



VERSE BY VERSE MINISTRY
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TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Revelation

2020 - Lesson 1

Chapter 1:1-20

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- Welcome to a new VBVM study through the book of Revelation, perhaps the most challenging study in the Bible
 - As we begin tonight, I'm sure it won't surprise you to hear me say that we need to approach our study of this book very carefully
 - Certainly, every book of Scripture requires careful observation and systematic interpretation
 - But the study of Revelation requires even more rigor for reasons that should be obvious
 - The book of Revelation stirs up tremendous controversy, and we can find many conflicting interpretations of its meaning
 - Those differences of opinion may lead us to doubt whether we can find the truth in the midst of so much confusion
 - For that reason, many Christians avoid a study of this book at all
 - But those conflicting opinions and all the controversy is merely proof that the enemy is at work to keep us away from this truth
 - As we will see tonight, the Lord gave us the book of Revelation so that we would understand important things
 - Our God isn't a God of confusion, so we should approach this book with an expectation that we can and will understand it
 - But at the same time, we need to acknowledge the Lord expects us to approach this book with preparation and care
 - And to explain what I mean, let me give you a simple analogy
 - Imagine you selected a large novel from the shelves of a book store, opened it for the first time but turned to the last chapter
 - And you began reading the final chapter...how much of the action would you be able to follow?
 - Wouldn't you be thoroughly confused by what you read? And more importantly, wouldn't you *expect* to be confused?
 - Of course you would, which is why you would never dream of reading a book that way (assuming you wanted to understand it)
- That's how you need to understand the book of Revelation...it's the last chapter of a novel called "The Bible"
 - The Bible consists of sixty-six books which are like chapters in a story about Jesus
 - The story starts with Creation and the Fall
 - Then it moves through history, introducing characters and describing events that explain God's plan of redemption
 - And in the final chapter (i.e., Revelation), all the loose ends are wrapped up and the story comes to a climactic conclusion
 - Because the Bible is truly one story, we can't open the final book of the Bible expecting to understand it unless we have a good appreciation of what comes before
 - The book of Revelation relies heavily on imagery and symbols that are

- introduced in earlier books of the Bible
 - And the text is written assuming we are familiar with the Bible's themes, storylines, and characters in the earlier 65 books
 - So if we don't have that background, we will be lost
 - But I doubt most of us have done that background study yet, so how are we going to get through this study together? That's where I come in
 - My job is to bring the background from the other 65 books into this study so we can decode the meaning of Revelation
 - This Revelation study has been described as a study of the entire Bible masquerading as a study of Revelation
 - But that's the only way to understand this book
- The second way we need to approach the book is with an appreciation for the rules of interpretation
 - Because rules protect us from ourselves...from our biases, blind spots and mistakes
 - That's why I begin a study of Revelation differently than any other book study I conduct
 - I start with some ground rules for how to study apocalyptic literature like the kind represented in this book
 - So let's begin with what *not* to do when studying this book
 - We need to appreciate that not everything we want to know will necessarily be available in every reading
 - The Lord is revealing the truth of this book to us progressively based on His purposes in our life
 - There are concepts in Scripture that build upon earlier concepts
 - And until you understand the earlier concept, the Lord may withhold a later concept
 - So don't try to fill those gaps in knowledge by guessing or assuming or running with the first idea that comes to mind
 - That's not a legitimate way to interpret the Bible...the truth of what the Bible says is not a matter of guessing or assuming
 - We either know what it says or we don't, and it's ok to say we don't know
 - That's better than guessing, because when we guess we think we know the truth and we stop looking for an answer
 - In reality, we've got it wrong but we don't know it
 - But even worse, should the Lord choose to bring us the real answer someday, we don't receive it
 - We reject this new information because we assume it's wrong, since it didn't agree with the answer we already have
 - We can avoid this entire problem by simply following rules of interpretation without exception

- And if we can't work out a solution, we leave the question unanswered and wait for another day
 - There aren't many places where the answers will allude us but we will acknowledge them when they do
- So what are guidelines we want to follow in interpreting Revelation (and every study)?
 - First, we will follow a basic rule of historical, grammatical hermeneutics
 - It's called the Golden Rule, and it says that when the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, we seek no other sense
 - We don't go searching for mysterious meanings when the plain meaning makes sense unless the context tells us to do otherwise
 - In other words, we don't run wild in speculating on what the text *might* mean
 - We remain constrained by the text itself seeking to understand what the author *actually* meant
 - So we will interpret the text taking each word at its ordinary, usual meaning unless the text itself tells us to do otherwise
 - And just because sometimes that meaning will blow our minds doesn't mean we reject it for something we prefer
 - We take it at face value and trust that with time and further study the text will prove to us how it is true
 - This rule tends to eliminate most errors in interpretation all by itself
 - And when we fail to respect this rule we end up with an over-spiritualized and incorrect interpretation
 - Secondly, we must recognize that symbols are always interpreted by Scripture itself
 - We never need to guess at the meaning of important symbols because the answers are in the Bible somewhere
 - And finding the meaning in Scripture is a matter of following three simple steps
 - First, we look for the symbol's meaning in the immediate passage, and most often that's where the answer is found
 - If we don't find the answer in the passage, we go backwards in the book to find the answer
 - And if we don't find an interpretation in the same book, we go backwards in the canon of Scripture to find it
- So with that background, let's dive into the first chapter of the book and get our bearings

Rev. 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

Rev. 1:2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Rev. 1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

- The book of Revelation is actually a letter, and like any letter it has an author and an intended audience
 - But unlike any other letter in the Bible, this letter has a unique chain of custody
 - It begins in v.1 as the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the Greek word for revelation can also be translated “apocalypse”
 - It’s apocalyptic literature, a type of Scripture heavily dependent on symbols to explain future events
 - And no other letter in the New Testament is said to be the direct revelation of Jesus Christ
 - Furthermore, we hear this revelation passes through a remarkable chain of custody
 - It starts with God giving this Revelation to Him (meaning Jesus), which tell us that “God” refers to the Father
 - So the revelation we have in this book went from the Father to the Son
 - And the Son shows this revelation to His bond-servants
 - A bond-servant is the New Testament term for the followers of Jesus, and it literally means a slave
 - And between us and Jesus there were a couple more steps in this chain of custody...
- The revelation goes from the Father to Jesus to His angel
 - The word angel literally means “messenger”, and that’s the primary role angels play in Scripture
 - The word angel is singular here, so we don’t know which angel is in view here
 - But as we study through the book, we will see angels featuring prominently as messengers
 - Finally, the angel(s) will communicate the details to John we’re told
 - John is the Apostle John, as church history records it
 - Since the text does not mention which John, then the logical assumption we make is that the Lord expected us to know
 - And the John most familiar to the early Church would have been the Apostle John
 - Why is this chain of custody so elaborate and specific? To encourage our trust in the extraordinary contents of the letter
 - Just as it is today, the early Church was inundated with false teaching – especially with teaching regarding the return of Jesus
 - After Jesus departed the earth the Church expected His quick return, so much was being said about that return
 - Some were saying it had already happened or was about to happen, while

others were saying it would never happen

- So here we have the definitive explanation of His return and all that happens before that moment
 - And to ensure that the Church accepted this testimony as true, we're given the chain of custody to validate the contents
 - We can trust the author because it's the Apostle John, who was called into service as an Apostle by Jesus
 - And we know John received it accurately, because it came from Jesus' angel, who got it from Jesus, who got it from the Father
- Then notice in v.1 we're told that Jesus "shows" this revelation to His bond servants
 - By "show" the text means that the details of the events are played out before John's eyes rather than explained in words
 - Furthermore, John says in v.3 that this letter is his testimony to all he "saw"
 - This is a fascinating detail, because it means the events aren't explained... they are just displayed
 - And herein lies some of the reason that this book generates so much confusion
 - Jesus says "show" and John says "saw" because the details of this letter weren't transmitted in a narrative form, as writing
 - They were communicated to the Apostle visually, so John related what he saw by describing the visions
 - John must put into words what he sees, though obviously he doesn't understand what he's seeing at times
 - And he didn't try to interpret the meaning of the images for the most part
 - He just told us what he saw, and he leaves the interpretation of the meaning to the Holy Spirit
 - So as a result of this methodology, the description of events is clouded in mystery
 - Rather than explaining what will happen, the book leaves the reader to make sense of the meaning of what John saw
 - This also serves to obscure the meaning from those who aren't intended to understand, the unbeliever
- Finally, in v.3 John says that those who read and those who hear the words of this prophecy and heed the things written in it will be blessed by God
 - This is the only book of the Bible that contains a promise of specific blessing to a believer
 - It would seem the Lord knew we might be hesitant to study the book, and so He gives us added incentive to do so
 - To receive that blessing, John says we should read (or hear) the book and heed (or observe) it
 - To heed or observe the book means to take it to heart, accepting what is written as true and looking forward to what it foretells
 - But notice also what John does not say...he doesn't say we must understand

it in order to be blessed

- Our understanding of the book will vary, and yet the blessing is equally available to all
- We simply need to dive in, reading it and accepting it as true like all Scripture
- The blessing is unspecified, but when the God of Heaven says He will bless you, don't underestimate what that means
 - When God said He would bless Abraham, he exceeded all expectations
 - We should desire that blessing, because the whole point of it is to encourage our interest in studying this work
- And with that opening, we now dive into the introduction of the revelation itself

Rev. 1:4 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,

Rev. 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood —

Rev. 1:6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Rev. 1:7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

Rev. 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

- The human author of the letter, as we heard earlier, is the Apostle John, but he acts as a secretary of sorts taking dictation from Jesus and sending it to us
 - He says in v.4 that he is writing to the seven church that are in Asia
 - This reference to seven Asian churches makes more sense once we get into Chapters 2 & 3
 - But we can begin to understand it now simply by observing the use of the number “7”
 - Numbers feature prominently in the book of Revelation, so we need to understand how we arrive at the meaning of numbers in the Bible
 - We're not talking about a “bible code” or some other mystical manipulation of the text
 - We're simply talking about careful observation...paying attention to how the Lord uses a particular number
 - For example, the Lord uses the number seven frequently in the Bible
 - And as we observe the way He uses it, we discover that the Lord has assigned a meaning to the number
 - The number seven represents a complete, perfect result

- Just as the number “100%” represents the whole, so you can think of the number “7” in the Bible as God’s way of saying 100%
 - So John says this letter goes to “seven” churches, but we know there were far more than seven communities of believers in the world
 - And certainly the Lord wasn’t only interested in communicating to these seven communities
 - Jesus was speaking to the entire church throughout history
 - And so He chose seven churches to receive this letter to represent all of the church (100%)
 - Nevertheless, these particular seven Asian churches were important as well, and we will see why in the next two chapters
- Next, notice the greeting John gives from all three members of the Godhead beginning with the Father Who “is, was, and is to come”
 - This refers to the eternal existence of God Who has always been and will always be
 - No matter how terrible the events of this book, they are merely moments in time
 - The God we worship is eternal and if He is always the same, then we can know that terrible events must give way to great things
 - Notice He repeats that statement in v.8, which is to emphasize not to get swept away in worry or fear over what you read here
 - The Seven Spirits before the throne of God
 - We know there is only one Spirit of God and the number seven means 100%
 - But we will address why we’re saying 100% of the Spirit when we get to Chapter 4
 - And then we have Jesus, Who is called the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth
 - These three descriptions refer to the three periods of Jesus’ ministry as the Second Person of the Godhead
 - Prior to His advent, Jesus was the One Who witnessed to the existence of God through the Creation and the word of God
 - As Paul says in Colossians 1

Col. 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.

- At His appearing, Jesus became the firstborn of the dead, having been the first to die and resurrect into a body of glory never to die again
 - As Paul goes on to say in Colossians

Col. 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in

everything.

- And following His Second Coming to earth, Jesus will rule the earth as king in a day to come
 - And this book tells us how we move from the second to the third period of history
 - And in fact, it shows us the Church's part in that plan, as v.5-6 tells us
- While we await, we are a kingdom of priests, who serve the lost world
 - We are the ones who have been released from our sins by the blood of Jesus
 - His death paid for our sin, so that we might be free to serve Him because we no longer worry about earning God's approval
- Instead, we now serve Him as priests of a Kingdom to come
 - Priest are intercessors, bridging a divide between people and God
 - So we are priests who intercede for the lost, representing Christ to them so that they might come to believe in Him
- With that, John begins to relate his story to you...

Rev. 1:9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Rev. 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,

Rev. 1:11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Rev. 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

Rev. 1:13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

Rev. 1:14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

Rev. 1:15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

Rev. 1:16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

- The John of this letter was a John well known to the readers of the day in which this was written
 - We know that because John calls himself "your brother" and fellow partaker in the experiences of the early church
 - If this writer had been anyone other than John the Apostle, he certainly would have been more specific in his description

- Because to simply say “John, your brother” immediately suggests the Apostle John and no other
 - Furthermore, John says he was imprisoned on a Mediterranean island of Patmos because of his testimony of faith in Jesus
 - That detail agrees with early church tradition that records John as having been exiled to this island by the Romans
 - John ministered in Ephesus, which was just a short distance from Patmos
 - So all data points to this being the Apostle John, and early Church fathers reported that this letter was written very late in the first century
 - Probably as late as 95 AD, which means it was the last work of the Bible chronologically
 - We know from the Gospels that John was probably the youngest disciple, because of his place at the Last Supper Passover table
 - So that means John was probably in his early 80s when he wrote the book
 - Early church fathers report that John was eventually freed from Patmos and allowed to return to Ephesus after Domitian died
 - If so, then we imagine he delivered this letter to the church when he returned to the mainland
 - Which is how we have a copy now
- At that time, John says he was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, but in the Greek the phrase “Lord’s day” is written as an adjective, as in a lordy day
 - So when combining “in the Spirit” with a “lordy day” John seems to have been experiencing an especially spirit-filled day of prayer or otherwise
 - And it’s in that prayerful attitude of submission to the Spirit that he receives a special visitor
 - It starts with a voice behind Him, a voice like a trumpet
 - It must have startled him because imagine someone sneaking up behind you and blowing a trumpet at you!
 - Nevertheless, the loud trumpet conveyed speech that John understood, and the first words John heard were instructions to write
 - John hears he must write a book of what he “sees” and send it to the seven churches
 - Notice again, he records what he sees (not hears) and he sends it to “the” seven churches, not just to some churches
 - The seven churches named here are all in Asia Minor, present-day Turkey, but we will look at each in detail in Chapters 2 & 3
 - And now only at this point does John have a chance to turn around to see where this voice is coming from
 - It must have taken him a second or two to regain his senses after that trumpet blast and realize that this was really happening
 - And then as he turns, his mission to report what he “sees” begins with a remarkable vision of the One speaking

- The first thing John notices is seven lampstands
 - The lampstands aren't described in detail, but when the Bible mentions a lampstand absent any additional detail, we must assume a menorah
 - The seven branched lampstand that God instructed Israel to construct for the tabernacle is the only kind of lamp in the Bible
 - So if the Bible says lampstand and nothing more, we should assume what the Bible assumes
 - And there are seven of them, which is that perfect complete number again
 - So we know these objects are supposed to represent something to us, but what?
 - Remember our rule about interpreting symbols? Where do we look first? In the same context
 - So let's wait to see if we get our answer here before we go searching elsewhere
 - Standing in the middle of the lampstands is a figure, and it's clear He is the focus of the vision
 - The description begins with the phrase "one like a son of man"
 - That phrase clearly points us to Jesus, but in the context it simply means someone who looks human yet not exactly
 - And at first the figure looks very human...with a robe down to His feet and a girded sash around the waist
 - These details are reminiscent of a person of authority, particularly a priest or king
 - But the "not exactly" becomes clearer as we get to the description of the Person's features
- His hair is white as wool and like snow, while His eyes are like a flame of fire
 - Now there have been times when I could describe my wife as having eyes that looked like flames of fire, but this is different
 - And the description goes on to say feet that were like bronze in a furnace, red hot and glowing
 - And his voice was like the sound of a huge torrent of water rushing as in a canyon or over a waterfall
 - And the figure is holding seven stars in one hand and out of his mouth came a two-edged sword
 - And His face is shining as bright as the sun (imagine trying to look directly into the sun)
 - How do we interpret all these details? We follow our rules
 - First, we glance down the chapter and in v.20 we find that the objects in the vision are explained for us

Rev. 1:20 "As for 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 are the seven churches.

- Here's a prime example of how symbols will be explained in context
- The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the lampstands symbolize the seven churches
- In speaking about angels, the writer of Hebrews says this

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

- We know that seven means 100%, so the imagery here is easy to understand
- The stars represent the angels serving all those in the church under Jesus' control
- And a lampstand represents illumination and the light of the truth reaching into the darkness
 - Certainly that's the mission of the church generally, and each believer individually
 - We are to be the light of the world, and the light of the truth shines from within us
 - So Jesus walks among His whole church signifying His authority to oversee, minister and rule it from Heaven
- But what about the details of Jesus' appearance? There is no immediate explanation of these details so what do they mean?
 - As our rules require, we go back in the Bible looking for other examples to explain it to us
 - For example, we find this description in Daniel :

**Dan. 7:9 "I kept looking
Until thrones were set up,
And the Ancient of Days took His seat;
His vesture was like white snow
And the hair of His head like pure wool.
His throne was ablaze with flames,
Its wheels were a burning fire.**

- And again in Daniel:

Dan. 10:4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris,

Dan. 10:5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz.

Dan. 10:6 His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult

- So we see that John's description is consistent with those of Daniel
- Then we go to Isaiah and find several of these details brought together for us and explained

Is. 11:1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

Is. 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Is. 11:3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

Is. 11:4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

Is. 11:5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

- It's clear from the passage that this is a description of Jesus, the shoot that springs from the stem of Jesse
 - And the Spirit will rest on Jesus, but notice the Spirit is mentioned seven times
 - And we remember that the seven Spirits of God were mentioned earlier in this passage of Revelation 1
- And then we're given explanations for details John gave us here
 - Jesus judges or discerns what is right and true by what He sees not by what He hears
 - True discernment rests on what may be known firsthand, through investigation and knowledge of the truth
 - Righteous judgments can't rely merely on what is heard, because rumors and gossip are often if not always misleading
- And Jesus will strike the earth with a rod from His mouth
 - That is, by what comes from His mouth He slays the wicked
 - And His righteousness and faithfulness are pictured by a belt around His waist girding Him
- Finally, we go to the Psalms

Psa. 93:1 The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.

Psa. 93:2 Your throne is established from of old;
You are from everlasting.

**Psa. 93:3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice,
The floods lift up their pounding waves.**

**Psa. 93:4 More than the sounds of many waters,
Than the mighty breakers of the sea,
The LORD on high is mighty.**

- The sound of many waters represents the unrivaled might and power of God through His word
- God brought the universe into existence merely by the word of His power, so clearly it's the ultimate power in the Universe
- So putting all this together (plus summarizing other details) here's what Jesus' appearance says to John and to us
 - Jesus is glowing white symbolizing purity and holiness
 - His robe represents His role as priest and king and His sash represents faithfulness
 - His eyes of fire symbolize piercing discernment
 - His face shines like the sun, representing the light of truth and His pure holiness
 - His glowing bronze feet represent judgment, as in the way fire tests the quality of metals
 - And they also represent His bringing wrath against sin

**Is. 63:3 “I have trodden the wine trough alone,
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.
I also trod them in My anger
And trampled them in My wrath;
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,
And I stained all My raiment.**

- So we have Christ appearing to John in a form that is consistent with God's appearance elsewhere in the Bible
- And the details remind us of God's character traits, which is not surprising
- But what's most striking about Jesus' appearance, however, is the way John responds to it

**Rev. 1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,
Rev. 1:18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.**

- John says that as he saw these things, He fell at Jesus' feet like a dead man

- To fall like a dead man means to be completely immobilized, lifeless, we might say scared stiff
- This response is not uncharacteristic of other men who have been brought into the presence of God

Josh. 5:13 Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?”

Josh. 5:14 He said, “No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my lord to say to his servant?”

Ezek. 1:28 As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

Dan. 8:15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man...

Dan. 8:17 So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.”

- But we know John was with Jesus for three years, and they had a close relationship as John says in His Gospel
 - John hasn't seen Jesus for 60 years, so we would expect their reunion moment to be a joyful scene
 - Instead, John is terrified and that tells us that Jesus' appearance during the time of Gospels was a unique period of history
 - We've seen that before His incarnation Jesus appeared in the same way John describes here and it terrified humanity
 - And this vision is showing us that Jesus is now again to be seen in His glory
- So the time Jesus spent as an ordinary man on earth was a unique time in which He appeared in an incredibly humble way, as Paul says

Phil. 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Phil. 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Phil. 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming

obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Phil. 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

- It's easy to assume that the way Jesus appeared in His first coming is the way we will know Him when we see Him too
- But Revelation 1 was given to us to remind us that the eternal Creator exists in a glorified form and that's how we will know Him
- He is to be worshipped and known for Who He is...and even someone like John felt the awesome presence of God and fell to His face
- In this detail, we're learning that every chapter in the book of Revelation contains a prophetic aspect
 - Even though the scene described here took place in the past (in the first century), nevertheless it still stands as prophecy even now
 - The image of Jesus exists into eternity and is prophetic because we do not as yet see Him in this way
 - Yet this is Jesus' appearance now in Heaven and it will be His appearance as He returns to the Earth at His Second Coming
 - In fact, take a sneak peek at what Revelation says Jesus looks like at the very moment of His return to Earth

Rev. 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

Rev. 19:12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

Rev. 19:13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

Rev. 19:14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

Rev. 19:15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

- Here we find many of the same details again, confirming this is the Jesus we serve now and in the future
 - So take down your paintings of the blue eyed, blonde haired Jesus with the movie star good looks
 - Jesus is more than you can even imagine and it's an awesome, fearful vision
- In response to John's fear, Jesus recognizes that John doesn't recognize Jesus
 - Jesus says do not be afraid and then describes Himself
 - He says He is the first, the last, and the living One, the One Who was dead and is now alive forevermore

- In other words, Jesus describes Himself not by temporal qualities (like His earthly incarnate identity) but by His eternal characteristics
 - He was God before He was man and He remains God even after His death and resurrection
 - So that's His eternal identity even as we continue to celebrate His work on earth in dying for our sin
 - In fact, His earthly name Jesus (Yeshua) will not be His eternal name according to Revelation 19:12
- So we end tonight looking at the task John is given by Jesus

Rev. 1:19 “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”

- John is to write what he sees according to a three part outline Jesus gives John here
 - The outline moves from past tense to present tense to future tense
 - First, the things John had seen (meaning up to that moment)
 - Secondly, the things which are
 - Finally, the things that happen after the things that are
 - The first part of this outline seems easy enough, since Jesus speaks in the past tense even as He stands before John
 - And to that point, the only things that had already happened were the events of the scene in Chapter 1
 - So the things John saw must refer to the events of Jesus' appearing to John, which we have just studied
 - So congratulations, you have just completed one third of the book of Revelation!
 - So the moment Jesus spoke these words, everything that happened prior to that moment are the things John saw (past tense)
 - And therefore, the things that “are” must be the things that come next in the book
 - But wouldn't that mean that the things that “are” would be history for us now, 2,000 years later?
 - Wouldn't they be the things that “were” for us today?
 - Not necessarily, because we have another anchor to consider in this outline
 - The third point in Jesus' outline is the things that come after the things that are (the things after these things)
 - If we could determine where in John's letter those later things began, then we would be able to divide the book into thirds
- So we know Chapter 1 is the things John saw, and we know that Chapter 2 must begin the second part of the things that are
 - And if we scan forward in the book, we come to a telltale phrase at the start of

Chapter 4

Rev. 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold...

- The phrase “after these things” conspicuously starts the fourth chapter
- That strongly suggests that the letter’s final third begins at that point
- And if that were true, then that would mean the second third fits in between, in Chapters 2 & 3
- Reinforcing that conclusion is the uniqueness of those two chapters
 - Chapters 2 and 3 are seven letters written to the seven churches mentioned earlier
 - And after Chapter 3, the narrative changes dramatically to discussing marvelous things in heaven and dramatic events on earth
- That strong change in the story following Chapter 3 supports the conclusion that this three-part outline corresponds to:
 - Chapter 1 is the things John saw
 - Chapter 2 & 3 are the things that are
 - And Chapters 4-22 are the things that happen after the things that are
- We still have a mystery to solve as to how the letters to churches that existed 2,000 years ago can be the things that “are”
 - So next week we dive into part 2 and make sense of why those letters represent the things that “are”