

Text: Rev. 1:1-3

Title: "Recipients of Revelation"

Time: 1/8/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro - Kimberlite rock is formed from cooled lava rock, is very common, and is not very valuable, but it is also where diamonds are found. Some of the hymns in our hymn book are a bit like diamonds in that way. They are gems that have arisen out of some places where we do not find much else of value theologically. Our hymn, "When We See Christ," is one of those hymns. It was written by a Pentecostal sister in the Lord with whom we would have serious disagreement, but it ministers to our hearts with the truth known to all believers that seeing Christ will make serving Christ worthwhile someday. We need these precious truths in a very practical way. Turn in your *Living Hymns* hymnal to #216 and take a look at the text again with me.

We are beginning our study of the book of Revelation this morning. There is a connection between seeing Christ and the revelation of Christ, isn't there? This book was given the title, "The Revelation of John," by the early church, and so in your Bible you probably have a title for the book as "The Revelation to John."

You will notice, however, that the book itself begins by telling us what its title is, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." That word *revelation* had two meanings in the New Testament. It can refer to that work of God by which He makes Himself known to man. Where God reveals Himself, it is His work of revelation (Rom. 16:25-27; note that the Scriptural use of the term *revelation* refers normally to special revelation). The second meaning of the word is a future event predicted throughout Scripture called the *Parousia* or

the *Second Coming of Christ* (1 Pet. 1:6-9). That passage from Peter sounds a lot like the theme of the hymn we read this morning – “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus”; “So bravely run the race, ‘til we see Christ.”

What is wonderful about realizing that this last book of the Bible is the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” is that it does for us now through God’s work of special revelation what the Revelation of Christ will do for us at His second coming – it helps us see Christ now like we will see Christ then.

This means that, with the help of this amazing book, it can be worth it all now, that now we can bravely run the race, that now life’s trials can seem so small, and that now our sorrows can be erased, all because now we have a book that is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. “When We See Christ” is “When we read, hear, and observe the Revelation of Jesus Christ.” So we begin the study of a very powerful book this morning.

As we do so, we start with a passage that tells us about three recipients of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. We will take them one at a time as we introduce ourselves to this wonderful capstone of inspired Scripture.

I. Jesus Christ received Revelation as a gift from the Father (v. 1a).

Ill: One author (Joseph Seiss) was very helpful to me in understanding the sense in which it is true that God the Father gave to Jesus Christ the Revelation of Jesus Christ: “The Apocalypse [Revelation] of Christ is the future re-appearance of Christ, clothed with the honours and crowned with the triumphs which are to characterize that forthcoming, and not the mere knowledge or description of these things.

And it is that Apocalypse [Revelation], with all its glorious concomitants and results, that God has, in covenant, given to Christ; --given to him as the crowning reward of his mediatorial work, as the Scriptures everywhere teach" (p. 19).

Appl: So the sense in which Revelation was given to Jesus Christ by the Father is simply this – God the Father has guaranteed to Jesus Christ that what we read about here is how everything ends. God the Father says to Christ His Son, "I give You Your Second Coming because You faithfully obeyed in Your First Coming." And so the text tells us that what we have in this glorious book are the *things that must happen*, and they must happen because this is the future that God the Father has given to His own Son. We read this truth throughout Scripture:

Ps. 2:6-9, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'"

Phil. 2:9-11, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

We just completed a season in which we celebrated the first coming of the Savior. That is a wonderful holiday. But we need to understand that there is another Coming to celebrate, one for which we have no holiday. Certainly, in the

celebration of the Lord's Table we remember not only that He came once to die, we also proclaim that death until He comes. So we celebrate the past coming and the future one in that ordinance.

Do we believe in this future? Are we ready for this future? Are we preparing for this future? Have our sins been atoned for by the One who is coming to rule the world and judge all mankind? Are we living with that day in view?

If so, life trials will seem so small now. We will bravely run the race now, and we will see that our labor is not in vain in the Lord now. If not, we need to come to Christ for salvation and forgiveness in faith before it is too late, because Jesus Christ has received Revelation as a gift from the Father. These are the things that must happen shortly.

II. John received Revelation as a message from heaven (vv. 1b-2).

III: In *The Christmas Carol*, Scrooge sees many visions with the help of Christmas ghosts. I believe that what is imagined there is probably very close to the way John received Revelation as a message from heaven in visions with the help of an angel. As we come to this book, however, what man can only imagine actually happened through the power of God. We have a text before us that was received by the apostle John as a true message from heaven itself. And so we learn three things very quickly about the words and sentences on these pages that we are about to study.

1. The Book of Revelation is God's word – it carries authority that makes both its human (v. 1b) and its angelic (Rev. 22:9) recipients bond-slaves. Do you see yourself in possession of the Word of God this morning? Do you see how that

makes you God's bond-slave, how you and I are duty bound to let it bind us and rule us as our master?

2. The Book of Revelation is the testimony of Jesus Christ – its authority stands or falls with His truthfulness. In a court of law, testimony is heard to determine who is telling the truth and who is not. How do we know that we can trust what the Book of Revelation says? It will ask us to orient our entire lives toward the future it predicts, so how do we know that it is trustworthy enough to require that of us?

The answer it gives is that it is the testimony of Jesus Christ. He testifies of its truth, and He is the One who lived a sinless life, died for our sins according to the Scriptures, arose from the dead according to the Scriptures, and promised that His Spirit would lead His apostles into all the truth. Before you can deny the Book of Revelation, you have to deny the truthfulness of the Christ of Revelation whose testimony it is. It is impossible to prove Jesus Christ a liar, for He is the way, the truth, and the life.

3. The Book of Revelation is the message of bond-slaves. This Book comes to you and I, this morning, by way of an angel's obedient willingness to share it, and an apostle's obedient willingness to write it down. As their fellow-bond-slaves, we too need to be willing to share it. We need to let people know that everything ends with the Revelation of Jesus Christ and they need to be ready. And that brings us to the third recipient of the Book we find in this passage.

III. We must receive Revelation as the key to our blessing (v. 3).

III: We know what blessings are, don't we? We share them often in our assembly times. We are a blessed people of God. It was a blessing to hear of my dad's negative cancer

test results this past week. He was being tested for what Nonah had last year. Nonah's tests were positive, but even in her life and then home-going, there were real blessings.

So it is no small thing when we read in the Bible – “Blessed is the man who does this.” We should want to be that person. The opposite of *blessed* in Scripture is *woe*. We have either one or the other from the Lord. So if we receive Revelation correctly we will receive its blessing. This means we must receive it in at least three ways.

1. We must receive the blessing of Revelation as a local church. The phrases *he who reads* and *they who hear* indicate that John had a setting in mind when he spoke of reading and hearing this Book. He was thinking of the assembly of the local church. In those days, not everyone had their own scroll of Revelation. They had to assemble, and one would read and the rest would hear. He who reads is blessed and they who hear are blessed, and they are blessed in part because they see their need for one another in the local church context. Do you and I see our need for that context of blessing?

2. We must receive the blessing of Revelation as doers of the word we hear. We must not only hear what is written in this book, we must keep what is written. The word *keep* is translated *observe* in the Great Commission (“Teaching them *to observe* all things whatsoever I have commanded you”). Our great work is to make followers of Jesus Christ, disciples, of all the nations, by baptizing them and teaching them to observe Christ's commands. But first we must obey those commands. We need the blessing that comes from hearing and obeying the Scripture if we are to help others find that blessing.

3. It calls us to receive that blessing with urgency. The paragraph ends with a promise that the Revelation of Jesus Christ is coming soon. That was written nearly two thousand years ago, and Christ has not yet come back. But as we read the New Testament we read about people who thought it would happen in their lifetime (Rom. 13:11-14, 1 Cor. 7:29-31, Phil. 4:5, the we of 1 Thess. 4:17, Jam. 5:8, 1 Pet. 4:7). This is called the imminence of Christ's coming, the idea that what we read about in Revelation could begin today, and we have to be ready.

Conclusion: Are you ready? Will the future summed up in the phrase, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," be a blessing or a curse to you? It will be a blessing only to those who are ready for it.

The best verse in the Book of Revelation is the verse that tells us how to be ready. It says that we can look forward to the Revelation of Jesus Christ as a blessing completely without cost. It is 22:17, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."

We get ready by coming to Christ for free salvation in response to the invitation of the Spirit and the bride, Christ's church. You are in the right place to hear that invitation to come to Christ this morning. Do you wish to drink the water of eternal life? Do you want to enjoy the future that the bride is going to enjoy? If so, understand that in His first coming, Jesus Christ died for your sins. Now you can come and drink of the water of life without cost. It's the only way to be a ready recipient of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*