



ST. MATTHEWS  
*Experience God's Family*

Sermon Title: **Revelation 1**  
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## For most people Revelation is a very strange book!

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It's full of visions, imagery and symbols

It talks of battles and dragons and beasts.

Someone said that probably 98% of Christians would hardly ever or never open Revelation because it is intimidating or confusing. And the other 2% of Christians seem to spend most of their time reading it. And it might be this 2% that give the book such a bad name that the 98% are even less interested in looking at it.

**It is very important to remember that Revelation is apocalyptic literature – picture language.**

It is not a cryptic book that needs to be decoded. It is a series of visions – pictures that convey a message, that show us something about our world.

One commentator says: *“Revelation is a picture book, not a puzzle book. Don't become preoccupied with isolated details. Rather become engrossed in the overall story. Praise the Lord. Cheer for the saints. Detest the beast. Long for the final victory.”*

Revelation is written to encourage everyone who reads it to be more serious about following Jesus and more committed to the Gospel.

It might help you to understand that there are different ways that people approach the book of Revelation:

**Preterist View:** Most or all of Revelation was fulfilled in the first century of the church, commonly limited to events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

**Futurist View:** Most of the fulfilment of Revelation is still in the future. This is a very popular view and often highly literalistic.

**Historicist View:** Revelation is a panorama of the great events spread throughout history relative to God's people.

**Idealist (Spiritual) View:** The events of Revelation are not tied to specific historical events. The imagery of the book symbolically presents the ongoing struggle throughout the ages of God against Satan and good against evil.

I wonder if there are not elements of most of these views in Revelation? Let's see as we go along?

But the main thing is to remember that Revelation is Apocalyptic Literature – picture language.

**Step back and get the big picture!**

So for example in the chapter there are golden lamp stands, Jesus with hair like white wool, blazing eyes, bronze feet, sword coming from his mouth, gold sash, etc.

Don't try to identify every element. If you need to know what things represent the passage will tell you (like Daniel) – lamp stands and stars? See 1:19 – 20.

Revelation is written by John and is specifically addressed to seven churches 1: 4 – 5, 10. It is misleading to see only chapters 2 – 3 as the letters to the seven churches. The whole book is the letter to the seven churches.

John is writing from Patmos and he is there because he has been bearing witness to Jesus 1: 9 (persecution). NB: phrase “word of God and the testimony of Jesus” is important in Revelation.

## And so John begins to write... let's look at Revelation 1.

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1 is dominated by this vision of Jesus in all his splendour. **Awesome Jesus!** And we should be in awe.

In “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe” Susan is about to meet Aslan and has just found out he is a lion not a man:

“Ooh!” said Susan, “I'd thought he was a man. Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.”

“That you will, dearie, and no mistake,” said Mrs Beaver; “If there is anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most, or else just silly.”

“Then he isn't safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr Beaver; “Don't you hear what Mrs Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he is good. He's the King, I tell you.”

Look at the picture of Jesus given in 1: 13 – 18: Eyes blazing like fire, sword coming from his mouth, keys of death and Hades in His hand – of course He is not safe – but He is good – He's the King.

He is also the Lord of the past present and future (1: 8).

And in 1: 5 John gives three titles to describe Jesus: faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

### **Jesus is our example – The Faithful Witness**

There was always pressure in the empire to worship the emperor and not remain a faithful witness to Jesus as the only Lord and Saviour. (1: 1 – 3 Angel = messenger from the seven churches talking about the persecution [1: 2 – same as 1: 9] But here in the vision that would be written down and sent to the seven churches, we see Jesus who has been faithful to His Father – even to death on a cross. Bearing witness to Jesus in the 1st century may cost your life... but Jesus is the faithful example in the face of persecution also showing how suffering for God always ends in glory!

### **Jesus is our hope – The Firstborn from the Dead**

Our hope is that Jesus died and rose again (also 1: 18) and He will also come to take his people to be with Him forever. Jesus is coming again (1: 7)

### **Jesus is our confidence – The Ruler of the kings of the Earth**

This is exactly what the readers of this letter needed to hear as the authorities persecuted them for worshiping an alternative deity (much like Daniel). Jesus is the one who walks among His churches. They are His and He is their King and even controlling the kings who think they are in control (why church always grows under persecution).

Here is Jesus – our example and our hope – but above all our confidence.

Revelation is not a distant and remote book. The problems they face are ours.

What John shows his readers is what we need to see: a clear picture of Jesus – who He is, what He came to do and the fact that He is King. He is our example, He is our hope and He is our confidence.

## So as we think about God's call through His Word to us to grow this year..

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And as we think about what He wants us to do to grow...

It is easy to be overwhelmed with all sorts of negative emotions...

But God through John tells us of the amazing vision he saw of the awesome Jesus! And encourages us to be overwhelmed with that instead!

So as we think about living and speaking as witnesses to the amazing Gospel of Jesus Christ to family and friends or inviting them to church to hear about this awesome Jesus... and we want to give up before we begin... let's look to Jesus our example who was the faithful Witness and pray that the Holy Spirit will overwhelm us with reckless boldness and let the whole world hear!

But if we still feel a bit overwhelmed with the task of witnessing and feel the burden of responsibility and remember our frailty... then let's also remember that Jesus is the Firstborn from among the dead... He is our hope and also the hope of the world. It is His death and resurrection that provides a certain salvation which the powerful Holy Spirit uses to save people – it is God who saves... and with that hope we pray for our witnessing efforts to be powerfully multiplied by the God who saves. He will do it.

And let's pray to be overwhelmed with confidence as we witness, not in our selves or our witnessing, but because the One who sends us is the one who has all authority to do so because He is the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

And even if the rulers of this world, or even the people of the world, don't like what we are doing... we remember Jesus is the awesome Jesus who controls all things for His glory, our good and the success of the gospel which is the content of our witnessing.

With the awesome Jesus on our side we can only grow!