

Revelation 1:3-8:

Once upon a time Meagan and I lived in the Great Plains. We didn't live in the real Great Plains; no, we lived in the Great Plains of Western, OH. Now, if you have been to both places, they certainly aren't the same, but compared to here they are the Great Plains. One thing I love about this area is if you drive out of town there are rolling hills. But one thing I love about Western, Ohio is when you drive out of town you can see forever.

Well, we lived in a farmhouse in the country. We were just outside Pleasant Hill.

Do any of you know where Pleasant Hill is? Don't be surprised, I would bargain only about 1000 people in Ohio know where Pleasant Hill is. Well, we were west of Troy, Ohio and 40 minutes or so northwest of Dayton, Ohio. There is a large church in the country that we were a part of. One summer evening, we were driving back home from the country church, down the country road, in the Great Plains of Western, OH. On this particular night a storm was brewing. So, as we drove home from the country church, on the country road, in the Great Plains of Western, Ohio we could see forever, and what we saw was, not a Tornado, not a Hurricane, not an earthquake, not Santa's sleigh, but we saw lightning and it was amazing. In that environment it was as if we were looking out at a lightning storm over the ocean.

How do you describe the indescribable?

The answer is that we do the best we can. Have you ever heard a child tell a story? Babysit sometime, I'll give you the chance. We will be sitting around the dinner table and Mercedes will say, "You know what Paul did at school today? He, ha, ha, He he, he, he walked this way and it was so funny, ha, ha, he he, and then milk came out of his nose!!!!" She will tell the story about something and she uses the vocabulary she knows and she'll laugh in between her words, but sometimes we are wondering what really happened. It is cute and funny all the same.

In Revelation, John does the best he can to describe the indescribable. **Interesting thing is that the language is formed or John seems to be bending the language for visionary experience. Verse 4:** "grace to you and peace from the One who is, the One who was and the One who is to come." There is kindergarten grammatical error in the sentence.¹ Later we see that John knows how to use his prepositions, so why would he make a kindergarten error grammatically. In chapter 16 it changes: "the One who Is and Who Was..." but the coming disappears. One of my Asbury professors, Dr. Mulholland, thinks that John is alerting his readers to watch this phrase. To the Hellenistic world writing meant a lot and John would not mess up this phrase if not intentional. John is describing the indescribable.

¹ Dr. Mulholland in his Greek Exegesis lectures from Asbury Theological seminary specifies the error is in the preposition if I heard right, but I am thinking the error is in the whole sentence.

Be encouraged, Jesus is coming again and He will make all things right.
We'll read the passage as we talk about it.

- I. Let talk more about this type of literature (a lot of this comes from Dr. Mulholland's lecture on Revelation in his Asbury Theological Seminary class):
 - a. Apocalypticism emerges in Judaism when the Jewish people had the intertestamental period. It had to do with their domination from Babylon, Persia, Greece and then Rome.
 - b. There can be a little dualism: spiritual reality and physical reality. Not as much dualism in Jewish writings.
 - c. Many apocalyptic writings are visionary experience:
 - d. 2 types:
 1. The writer has an encounter with a heavenly being and then wrote it down.
 2. Another a person sees something and is told to write it down.
 - e. The question is if the person does have a visionary experience. We know that the prophets in the O.T. had a visionary experience.
 - f. We have to think of whether or not something really happened or is the person just using a visionary experience as a style of writing. Think of Ezekiel as he was picked up and carries away in Babylon. Did it happen? Yes, I believe it did.
 - g. One thing that sways us was the enlightenment. Human reason became the arbitral of reality and visionary experience was pushed off the fringes. But we must realize there is more out there.
 - h. The primary influence of Zoroastrianism would lead towards dualism. The Jews would push this but not cross it. We **do not** in Judaism have a pure spiritual world and another material world that do not touch.
 - i. Prophecy: prophets were speaking primarily to their own time, though there are future dimension, but primarily the prophet is speaking to God's people right now and drawing them back to Israel's covenant God. The prophets also see the Jewish expectation of the restoration of the Kingdom. The prophetic perspective sees God engaged with the covenant people and the other nations.
 - j. Apocalyptic: because of its' long period (intertestamental) had a long period of foreign domination: 600 BC-New Testament (even the Hasmonaeon dynasty, not long and still not the same as their own rule) they had to see God still working between this age and the age to come. Prophetic thinking was that this age would morph into the age to come. Prophetic Judaism really seems to be the primary source for Jewish apocalyptic. It is the religion of the marginalized. There were Jewish elites that had a long history of being with those with power. The faithful Jews were not like this. The Jews were marginalized by their own people.
 - k. They see themselves as marginalized by their own leadership and foreign countries. This all comes into play in Revelation.
 - l. The word apocalyptic comes from Revelation 1:1
 - m. It has the idea of a disclosure, an uncovering given by God.
 - n. God is always the source and it is to show, uncover, speak to God's people what God is about and going to do.

- o. God is a plan and God is working that plan and at some point God is going to intervene and consummate things. Certain things must take place leading up to this and the transition.
- p. Often apocalyptic writing has an intermediary: an angel or someone who brings the message or interprets the vision.
- q. Dr. Mulholland recommends: Be careful of trying to squeeze John's vision into Jewish apocalyptic literature. Certainly John uses that but he morphs it.
- r. John's Revelation is the only Christian apocalyptic in the New Testament. There were other apocalyptic supposed Christian writings: The apocalypse of Peter, etc.
- s. **Question:** Regarding how much John knew what he was writing. Dr. Mulholland believed that John had a good idea. If you look at John's Gospel, he seems to have a richer understanding of who Jesus is than the synoptic.
- t. **In** John's Gospel he uses the preposition that you believe into Jesus. John talks about believing in Him and having rivers of water and John adds that he is talking about the Holy Spirit who has not yet been given.
- u. **Verses 4 and following:**

The text:

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, 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— 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.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.

⁸ *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

- v. Verse 4 tells us the sender and where these letters are going.
- w. From Him, Who was and Who is and is to come... remember from God the Father to the Son to the angel to John.
- x. Verse 5: and from Jesus Christ
- y. Jesus is the "faithful" witness, firstborn from the dead:
- z. There were certain Jewish dynamics and expectation of the restoration of the Kingdom and the resurrection. The righteous dead or righteous martyrs were to be resurrected. The resurrection of Jesus was seen as the first step of this restoration. This is why He is called the firstborn of the dead.

- aa. In Acts, in the first few chapters, the Sadducees were the only opponents of Jesus. This was because they were proclaiming of Jesus the resurrection. The restoration of the Kingdom implies the overthrow of Rome.
 - bb. 2 Maccabees: The woman with sons who were terribly martyred and they said that they can be killed but they will be resurrected
 - cc. So John adds in verse 5: “To Him who loved us and has freed us from our sins, the covenant God...” verse 6, John adds “has made us a Kingdom of Priests” and this goes back to Exodus. John is saying that John has fulfilled the Old Covenant and has made us a Kingdom of priests.
 - dd. Verse 7 and “coming on the clouds” has the image of the “son of man” from Daniel.
 - ee. Two images: Jesus the righteous martyr who has been raised from the dead and has made us a Kingdom of priests.
 - ff. In his introduction John has gone to great lengths to show the Jewish narrative world.
 - gg. Imagine being a first century Jew and reading this part, you are hooked, you have to read the whole thing now. Especially since currently Rome is in the driver’s seat.
 - hh. In verse 9, for the second time: the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.
 - ii. To John tribulation is not something that will happen at the end of the world, but John and his readers are already experiencing this.
 - jj. **John’s vision in a few words:** John calls radical discipleship as faithful citizens of a New Jerusalem in the midst of a fallen Babylon world.
 - kk. **Faithful endurance** in the midst of this tribulation.
- II. Let’s talk for a moment about the author.**
- a. **This has been** disputed.
 - b. The author calls himself John.
 - c. But he didn’t tell us more about what John he was.
 - d. 4 positions
 - i. John the apostle
 - ii. John the elder
 - iii. An unknown John
 - iv. 4th extreme view the it was not a named John at all. (pseudonym) very much discounted
 - e. **The language of Revelation is pretty well different than the Gospels and the letters.**
 - f. **The Greek is different**
 - g. **However,** scholars pretty well agree that the same person wrote the Gospels and the letters.
 - h. **Interesting thing is that the language is formed or John seems to be bending the language for visionary experience.**
 - i. John’s Gospel the only one to describe Jesus as the lamb.
 - j. But also strong comparisons similar to John’s Gospel.
 - k. John’s Gospel also: “I am the door of the sheep.”
- III. Let’s talk about when this was written: Date:**
- a. **In the** Late 1800’s they thought it was written in the late 90’s AD
 - b. In Mid 1900’s they thought it was written the 60’s AD
 - c. Now they are going back to the 90’s
 - d. The shift to the 90’s was when we found out that there was persecution under Domitian.

- e. We have found out that that persecution was more “in house.” This was not empire wide, nor empire wide repercussions. He was killing people in his house who had become Christians.
- f. In the 60’s Nero had an empire wide persecution. The empire was following Nero’s lead.
- g. As we look at the letters to the 7 churches we can see that it appears that persecution could happen at any time.
- h. The church father, Irenaeus was quoted by Eusebius with a later date.
- i. Justin, a disciple of Polycarp, a disciple of John says that John wrote this. Polycarp was martyred as an old man.
- j. The church fathers were split on the date.

IV. As I study this passage I am encouraged that Jesus will make things right.

- a. This is the theme of Revelation. Look at verse 7. *“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.*
- b. Jesus is coming again. If you remember the book of Acts, in Acts chapter 1:10 we have the disciples look to the sky as Jesus ascends and then we have an angel say: *“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”*
- c. He is coming back and He will make things right. He will come again. We will see more of that idea in Revelation. There is really only One who will make things right and He is not a Republican or a Democrat, nor any other party. He is the Rock of Ages (Psalm 18:2).
- d. GOD WILL MAKE THINGS RIGHTS. He is the future Leader.
- e. Jesus is partially making things right now.
- f. Every time a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior Jesus is making things right. Every time someone lives for Him and surrenders to Him, He is making things right. When we surrender to Jesus, He is stomping on the devil.
- g. I struggle, I am frustrated and I am a worrier. Seriously, I have news alerts come to my phone. I read the headlines. I hear about another shooting and another one and another one. I hear about boys getting into girls locker rooms, I hear about the culture going to literal hell. We, as a culture, are a mess. We are a mess in morality, we are a mess in real violence and we are a mess spiritually. I look at my innocence seven year old and five year old and I think, “What is going to happen?”
- h. In this book, in Revelation, Jesus tells me what is going to happen. Things are going to be okay.

- i. It is as if Jesus is saying, “Here is some encouragement, I am coming.”
 - j. Jesus says that He is coming in the clouds and every eye will see Him. We used to wonder about that. Well, Jesus can work that out anyway He wishes. He may be on all the cable channels or whatever.
 - k. All the people will wail. This is possible because He is coming and He will judge.
- V. As I study this passage I am encouraged that Jesus is outside of time.
- a. Look at verse 8: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*
 - b. Nothing happens without God knowing it. God is not taken by surprise.
- VI. I am also encouraged that Jesus is almighty.
- a. Look at verse 6 and then we’ll look at verse 8.
 - b. Verse 6: *and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.*
 - c. I mainly want to emphasize that God is to be glorified forever and ever and His is the power. God is almighty. Look at verse 8 again: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*
 - d. Notice that final noun, “almighty.”
 - e. God is almighty. When you are trusting God, He is the almighty.
- VII. I am encouraged with the Gospel: God loved us and set us free with Jesus’ blood.
- a. Look at verse 5: *and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood...*
 - b. Notice the end of the verse: we are freed from our sins by His blood.
 - c. We know that we needed a sacrifice. In Genesis chapter 22 we have Abraham take Isaac up to be sacrificed and Isaac asks his father, “Where is the lamb.” (Genesis 22:7)
 - d. For human history we have needed a Lamb for our sacrifice. God provided Jesus. We are set free.

Let’s apply this:

1. Jesus will come as judge. We all must surrender to Him now. If we can’t surrender now, how can we surrender later?

2. God is Awesome, what we get right here, what we begin to see right here is this amazing picture of our amazing God. Seven Spirits before the Throne, wow! He has all dominion (verse 6), He is outside of time (verse 8). I know that Cher might want to turn back time, but only God can go anywhere at any time. We have all seen amazing images. But God is bigger than a lightning storm. Actually, I think the lightning and thunder happens in God's presence because when God is present the surrounding area recognizes it and responds with splendor.

3. Do we, can we, love the Gospel? I am not only talking about surrendering and recognizing Jesus as Lord. I am saying can we be satisfied in the Gospel? Please, think on this.
 - a. This is a real struggle for me because we have temptations. I have an example:
 - i. **I think God has set up everything as if to say, "be satisfied in me."** To me, the world says, "That new car will give me satisfaction." God says, "Only for a while, then the bill will come, then the rust will come, then the damage will come." To me, the world says, "That Chipotle, oh yea, it will give satisfaction." God says, "Yes, you need to eat and you can enjoy food (Psalm 104), but only so much." God continues, "I am the Lord and there is no other, rejoice in Me. I can fill your deepest void. You need Me. I want to help." (Ecc. 3:11) To me, the world says, "You will be satisfied if the Steelers get to the super bowl, that Mac Book, that iphone, that book, that tool, those will all add to satisfaction, that big TV, Oh yea, that is satisfaction, that electronic, you name it, I feel like that will be satisfaction, that vacation destination it will satisfy, that house, that man-cave, they will bring satisfaction." I want them to fill a void within me. I want it all. But God says, "Are you kidding Me? Are you really, actually, seriously kidding Me? I am God and there is no other (Isa. 46:9), you are in the richest country in the world, if that does not prove that you need Me, what will. Turn to Me, be satisfied in Me." God says , I love you."
 - ii. **Do you get that? The Gospel is right here in verse 5: *this letter is from the One, Jesus, Who has freed us from our sins, by His blood.***
 - iii. God says, "I love you, be satisfied in me."

Mercedes will often say, "I love you." We will say, "I love you too." She will say, "I love you more."
Abigail will chime in "I love you."

God loves you and He loves you more.

Revelation is God showing us the future. Be encouraged He will make things right. Be encouraged you are loved. Be satisfied in Jesus, in the Gospel. The Gospel is *Amazing*.