really quickly. Forget about asking us what happened last week! We don't remember perfectly. I remember bits and pieces of my past, of course, in general. I can tell you some things vividly with all the little details, but not everything. What's amazing to me is that God knows the past, present, and the future with perfect detail. That just baffles me!

Now, I heard a story, I believe it was Steve Wiggins...or maybe it wasn't...anyway, worked at this country club where there was a golf course. What they would do is record different sports games, like tennis or golf, and show them on all of the screens throughout the country club. So one of the guys knew that they did this, and he was overheard making a bet. He said, "Hey, I wanna lay down some money on this guy." I believe it was golf. It was a large sum of money. They thought, "There's no way he's going to win." Well, he won, and they couldn't believe it. They sat down and watched the whole game, but what they didn't know was that this guy had already knew the outcome. He was betting on a sure thing. Of course, that's cheating, that's gambling. I'm not telling you that that's right. I'm just telling you that just as perfectly as this guy knew the outcome of the game, God knows the end, and all the little details along the way.

Listen, two-thirds of the Bible is prophecy, and half of those events have already taken place. So who are we to say that the next thing that comes up may, or may not happen. I believe the Bible to be the very word of God. It's God's very own breath. He knows the beginning, just as He knows the end, and everything that takes place in between.

Now, let's take a look at our text here. Verses 1 and 2: ***The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.***

"...things that must soon take place." We know from 2 Peter 3:8 how soon *soon* can be. As the apostle Peter said, ***"A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day."*** Now anytime you read a verse in the Bible that says *like* it doesn't mean that it *is*. Some people equate one day to a thousand years, and vice versa, so therefore we make these conclusions and calculations on something that is *like* that, but it is not that. We have these people who are making predictions on that formula and Peter doesn't say it's a formula. He's saying that God is not constrained within time. Think about that.

For 2000 years, we've been on the edge of our seats, and it seems like it's taking **so** long for Him to come back. For those of you who are familiar with Calvary Chapel, you know that Chuck Smith had been saying for many

years, "Oh, Jesus' return is imminent. He could come back at any time." We should live lives, as Christians, with that mindset that he could come back at any time.

The Bible talks about the virgins who were really caught off guard, who didn't have oil in their lamps (Matthew 25). They were asking the one virgin who was faithful, "Can you give us some oil?" She told them, "I can't. I won't be ready. Go and get some yourself." For them it was too late. We should live each and every day as if Jesus was coming back today, because you just don't know. All is set for His return. That's why we should have a sense of urgency as it pertains to evangelism, speaking to others about the love of Christ that He has expressed on the cross.

Now Peter talks about God's patience toward us as he continues on with 2 Peter 3:9-10. He's not delaying because He's lazy, or because He wants to frustrate us. He says: ***The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*** ¹⁰ ***But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.***

Now, "...***the things that must soon take place.***" Once they start happening, they will happen quickly. That day will come. All of this will be covered as we study the book of Revelation, but the point here is that God's patience is explained. Not to frustrate or cast doubt on the reality of prophecy.

It's not *our* interpretation of God's timing that gives a confirmation as to whether God's Word is reality, or not. It has nothing to do with how *we* interpret His timing, because His timing is perfect. We may say He's slow while we're going through circumstances. "You're slow, God. Why aren't You answering my prayers in the way I want You to answer them?" It doesn't mean that He's not at work. He's at work all the way through. He's faithful from the beginning to the end. We are going to read that He himself proclaimed to be the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. Again, not to cast doubt on the reality of prophecy, but that more people would come to repent of their sins to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ. That's it. He's waiting. I sure am glad that before I came to Christ that He didn't come back. I'm glad. He's waiting for you.

What did God do with John? He sent him an angel. That's unique to the book of Revelation. And this angel was instructed to do two things:

1. To bear witness to the Word of God.
2. To bear witness to the testimony of Jesus Christ.

How would he do this? John was taken by this angel on a journey into the eternal realm and he showed him these things. Now keep in mind that some of these things that we'll be reading about are symbolic. These are the ways that John could describe them. At that time they didn't know about nuclear power; they didn't know the effects of an atomic bomb. John was describing these things as best as he could. That is how we get the book of Revelation because the angel was taking John, basically by the hand, and showing him all of these things.

Also unique to the book of Revelation is a blessing that is promised to us in verse 3: ***Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.***

This is the only book of the Bible that promises a blessing to the person that does these three things:

1. Reads it out loud.
2. Hears.
3. Keeps, or does, what he reads out loud and hears.

There's always something special about reading the Bible out loud. Does anyone do that? I do that. I like to read out loud. Just to hear the words. I'm not reading them just with my mind as I'm going through, but hearing them as they come off the pages of the Bible. There is something special about that. This book comes with a promise for doing that very thing.

What is the reason for giving specific blessings regarding this book? There's all the different books of the Bible, but why this book? You can say, "Aren't all the books of the Bible special? Aren't they all inspired by God? Aren't they all important for us to understand and be blessed by them?" Yes, absolutely! But there's a special blessing here. I believe it is given to us in verse three, and is the reason for the title of this series, because *the time is near*. For us, the end times; the end time church; the body of believers; the bride of Christ, these are the things that are important for us to understand. Some people don't see any use for studying this book, but that doesn't make sense when you consider the fact that God went to great lengths to make sure that John was given these things to write down to pass along to the saints, to you and I. Within the first three verses we're told why it's important for us to read aloud, to hear, and then to keep the things that you read and hear. Why would God do this, and then not really care whether we did this or not? He wouldn't, right? It's important.

John wrote the gospel which bears his name, the three epistles (three letters), and then he wrote Revelation. He wrote the gospel so that we might believe. He wrote the three epistles so that we might be sure of our walk with the Lord, of our salvation. He wrote the book of Revelation that we might be ready for His return.

What people tell you at the end of their lives is what they have come to hold as most important. They will not waste any time on fluff, or frivolous things. I know that for a fact. I've seen a lot of people that are at the end of their lives, and they don't waste any time with anything other than what they hold to be most important. "I want certain people to come. I want to tell them specific things." And the one thing they tell them over, and over is how much they love them. "I just want you to know that. I don't care about anything in the past. I want to make sure that you understand that I love you!"

You could say that as we go through this, we're going to be pointed back to a time when God demonstrated His love toward us, past tense. He's saying, "I want you to know that I loved you then, and I love you today, and I will demonstrate to you, and I will show you what's to come." What God has revealed about the end of ages is very important for the hearer to know and understand. It's good to know, not just for the benefit of accumulating knowledge, but that this would draw us even closer to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Now, we're going to go through a lot of symbols. Why does God use so many signs in the book of Revelation? We need to understand two things as it pertains to God using signs:

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1. John was shown things that pertain to future events and could only describe what he was shown in the best way that he could. And he uses the word *like* many times. It means that it strongly resembles what he knows to be.
2. It's much better to describe something in vivid terms than to simply say that something is evil, or bad.

Let me give you an example. In Revelation 17:6: ***And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.*** I want to come to understand exactly what that means. Some of you already know. That's pretty vivid and gives an in-depth understanding, a picture of the evil there.

Let's talk about the greeting. Verses 4 and the beginning of verse 5: ***John to the seven churches that 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, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.*** Originally, this letter was written to the seven churches of Asia, which in today's day and age is the western part of Turkey.

Now, "***grace and peace...***" You will always see in the Bible that *grace* comes before *peace*. *Grace* speaks of our position, our place in Jesus Christ. *Peace* is the experience of our position in Christ. We can never have peace before grace. We can understand what true peace is *only* because we have known God's grace and we have surrendered to Him, and we are in Christ Jesus.

And so we see this greeting start out like this: ***John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come...***

John makes reference to the Trinity here. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The first one is God the Father. John makes reference to "***who is, and who was, and who is to come,***" and he's relating this characteristic, this attribute, to Yahweh. As we know it to be in the Old Testament, the name that is given to The Lord. He's referring to God the Father. He's giving us an understanding of God ruling over all. Not just today, not just yesterday, but also tomorrow, and overall. He's saying that He's eternal, He's sovereign, He's almighty. We're going to go into *almighty* a little more in a few moments. John is making specific reference to God the Father in this phrase as he separates references to the Holy Spirit, and to the Son of God.

Secondly, he mentions the seven spirits who are before His throne. This is the Holy Spirit, not that there are literally seven spirits, but he's actually quoting an Old Testament scripture, Isaiah 11:2:

And the Spirit of the Lord (one) shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom (two) and understanding (three), the Spirit of counsel (four) and might (five), the Spirit of knowledge (six) and the fear of the Lord (seven).

The number seven is significant as it pertains to the Bible because it speaks of fullness and of perfection. This is not saying that there seven spirits of God, but that the Holy Spirit has these characteristics, and He has them in all fullness and perfection. So John is making reference, at this point in his introduction, to things that he hasn't been shown just yet. It's all in the introduction here. He's talking about things that are already known, things that have already been written down, things that everyone already knows at this point.

And then John refers to God the Son. He also includes a greeting from God the Son and describes Him for who He is and what He has done. He says Jesus is "***the faithful witness***". What does this say of Jesus? That He is

perfectly loyal. He's perfectly reliable. He's perfectly faithful to the Father, even unto death. Do you remember when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and He was feeling the anguish? He understood the heaviness of what was to come. He was fully human and He was fully God. He has experienced everything that you have experienced up to this point. He was praying, "God if there's any way that this could be done any other way, that this cup can pass then let it be so, but nonetheless, may Your will be done not Mine" (Matthew 26:39, Luke 22:42, paraphrase). So He's perfectly faithful to the Father, even unto death. In fact, the ancient Greek word for *witness* is actually translated *martyr*.

Jesus was also referred to as "***the firstborn of the dead***". This speaks of Jesus' preeminence among all people. He was not only the first to resurrect from the grave, but that He was preeminent among *all* of those who will resurrect. If you're jotting down some notes, jot down Romans 8:29. Now, *firstborn* is not giving Jesus a birth date of His existence, but a title given to Him whom everyone understood gives Him preeminence. He is the God above all. Of course He comes first, of course He's preeminent. Why? Because He's eternal. He's referred to in this manner because He's the *firstborn of the dead*.

Jesus is also referred to as "***the Ruler of Kings on earth.***" Now, within the pages of Revelation we will see how Jesus will be ruler over all earthly kings. Jesus is King but not yet King over the earth, at this point within our timeframe. But what is certain can be proclaimed by the One who knows it all perfectly. It's not arrogance, but perfect knowledge. It's like, "I'm just stating the facts. This is what's going to happen. I'm not boasting. God is not boasting." He's not saying, "Oh, yeah, I'm gonna tear 'em up, chew 'em up, spit 'em out because I just want to show-off." It's not like that at all. He's God and knows the beginning to the end, and everything in between.

The *Trinity*. Some people will argue that the word *Trinity* is not in the Bible. So, don't Google it. Let me just tell you, it's not. The word *Trinity* is not in the Bible. But reference to the Trinity is all over the place. We see here a reference to the Trinity, that God exists in three distinct Persons, as was described by John in his greeting. And it was understood by the apostles, by the church, and is woven throughout the Bible; the Old Testament and the New Testament. As we go to Genesis 1:1: "***In the beginning Elohim...***" *Elohim* speaks of one God in three persons. So from the very beginning we see the Trinity in perfect form.

A love, a service, and a glory is what we see as we continue in part of verse 5 and verse 6: ***To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

So, we see here a love, a service, and a glory. John is pointing back to a point of time in the past. A demonstration of God's love expressed to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ, as He hung on the cross in complete victory over our sins. It was the shed blood of Christ that gave us freedom from our sins. Here John is reminding the reader, "Let me remind you [past tense], to Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His sacrifice, by His shed blood, just look back." Little good are we done by the person who continually tells you in the present tense, "Today you are loved...today you are loved", and never makes reference to the point at which God demonstrated His love toward you perfectly. *That* is what will put things in proper perspective.

Romans 5:8 says: ***God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.*** (Past tense). It's a beautiful reality to understand, and be reminded of the fact, that God loved us enough to do something to

reconcile us unto Himself. He did it, not us. It was an act of love toward us as He sent His Son to this earth to die on our behalf. It was an expression of love. So John was pointing back to this.

I believe there are many people who are not secure in their salvation. They are not secure in their love of Jesus toward them because they look at their present circumstances, instead of looking back at the love that God has already expressed to them. We get so wrapped up in our present circumstances, and we fail to look back at the one time, the one thing that God did to demonstrate His love toward us; to secure it in us, to give us the ability to know a relationship with the Father, through the Son, we fail to do that. We get so wrapped up in our present circumstances that we lose sight of that. We fail to look back at how God has already expressed His love toward us. That expression of God's sacrificial love is to resonate in the heart of the believer; and to serve to secure the love of God toward us; and to serve, to give us strength to persevere through tough times in life. That's what will get you through. Often times we are looking at, "What can God do for me right now?" When He's already done it all.

He's actually equipped you with the Holy Spirit. Do you know that the same Spirit that was there in the beginning, at creation, as God spoke the world into existence, the same Holy Spirit that resurrected Christ from the grave...that same Spirit was given to each one of us and has sealed us for the day of redemption. The same Holy Spirit gives us understanding for all things that pertain to life. That is Who is with us each and every day.

This is why it's so important for the preacher, the teacher, to speak of the work of the cross as an expression of a reality of something that is past tense. A work completed, to be reminded that Jesus at one point in history said these words from the cross before He gave up the Spirit: **"It is finished!"** That's it! The work is done! It serves to remind us of a time when God declared *victory* over sin and death. A time when He demonstrated His love toward us. We must not speak of a present love without looking back at His *demonstrated* love. Amen.

Do you guys know that we are all kings and priests? In the Old testament it was actually forbidden to combine the offices of kings and priests. It was forbidden, but as children of God we are deemed both kings and priests. Just as our Lord is deemed not only King, but He's also our High Priest. *Kings* speaks of God's royalty; of privilege; of status; of authority. We are God's children. We are part of His royal family. We are kings. Ladies, you are queens. Can you believe that we are part of God's royalty, privilege, authority, status? And it's pure. It's not conceded, not overbearing. It's pure in every sense of the word. As *priests*, we are God's special servants who represent God to others, and others to God. We are those servants who willingly stand in the gap interceding for others, but also speak to others the truth of God's Word.

And then he gives us a word of praise. After everything that he's said up to this point, John wants to give glory to God. He says, **"To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever."** And he says, "Yes!" That's what *amen* means. Do you know what we need more of in the church? More of that. *I'm not looking for external experience. I'm just understanding this. I'm getting this! I understand what's being taught here!* All of us should just arrive at a certain time in our reading and in our prayers and be like, "Yes! That's it! That's what I needed to hear!" Some of you I see on Facebook, you do that. You don't say, "Amen", but you're saying, "I get it! I'm going through this, but I get it. God is Almighty God. He's amazing! And that's all I want to say, that's how I want to end this post." That's saying, "Yes! Amen." That's what the apostle John says here. He gives a word of praise. In light of all that has been said up until this point, would it not be appropriate and fitting to give God praise? To identify His glory? To acknowledge and honor Him?

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C.H. Spurgeon said this: *"Again, if we truly say to 'Him be glory and dominion' then we must give Him dominion over ourselves. Each man is a little empire of three kingdoms -- body, soul, and spirit – and it should be a united kingdom. Make Christ king of it all. Do not allow any branch of those three kingdoms to set up for itself a distinct rule. Put them all under the sway of your one King."*

When we give Him praise, that's what we're doing. All glory, all dominion is Yours. And then we say, "Yes!" We are your royalty. We are your servants. We are your priests. And we're chosen specifically to serve You, and to serve others on Your behalf. To intercede, to stand in the gap. We are privileged. We are given status. We are given authority. Why? Because we are His children. That's it.

To recognize God's dominion is to allow Him authority and rule over us. To lack in praise is to lack in giving Him this place in our lives that He is due. What is your praise gauge reading? Do you praise God? "ALL GLORY AND ALL DOMINION IS YOURS!" How often do you say that? "Lord you are God! You are amazing!" It should be all the time. The word *awesome* should be ascribed to God and God alone. I know we're used to saying, especially in California, "That's awesome!" But really, we should be speaking of God in all awe of His awesomeness. To Him be all glory and dominion.

And then we have the opening introduction of Jesus. Let's quickly move on here. Verse 7: ***Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.***

This is a description of Jesus' return, but it's not a supernatural event that was shown to John. We haven't even gotten there yet. He's simply informing us of what's to come. He's coming with the clouds. This is not to say that it will be cloudy when Jesus returns. You know, sometimes we can think about that. We look up and it's a cloudy day and wonder if today's the day. You're laughing because you've done that! It doesn't necessarily mean that, but it may refer to God's presence and glory. Oftentimes, His presence and glory is described as a cloud. *As a cloud, His Shekinah glory filled the temple. He's coming with the clouds.*

It may be that John is referring to a multitude of believers as God refers to His saints as His glory. So, as I said earlier that He refers to you and I as His saints, as His glory. He glories in us. We glory in Him. He looks at us as His perfect work. God loves redemption. God loves reconciliation. That's why the power of the cross can never be overdone. All we can talk about is the power of the cross and it speaks of how God loves redemption. The whole Bible is a story of redemption, of reconciliation. Redeeming and reconciling people to Himself. And so, He may be referring to the saints returning with Him, as John is reminding us of here.

It won't be a secret when the Lord returns. Everyone will know. No one will miss it. You won't hear about it on the internet, or anywhere else, and discover that you missed it. Everyone will know. Not only will the Jews see this, but so will every people of the earth, and they will all mourn because they will fully know who He is, and the sacrifice He has known on the world's behalf.

Now the Jews, when they see Jesus and His nail-pierced hands, and His nail-pierced feet, will sorrow, but will turn to Jesus Christ. This is in fulfillment to the Old Testament passage of Zechariah 12:10, which says: ***And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so***

that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

So John didn't need special revelation to know these things. They were already written. He also didn't need a special revelation to know that Jesus would be coming the way he described it, because Jesus had already said this. Matthew 24:30 says: ***Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*** So at this point, we're still not there yet.

Jesus introduces Himself in verse 8: ***"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*** Now for those of you that have Bibles that have the red letters, this is where the red comes up, because it is believed that these were the words of Jesus Himself. In one fell swoop, Jesus confirmed everything that John had said up to that point. With those words. That's it. It was as if Jesus was saying, "Ok, enough, John. Johnny that was really good. Let me just confirm everything here." And it's awesome how He does that with you and I. As we speak His Word it's like He comes along and He'll confirm it in the heart of the people who have heard those words. "Yes, I am who he is speaking to you about according to the Word of God."

So Jesus introduces Himself, and this is before He commands John to write down the things that he is shown. Jesus makes a statement of sovereignty, of authority, and of glory. The statement was made earlier in reference to God the Father, remember that? But this attribute also applies to God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, as they are all eternal as one God. In the Greek alphabet *alpha* is the first letter, *omega* is the last letter. He has authority over everything in between and directs all of human history.

By the way, *Almighty* is used ten times in the New Testament, nine of which we find here in the book of Revelation. This is what it literally means: *The One who has His hand on everything.* And Jesus said, "That's who I am. I'm the Beginning and the End. I'm over all. And I have My hand on everything." This speaks of Jesus' sovereign control over everything; past, present, and future.

Now, that concludes this morning. Next week we'll be going into what Jesus has commanded the angels to actually show John, and is commanding John to write down. I pray that you are ministered to in a special way. Right now we are truly living in the end times. This is just precluding, this is just the introduction to the Book of Revelation. Now we'll be going into some things that we'll be hearing and reading about; things that are symbolic; things that we really need to wrap our heads around and understand fully. We will be blessed through it.

I pray that you caught the introduction of God. Why it is that He is even revealing these things to John. How John refers to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It's important for us to refer to Them in the same manner. It's important for us to understand, if nothing else, hold on to this...that you'll always think of that one point that drove you to respond to the love of God. And that's His expressed love toward you on the cross. If nothing else, that right there. And from there, you can move forward and deal with anything that life has for you, knowing that not only has God expressed and demonstrated to you, but He also is with you today, just as He was with you yesterday, and He will be with you tomorrow. I pray that is what really resonates in your heart *for the time is near.* Understand these things. Look all around. The time is near. He is coming soon.

Intro to Revelation

So, if you have anything on your heart this morning...maybe you don't fully understand salvation, reconciliation, redemption. What do you need to be saved from? Well, sin separates us from the Father, but He sent His Son to die in our place. So really reconciliation is receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior, as your Lord. He's the one that we ultimately offended, so we ask Him for forgiveness, and we ask Him to be our Lord and Savior. It's at that point, when it's a genuine repentance, then I tell you that there's going to be fruit. Everyone sees it around you. It's not hidden. It's all out in the open. If you have any questions, we would love to talk to you about that.

For those of you who are going through issues, you have been given the one thing that will help you and put things into proper perspective. I'm not lessening what you're going through, I'm just telling you that the answer is not in any one person. At least not here on earth. The one person that can help you out is Jesus Christ. Look to Him. He will help you through. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You for this morning. We thank You, Lord, for reminding us of how much You love us. We thank You for bringing to our attention that which I think we all pretty much knew, but Lord we really need to live lives that reflect this knowledge that the time is near. May we live lives with a sense of urgency, truly redeeming the time, making the best use of our time, talent, and treasure, all of which You have given to us to be stewards of. May we bring You glory, and may we give You all the praise, and all the honor; for all glory and all dominion belong to You. We thank you, Almighty God. We praise You, Yahweh, in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.