**Revelation 1**

1. **Background to the book of revelation**

1a) The book of Revelation was written around 90-95 AD (roughly 60 years after Jesus died). It was written by John, the youngest of Jesus’ 12 disciples. John referred to himself 6 times in his gospel as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”.

1b) After Jesus died, John spent roughly his first 12 years ministering around Jerusalem and Judea. However when the persecution of Christians under Herod Agrippa (Acts 8, 1) scattered the first throughout the Roman empire, John went to Ephesus where he became one of the leaders of the church there and of 6 other churches that were near bye (these churches are mentioned Rev 1-3). Tradition says that he lived for over 50 years after the martyrdom of his brother James, and that he took Mary, the mother of Jesus into his home where she lived until her death.

1c) During the persecution instigated by the Roman emperor Domitian, John was imprisoned for his faith on the island of Patmos which was a tiny island, 8 miles long and 4 miles wide. Important prisoners in the Roman world were sent here. A bit like sending you to Siberia. He was probably in his late 80’s or 90’s when he lived there, and he was made to work in the stone mines. He was freed and returned to Ephesus after the death of Domitian and died there a few years afterwards.

2b) The book of revelation is the only book in the Bible where God pronounces a blessing for those who read it. ***“Blessed is the one who a) reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who b) hear it and c) take to heart what is written in it” (Rev 1, 3).*** It is also the only book in the Bible where a curse is pronounced over those who try to hide its message (Rev. 22:18-19).

2c) It’s the most “**Biblical Book” –** In its 404 verses there are over 400 direct quotations from the OT. (Matthew has 96 quotations, Luke 58, etc.)

1. **“On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit”** (1, 10).

3a) The phrase “In the Spirit” is not referring to John’s mystical spiritual revelation. (That came later).

3b) The phrase “In the Spirit” describes an experience of being in the close presence of the Lord. Other biblical writers express this same experience using words like “Under the shadow of His wing” (Ps. 36, 7); “The hand of the Lord was upon me (Ezk 3, 22).

3c) Believers can learn to enter “in the Spirit” whenever they want. See the life of Elisha; “But now bring me a harpist.” While the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came on Elisha” (2 Kings 3, 15).

3d) Worship, Contemplative Prayer or stillness can be gateways into the Spirit.

3e) “In the Spirit” is the place of revelation, of encounter, of our spirit interacting with God’s spirit. “Be still and KNOW that I am God” – the word used of a man making love to his wife.

3f) The Pharisees and others had great head knowledge of the Scriptures and took part in many worship services, yet they did now “KNOW” the Lord. Jesus said it would be the same for many Christian believers. “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, **‘I never knew you.** Away from me, you evildoers!” (Matt. 7, 23-24).

1. **The Seven Stars and Seven Golden Lampstands**

4a) Whilst “In the Spirit”, John turned around and found himself in a vision. He saw 7 golden lampstands, and among them one like a son of man with 7 stars in his hand.

4b) Jesus himself gives the meaning of the vision so that there can be no doubt to its meaning. (v. 20) “The 7 lampstands are the 7 churches”.

4c) “The seven stars are the ***angels*** of the seven churches” (v20). The Greek word translated “angel” is “angelon” which also is translated in the NT as “messenger” (eg. Mark 11, 10; Luke 7, 27 etc). It probably refers to the human leaders of the churches rather than angels for 2 reasons. a) There is no other scripture that says that each church has an angel responsible for it; b) More importantly, God points out the failings and sin of each one. “To the messenger … I hold this against you …. you have forsaken your first love” In other letters the messenger is told “Repent”, giving a clear indication that he wasn’t addressing angels.

4d) Jesus holds the leaders of the churches in his hand! “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account” (Heb 13, 17).

4e) We can often get discouraged about our church as we look at its human failings. The churches listed in the book of Revelation all had their faults. But God sees the churches as golden lampstands that are shining their light into the spiritual realm.

1. **“The Revelation of Jesus Christ”** (Rev 1, 1)

5a) The main purpose of the book of Revelation is not to be a revelation of what is soon to happen in the world. Rather it is a revelation of Jesus, his heavenly character and what he is going to do to bring this world under His rule.

5b) This book reveals to us many things about Jesus that we can’t read in any other book of the Bible. (Descriptions unique to this book in the NT in red)

5c) **30 Descriptions of Jesus in Rev 1-3**

1. He who is and who was and who is to come (1, 4)
2. The faithful witness (1,5)
3. The firstborn from the dead (1,5)
4. The ruler over the Kings of the earth (1,5)
5. He who loved us (1, 5)
6. He washed us from our sins in His own blood (1,5)
7. He is coming with clouds (1, 7)
8. Every eye will see him, even they who pierced Him (1, 7)
9. All the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him (1,7)
10. The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (1,8)
11. The Almighty (1, 8)
12. He stands in the midst of the seven golden Lampstands (1, 13)
13. One like the Son of Man (1, 13)
14. Clothed with a heavenly garment down to his feet (1,13)
15. Girded about the chest with a golden band (1, 13)
16. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow (1, 14)
17. His eyes were a flame of fire (1, 14)
18. His feet were like fine brass (1, 15)
19. His voice as the sound of many waters (1, 15)
20. He holds seven stars in his hand–the”angels/messengers” of the churches. (1, 16)
21. Out of His mouth comes a sharp two edged sword (1, 16)
22. His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength (1, 16)
23. He who lives and was dead and behold is alive forevermore (1, 18)
24. He holds the keys of Hades and of Death (1, 18)
25. He will come like a thief (3, 3)
26. He is Holy and True (3, 7)
27. He holds the key of David (3, 7)
28. What He opens no-one can shut, what He shuts no-one can open (3, 7)
29. He is the ruler of God’s creation (3, 14)
30. He stands at the door and knocks (3, 20)

5d) And there are a lot more unique descriptions of Jesus throughout the later chapters of the book, for example the lamb that was slain (5, 6), the Lion of Judah (5,5), the root of David (5, 5), The rider on the white horse and the commander of heaven’s armies (19, 11), the one who will rule the nations with an iron sceptre (19, 15) the one who treads the winepress of God’s wrath (19, 15) the heavenly bridegroom (21, 9), the bright morning star (22, 16).

**6)We need a Change of Mindset about who Jesus is**

6a) Most of the disciples had never imagined Jesus in the way that he is revealed in the book of Revelation.

6b) They understood that he was a Miracle worker. Great teacher. The son of God. Risen from the dead. Died for our sins. Seated at the right hand of God. But only Peter, James and John had seen a glimpse of Jesus as he appears in the book of revelation – at the transfiguration.

6c) Most of the church today doesn’t have the full picture of who Jesus is. Most would not think of Jesus coming with the armies of heaven, fighting against God’s enemies, pouring out the wrath of God upon all those who have been disobedient.

**7)Every eye will see Him – and they will mourn …**

7a) V7 is a verse from one of songs that the early church used to sing. “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.” (1, 7).

7b) Every eye will see Him … and they will mourn. When Jesus appears in the sky over the earth, people will suddenly know with certainty that the Son of God, whom they spent their life ignoring and rejecting – is coming back to take control of the earth. **They will be terrified.**  “the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” (6, 15).

1. **“One like a Son of Man”**

8a) The passage goes on to give a vivid description of the heavenly Jesus (v13-16). “among the lampstands was **one like a son of man**, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”

8b) Jesus was so glorious that John fell hat his feet as though dead (v 17). This was the disciple that was the closest to him as a man. Jesus had to reassure him that he was the same person that John had walked with on the earth.

8c) Jesus referred to himself as “the Son of Man” 81 times, more than any other name or title he used about himself. It was a clear reference to several things;

8d) It emphasised His **Humanity**. Jesus wanted to emphasise that he was an ordinary human being, just like those around him.

8e) Yet he was **the Second Adam**. In Hebrew the “Son of Man” is **“Ben Adam”.** Paul would later take up this theme in 1 Cor. 15, 45, showing how the first Adam brought death, whereas the second Adam brought Life.

8f) The phrase “Son of Man” illustrated Jesus’ **Humility**; Jesus intentionally lowered his status from the “King of Heaven” to the “Son of Man.”

8g) The “Son of Man” was also a clear reference to his **Divinity**. It was a clear reference of the old testament passage Daniel 7. “Thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. ….

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was **one like a son of man**, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” (Daniel 7, 9-14).

8h) Jesus quoted the Daniel 7 passage about himself at his trial before Caiaphas, the high priest. “I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! (Matt. 26, 64-65). It was clear to the High Priest that when Jesus referred to himself as “The Son of Man” from Daniel 7, he was claiming that He was God and so committing blasphemy.

1. **Lessons to learn**

9a) We need a revelation of the fulness of who Jesus really is.

9b) We need to separate ourselves from the world and walk in purity and holiness. God’s wrath will soon be poured out on all that opposes His rule.

9c) We have the great privilege of partnering with Jesus in his end-time judgments