

The Revelation of Jesus Christ
Rev. 1:1

Richard Tow 4-5-15

I take as my subject this morning: The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

That is the title of the last book in the Bible. Apokalupsis Ieesou Christou in the Greek. We get our English word Apocalypse from the Greek word Apokalupsis.¹ The Greek word is a combination of two words: apo = off or away from. Kalupto = to hide or cover. So the word means to uncover—to take away the veil—to reveal.² This book is a revelation (a revealing) of Jesus Christ. Scholars disagree as to whether this is a revelation *from* Christ (subjective genitive) or a revelation *of* or *about* Christ (objective genitive) or whether the author intended both meanings (plenary genitive).³ There is no way of being sure. However, we can see the same phrase in other New Testament passages where the meaning is clearly a revealing of Christ. I won't take you to those passages right now but the references are in your notes.⁴ What I want us to do first is to see:

I. Christ as He is revealed in the book of Revelation.

John writes in Revelation 1:10 *"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,'"*⁵ So Jesus identifies Himself with the phrase *the First and the Last*. As a good Jew, John would have immediately interpreted that in the light of Isa 48:12-13 where the Lord says, *"Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. 13 Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, They stand up together."* It would have been blasphemy for anyone but God to claim to be the first and the last. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet: omega is the last letter. He is the first (The gospel of John opens with these words about Him. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*) He is the first—everything issues through Him and He is the last (everything finalizes in Him—we will see that in this book). In verses 7 & 8 the same language is linked with being the Almighty. *"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."* The revelation of Jesus in this book will unveil the divine nature of Christ.

¹ Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1993) P. 54.

² (from Rev. 1:1, Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996 pp. 120-121. Wallace concludes "Since this is the *title* of his book—intended to describe the whole of the work—it may well be a plenary gen." That is the view I am taking in this message. The content of the book is supremely about Jesus (Rev. 19:10) and certainly from Him (Rev. 22:16). Therefore the plenary view is consistent with what is recorded in the book as a whole.

⁴ 1Cor. 1:7 translated "waiting for the revelation (apokalupsis) of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2Thes. 1:7 "and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed (apokalupsis) from heaven with His mighty angels." 1 Peter 1:7 "...may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation (apokalupsis) of Jesus Christ."

⁵ All Scripture quotes are from New King James Version unless indicated otherwise.

“*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 (John is seeing Jesus standing in the midst of His church—the seven lampstands represent the church (verse 20 tells us that). Eighty-three times in the gospels Jesus refers to Himself as *the Son of Man*.⁶ This is Jesus that John is hearing from and seeing. Now John describes Jesus as he sees Him in this revelation. “...*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.*” Each point of description tells us something about the risen Christ. Our subject is the revelation of Jesus Christ. So let’s linger over this description for a few minutes. (1) He is clothed with a garment down to His feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. The garment emphasizes the dignity of His office as Lord. Priests, Judges and Kings wore robes appropriate to their office. Jesus is about to judge His church. He will later judge the world in chapter 19 as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Here He is in regal authority. “*In the year King Uzziah died (Isaiah wrote) I saw the Lord-- sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.*” That’s a picture of majesty. That something similar to what John is seeing. In Isaiah’s vision, powerful angelic creatures called seraphim were declaring the glory of the king. Their proclamation was, “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!*” The Bible says the place shook at that sound and was filled with Shekinah glory. (2) John saw His hair was *white like wool, as white as snow*—in the Bible white hair represents wisdom and dignity. Prov. 16:31 “*The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness.*” The white hair is symbolic of both purity and wisdom. (3) His eyes were like a flame of fire—able to look into the depths of men’s hearts; able to see all and perceive all; able to make righteous judgement in all matters. In the next chapter the church comes under the scrutiny of those eyes and He will tell them what He sees. Later in chapter 19, the description is used again in reference to His second coming. (4) *His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace.* Brass; the instruments of judgement in the temple were made of brass: the altar where sacrifices for sin were laid on the fire was of brass. The tongs and other cooking instruments were of brass.⁷ Brass is symbolic of judgement. Jesus walks in righteous judgement. He has been tried in the fire and found faithful. He is about to walk in judgement toward His church in chapters 2-3 and toward the world in the final consummation. (5) *His voice as the sound of many waters.* Have you ever stood before a giant waterfall and listened to the depth of the roar? It is an awesome sound. I remember as a young boy standing at Boulder Dam and hearing that sound for the first time. It took my breath, hearing the rush of those waters. Ps 29:4 “*The voice of the LORD is powerful; The voice of the LORD is full of majesty.*” John is talking about the authority of His voice. (6) *He had in His right hand seven stars.* Verse 20 tells us these stars represent the *aggelos* or

⁶ W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) p. 145. I am indebted to Dr. Criswell for other general thoughts concerning John’s description of Jesus in Rev. 1 as well.

⁷ Exodus 27:1-6.

messengers of the seven churches. That could refer to angels or it could refer to the pastors⁸ of those churches. Either way Jesus holds them in His hand and controls their destiny. (7) *out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*—indicating the power of His word. We will later see that with that two-edged sword He destroys His enemies at the end of this age. (8) *“and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.”* Emanating from Him is the light of glory. It is a glory that knocked Saul of Tarsus off his horse and caused him to say, *“Lord, who are you?” “What do you want me to do?”*⁹ It is the glory the apostles saw on the Mt. of Transfiguration. There Matt 17:2 says *“His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.”* All of that is an unveiling of the majesty and glory of Jesus as the second person of the Trinity.

Look at John’s reaction in Rev. 1:17 *“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.”* If we haven’t yet sensed the awesome splendor of Jesus’ presence in this passage, we should at this point. This is John, the Apostle. In the gospels he laid his head on the bosom of Jesus. They were that close. He saw Him glorified at the Mt. of Transfiguration. He had seen Jesus after His resurrection and had spoken with him before his ascension. Yet this revelation of Jesus drops him to the ground like a dead man. I have heard people talk about going to heaven and visiting with God, shaking His hand, bringing the dog along, visiting about the last ball game. I personally don’t believe a word of it. My limited experience is more like this. When Job got in the presence of the Almighty, he shut his mouth. Daniel lost all his strength. And Isaiah said, *“Woe is me, I’m undone.”*¹⁰ Our Heavenly Father invites us to draw near to Him. He grants access to His throne of grace. We enjoy intimacy with Him as His dear children. But He is God and I am not. I will never cease to be awed with who He is. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. There is a kind of familiarity with God that fails to give Him the honor due His name.¹¹ There is a kind of presumptive familiarity with God that takes too much for granted. John encounters the divine presence in Christ and even this Beloved apostle is struck down by the encounter.

Yet here is the kindness and tenderness of our majestic Lord Jesus (verse 17 again). *“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me,* (do you sense the tenderness in the gesture? This is the Eternal God extending His hand to feeble man. Has not this same Jesus laid His right hand on you and said, Don’t be afraid, I’m the First and Last, I am for you not against you). *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.”* Today is a special celebration of our Lord’s resurrection. Every week we come together on Sunday as a celebration that He is *alive forevermore*. But today we especially celebrate that fact. Our eternal destiny depends on it. Had He only come as a babe in a manger; had he only lived an exemplary life; had he only spoken words like no one ever spoke before; had he only laid down His life on a cross, yet never come up from the grave—you and I would be without hope. Vanity of vanities, life would be just a meaningless vapor. But up from the grave He arose, as the mighty victor over His foes. He lives, and because He lives so will I live forever, so will my loved ones. Now He holds the keys to Hades and of Death. It’s all under His domain and

⁸ NT:32 aggelos (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

⁹ Acts 9:1-7.

¹⁰ Job 40:3-5; Daniel 10:7-12; Isaiah 6:5.

¹¹ Psalm 99:1-3; Prov. 9:10; Heb. 12:28-19; Rev. 15:2-4.

control. "Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:54-57).

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Mohammad cannot say that. Buddha cannot say that. But Jesus can!

Look again at the Lamb of Glory in Rev. 5:11 being worshipped and adored by all of heaven. *11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"*

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ (all the multitudes of heaven bowing in worship to Him). We do not have a complete picture of who Jesus is without this revelation! That is the revelation of Jesus we see in this book. Do you see the:

II. Contrast between what we see here of Jesus and what we see in the gospels?

There we see a babe born in a manger, ignored by the world. He is viciously pursued by Herod and has to be hidden away in Egypt. Later he is working as a carpenter's helper with Joseph. In the gospels we see a man walking down dusty roads to Jerusalem and washing the feet of other men. There we see a kind man taking up little children on his lap and teaching people how to enter the kingdom of God. Yes, we see glimpses of His glory. We see Him touching the leper; we see Him opening blind eyes and healing the woman with the issue of blood. We see Him going about under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and delivering oppressed people.¹² But His deity is veiled. He operates in a limited realm of ministry—training a dozen disciples and ministering primarily to the lost sheep of Israel.¹³ At first glance, one might ask "*Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?*" (John 6:42).

Pilot looks at Him at the trial and says, "*Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?*" (John 19:10) Pilot did not see the same manifestation of Christ that John sees in our text! Pilot sees a poor Israelite from Nazareth. Yes, we later see Jesus resurrected from the dead. But even then He only shows Himself to a limited number of people: 500 at one time, certainly enough to verify the fact of His resurrection; but that's not many compared all the people living on earth at the time. His close circle see glimpses of His glory; but even they do not see the majesty John is seeing here in the book of Revelation. The last time the world saw Jesus He was hanging on a cross in shame—suffering a painful, criminal's death.

The divine Son of God had taken on Himself the form of a man. He had humbled Himself to be a servant and even suffered the humiliating death of the cross. In the gospels we see God the Son laying aside His divine rights and power that He might offer Himself as a sacrifice for

¹² Acts 10:38. He was operating as a man full of the Holy Spirit. He was not operating out of His divinity (Phil. 2:6-7; John 5:19).

¹³ Matthew 15:24.

sin. That was His first coming. His purpose in that first coming was to do away with sin by sacrificing His own life for us.¹⁴

But in Revelation we see Him in His second coming. We see Him coming for a different purpose. In His second coming He comes to put down all rebellion and to rule the earth in righteousness. We have seen one side of Philippians 2 fulfilled in the gospels; now we see the other side of Philippians 2. *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* “ The word “therefore” in that passage marks a pivotal change in how He is operating.

As the events in the book of Revelation unfold, so also does the manifestation of Jesus. Babylon has fallen, the Bride has joined Him in heaven¹⁵, and the end of the age is at hand. The armies of the earth have gathered against Jerusalem; but in doing that, they have gathered against their Messiah. These vast armies of millions are going to bring this troublesome area (Israel) into submission. And so there they are at Armageddon. Iran has her nukes and is confident. America has her coalition and will get things under control. Russia has descended from the north. And Asia has sent an army of 200 million men.¹⁶

Now we get further revelation of Jesus. Rev 19:11-16

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (Do you hear His purpose in that statement?) 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself (There are things about God we will never know) . 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. (That’s a quote from Psalm 2 that ends with this warning: “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him). He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

There is a consistency between who Jesus is in the gospels and who He is in the book of Revelation. In His person He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.¹⁷ We saw that in the way He touched John in the first chapter. But in the gospels we see His majesty veiled. Here we see the veil taken away. Here we see Him in full revelation as the resurrected King. Then He was laying down His life for our salvation. Here He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Here the Lamb is now the Lion as well. In His first coming we get a revelation of the humility of God. We get a revelation of the love of God. We see His great, abundant mercy. In His second coming we get a revelation of the authority of God. We see His wrath. We see Him execute judgement so that justice can reign in the earth. My demeanor will look very different if I am gently reaching into the crib of a newborn to carry him to his mother verses defending a toddler from an attack by two pit bulldogs. I might not

¹⁴ Heb. 9:26-28.

¹⁵ Rev. 19:7, 14; 1 Thes. 4:13-18.

¹⁶ Rev. 16:12-16; 9:13-16.

¹⁷ Heb. 13:8.

appear quite so gentle in the second scenario. My purpose is different. I'm the same person. In gentle love I am comforting that newborn and taking him to his mother. In the other case I am operating in love by protecting the toddler from the destructive force of the bulldogs. Same person but the purpose requires different actions.

You cannot read the book of Revelation and conclude that Jesus was just a good man, or just another one of the prophets. You cannot see Him as John sees Him and think that gentle Jesus could never execute the righteous judgements of the Almighty. His very appearance in Revelation 19 melts the flesh off His enemies' bones.

Look with me at Zech. 14

Verse 1 *"Behold, the day of the LORD is coming...."* We don't know the month, year, or time. But it is coming!

Verse 2 *"For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem...."*

Verse 3 *"Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. 4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two...."*

Verse 5 *Thus the LORD my God will come, And all the saints with You. 6 It shall come to pass in that day That there will be no light; The lights will diminish. 7 It shall be one day Which is known to the LORD -- Neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen That it will be light.*

Verse 12 *And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths."*

When people want to play rough with Jesus, He knows how to play rough! If the only revelation you have of Jesus is His time of humiliation in the gospels, you don't have a full picture of who He is. In that final battle, we will be with Him; but He is the only one with a weapon. He takes care of all the enemies all by Himself. The manifest glory of His presence slays the adversaries by the millions. The sharp sword of His word is enough to get the job done.

Jude writes (14) *"Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

Yes, there is tenderness and kindness that Jesus shows toward any who will receive it. But there is also this side of Him as well. He knows how to deal with the obstinate and defiant as well. So Paul warns in Rom 11:22 *"Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God...."* The theologian, who concludes that God could never send anyone to hell and won't even send the Devil there, has obviously never read the book Revelation with any understanding at all. God does not have to conform to our concept of what He can and cannot do. Today the mercy of God flows like a river. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.¹⁸ This is the day of opportunity—let all who are thirsty come and drink of the grace and goodness of the Lord. But there will be a day when that opportunity has passed.

¹⁸ John 3:16; Acts 16:31.

Today there are all kinds of injustices going on in the earth. Nations rise up against nations and war brings all kinds of miseries to people. Aggressive people abuse weaker people and seem to get away with it. Radical Muslims slay 150 innocent Christians in Kenya. People ask why doesn't God fix all that. He is going to do just that. 2 Peter 3:9 "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" But the day of the Lord will come...."

The purpose of His second coming is to bring justice, righteousness, and peace to the earth. The Day of the Lord will come!

If wickedness is never put down, then justice and peace cannot fill the earth. It would be wonderful if God could just say, "Now everybody, be nice," and then everybody would do that. There would be no need of judgement. Everything would just fall into place. But we all know that is not going to happen; and the Bible tells us it won't happen. So you either have wickedness, oppression, and injustice continuing indefinitely or you have Jesus in Rev. 19 putting an end to it.

The important thing is to be on the right side of all this. To oppose God ultimately ends in destruction. But God is not willing that any perish. Now is the day of salvation; now is the accepted time. God offers to anyone who will receive it, His love, His mercy, His forgiveness, the free gift of eternal life—purchased on the cross by this same Jesus at Calvary. All you have to do is humble yourself and ask for His mercy. He will freely give you mercy. One person asked Paul in Acts 16:29 "*What must I do to be saved?*" The answer is amazingly simple: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved....*" Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; entrust your eternal destiny into His hands; submit your life to Him and receive His forgiveness. You can do that right here, right now, today. The one thing nobody can do for you is to make that decision. That is your responsibility and no one can do it for you; but you can do it and I'm inviting you to choose to follow Jesus today. (Invitation)