Vision of the risen Christ and the letters to Ephesus, Smyrna,
and Pergamum Part 1

By Charles Feinberg

This is a series of messages on the Book of Revelation. By Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg
dean of Talbot Theological Seminary in La Mirada California. We are indeed grateful to the
Lord to be able. To give this series a verse by verse chapter by chapter study of the wonderful
book of the Revelation, the last book in the Bible. I want you to notice its title, The Revelation of
John. It would better be called the revelation of Jesus Christ as the first chapter, the first verse
indicates. Now let's mark well its place in the canon in the collection of scripture. As we find it
the final book and capstone of the Bible.

It was written undoubtedly by John, the son of Zebedee, author of The Gospel according
to John and the three epistles of John. The Apostle John was exiled to Patmos that was a little
rocky island in the Mediterranean Sea. You will notice that in the first chapter, the first verse, the
fourth verse of the first chapter, the ninth verse of the first chapter and in chapter twenty one
verse two, we read that John was the writer of this wonderful revelation. In Chapter 22 verse
eight, we have an indication of who the author was.

It was written about the year 95 A.D. in the last decade of the first century of our
Christian era. In the time of the Roman emperor Domitian. It's remarkable friends that this is the
only book with an express blessing for those who read, those who are hear, and those who keep
it. There is a warning that we are not to tamper with it, we're not to add to it, we're not to take
away from it. Revelation 22 versus 18 and 19. It is a revelation mark you. It is an unveiling, that
is a disclosure not something hidden something put aside, something covered but something that
it's unveiled something now clear and open to our view.
Notice in the introduction versus 1 to 3 the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him to show and to his servants things which must shortly come to pass and his sentence signified by his angel under his servant John who bore witness of the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that read it and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it for the time is at hand. Now not all interpreters of the Bible interpret the book of Revelation alike. There are four distinct and clear and main approaches to the understanding of the book of Revelation. There is what's called the historical view. This view says the entire history of the church is given in this book and that the book pictures the antagonism of the forces of the evil against the church in the world. In other words it is the entire history of the Church on earth as it battles the forces of evil in the world. That's what is called the historical view.

Then there is the preterit view, the past view just as we have a preterit tense in grammar. And this view indicates that a greater part of the prophecy has been fulfilled in the past. When? Well especially in the struggle of the church with the Roman Empire and there we are told the victory of the church, the triumph of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is foretold. There are others who approach the book and interpret it along the line which has been called the spiritual interpretation. It might better be called just the general interpretation in a spiritual fashion. They say the book has many many details but we can't be troubled with those and it's just. Indicating the triumph of truths, that is God's truth over Satan's error, and doing it in a most elaborate detailed marvelous way. Then there is the final view, the fourth view or approach and interpretation and that's called a futurist. That's the view that we are going to be presenting in this series Lord willing.
It's the position that we feel is biblical, it is a time honored position, it's the one to set forth in many works on prophecy. The one that set forth in the new Scofield reference bible and has been set forth in the Scofield Bible since its first edition. What is the futurist view? Very briefly, it holds that from Chapter Four everything in the book is future to our time. Now, what is the purpose of this book? Would not 65 books have been enough in the Bible? No, we had to have 66 books. Why? This book is written first of all to encourage believers in the time of great Roman persecution showing the final victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was written in the second place to enlarge upon, to add to Old Testament prophetic truths dealing with the future. How beautifully it fills out and compliments. Truth given in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament. All of scripture is wonderfully perfect, but it's not complete. Otherwise we would have had only one book in the Bible or one chapter but that did not complete the story. Not that it wasn't perfect but it was incomplete.

So the Old Testament was incomplete and all of the New Testament too was incomplete until the book of Revelation which completes the entire book of God. And then in the third place, the Book of the Revelation was given by God to present an unveiling and this is beautifully done. It presents a disclosing of the Lord Jesus Christ as he enters majestically regally upon the purchase possession. He gets the earth as that for which he died. He enters upon his purchase possession and the plan of the book is indeed a marvelous plan. You remember Sir Winston Churchill said on D-Day all is proceeding according to plan and what a plan. That is all the more true infinitely true of the book of the revelation.

Some folks say, "I can't understand the book of Revelation." Well God meant for us to understand it. He pronounced the blessing upon those who read, upon those who hear, and the ones who keep it. He must have meant for us to understand it. And instead of the book being this
orderly this arranged haphazard just thrown together, believe it friend, the plan of the book of the Revelation is most orderly, arranged and symmetrical.

The first chapter, the nineteenth verse tells us, "Write therefore the things which lost and the things which are and the things which are come to pass hereafter." This is the three full outline of the book of the revelation. It is given by the Holy Spirit Himself. I repeat. Revelation 1:19 is the key verse to the whole book. Write the things which I have seen and the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter. In 1:19 we have the things which thou has seen. That is chapter one, division of the glorified Christ. The things which are, which obtain in the present hour in which John is writing, the things which are cover chapters 2 and 3. The wonderful spiritual history of the Church on earth. And then the things which will come to pass here after are Chapters 4 to 22.

Now in that third division of chapters 4 to 22 we have again a threefold division chapters 4 to 19, the tribulation time. Chapter 20 the millennium. Chapter 21 and 22 eternity. I want to repeat and emphasize revelation 1:19 give you the plan of the book. Remember the book is a book that has a message in symbolical language. Verse 3 of the first chapter indicates that. He sent and signified it, he sent and signified it. Now what as signified mean? It means that it's chapter 1 verse 1. Actually he sent and signified it means he sent and made it known by signs, by signs. Let us read the words signified a little differently.

He sent and sign-I-fied it. He made it by signs, he made it by signs. So there's symbolism in the book now that does not mean that everything is symbolism, there are many things that are literal. Symbolism in the book can only be understood in the light of the Old Testament scriptures of other parts of the New Testament. It is not a book sealed, it is not a book hidden, but a book unveiled disclose revealed open to our gaze and as we read in the first chapter we
have a vision of Christ. It's a view of Christ in the glory, the things which thou sawith. The first 8
versus our introductory. I've read the first three, we shall be reading the others in just a little
while. The rest of the chapters occupied with a vision of the glorified risen Christ.

Notice verse one the channel of the message. The revelation of Jesus Christ. It is of Jesus
Christ that God gave to him to give to the angel to show it to John who will give it unto Christ
servants. Things which will come to pass. Notice, the very means and medium whereby it came
showed the tremendous importance of the message. Actually there is a fivefold stepladder on this
channel. God the Father, God the Son, the interpreting Angel, the apostle John, and all of Christ's
servants. Is God giving the message to Jesus Christ to show to Christ servants and that in turn is
sent by an angel. Christ gives it to the angel, an interpreting Angel who gives it to John who
ultimately gives it to all of the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. So you cannot say friend, that
this book is not applicable to you. It is a love message of the Lord Jesus Christ, the risen Christ
in the glory right to your own heart. John bears witness of the Word of God and the testimony of
Jesus Christ even of all the things that he saw. He was faithful to the message that was given to
him down to the last letter.

Then we have this benediction in verse 3 the great beatitude if you will. On the one who
reads, they who hear the words of the prophecy. Now why is it indicated in the singer he read it?
Because we're to understand that in that day they didn't have great many copies of the scripture
and there was one as in the synagogue today who would read it from the manuscript and the
others would be hearing it and would be keeping the words.

Remember again, he says the words of this prophecy. It is a prophecy. God said so
himself, you and I have no right to say it is history. All history when it is indicated that it is a
prophecy. You cannot say that it has all been fulfilled. In verse 4, John writes to the seven
churches that are in Asia. Let's read through from verse four through verse eight where we are going to have the introduction of the messages of our ascended Lord Jesus Christ to the seven churches.

Revelation 1:4 with your Bible before you, "John to the seven churches, which are in Asia. Grace be under 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, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth" I'm reading from the new Scofield reference bible and instead of loved, the proper reading is under him that loveth us. Present tense. "Unto him that loveth us and washed us from our sins, or loosed us from our sins in his own blood and it made us a kingdom of priests unto God and his father. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever amen." "Behold he cometh with clouds in every eyes will see him and they also who pierced him in all kidders of the earth shall we all because of him even so, amen. “I am Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the ending said the Lord who is and who was and who was to come, the Almighty."

In verse 4 then, John writes to the seven churches that are in the Roman portion of Asia. The Roman province of Asia. He writes with grace and peace to him that is and was and is to come. That's, God the Father the eternal one. And then with the seven Spirits before his throne or the seven full fullness of the Holy Spirit as we have it so beautifully told forth in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah and the second verse you have the whole trinity here. First God the Father, then God the Holy Spirit and then God the Son or the Lord Jesus Christ who is indicated as the first born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

He is called also the faithful witness. Every one of these characterizations friends has important truth. Christ is the faithful witness that speaks of his prophetic ministry. I speak always
the things which are pleasing unto the father. The things which the father has spoken to him
those he told for. Then it's indicated he is the first born of the dead that speaks of his priestly
work of sacrifice where he took our sins upon himself and died, he's the first born of the dead.
Then he is the ruler of the kings of the earth, that's his kingly ministry. He is connected with the
earth. All this is going to be seen to be very significant for the message of the book is prophetic
ministry, its priestly ministry, and its culmination in a wonderful kingly ministry. And then we've
been reading unto him the loveth us and washed us or loosed us from our sins by his blood made
us to be a kingdom of priests unto his God and father, Him be the glory Dominion forever and
ever amen.

John gives us the Doxology. John still remembers that Christ loves us and he is the one
who loosed us or washed us from our sins by his blood. He made us a kingdom, a priest. Both
kings and priests just as there were kings and priests in Old Testament times so now we believers
in this age of grace are God's kings and God's priests. We are priestly kings and kingly priests if
you will, royal priest. Why? Because the one we follow, the Lord Jesus Christ, is both King and
priest. Thank God he loves us, he loves you friend. He watched you. He loosed you from your
sins by his blood. You must trust him this hour that is the all-important message of the book, else
we shall lose the tremendous thrust of the message of God. We've noticed then, the wonderful
description of praise under the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice now the wonderful words in the seventh
verse. "Behold he comith with the clouds, every I shall see him, they pierced him, all the tribes
of the earth shall mourn over him, even so a man, all kindred. Notice, of the Earth. That's all the
tribes of the earth.

In the seventh verse of the first chapter were brought immediately to the main dominant
theme of the book. What's that? The revelation that is the unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ. He
has returned visibly from the glory. He comes now with clouds visibly, manifestly, openly, personally with great glory. What time is it on God's prophetic clock? Well, the time of this verse is the same as in Zacharias 12:10 where God says through the prophet Zachariah, "And I will pour out upon the House of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced and shall mourn for him. As one mourner for an only son and be in bitterness for him as one is in bitterness for his firstborn." Those that pierced him. Who shall see him in that time are the tribes, not of the Earth, but of the land, in the land of Palestine. He shall return you see to the Mount of Olives, Zachariah 14 first five versus. His feat shall stand upon the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem to the east and that mound shall be cleft asunder from east to west. Half of the mountains shall remove north and half of it south and there shall be a very great valley.

So Christ is got to return in the spirit of grace as supplication shall be poured out upon Jerusalem. Upon David, all his royal house, all the inhabitants of the land of promised. They shall look unto him who they've pierced. They shall mourn for him as they mourn for their only son being bitterness for him as those who are in bitterness for their firstborn. He is unveiled before their eyes. You have a pre-figuring of this do you not when Joseph made himself known unto his brethren who had so grievously rejected him. We're told that one day when King Edward of England visited Northridge. That 11,000 children saying God save the King. After the King had passed on, in his the procession, a little girl was seen weeping just weeping her heart out.

"Why", asked the teacher? "Why are you crying? Didn't you see the king?" "Yes, but the king didn't see me sobbed the little child," but when the King of Kings comes he will see all and every eye we'll see him and now we read I'm alpha and omega, the beginning and the endings
said the Lord who is and who was and who is to come the Almighty. The blessed source and the end of all things is God himself. He is the first, he is the last, he is the Lord God, he is the eternal one, he is the almighty. How much description of praise there is here to God. He it is who is giving this wonderful revelation then how absolutely insane it is to talk about a God who is dead.

The apostle John knows of no such idiocy, insanity or foolishness. John goes on concerning the Patmos vision. In verse 9, "I John, who also am your brother and companion and tribulation and the kingdom and patients of Jesus Christ, was in the aisle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a great voice is of a trumpet saying I am alpha and omega, the first and the last and what thou sees right in a book and send it under the seven churches which are in Asia and to Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.” "And I turn to see the voice that spoke with me and being turned I saw seven Golden Lamp stands and in the midst of the seven lamb stands one like the son of man clothed with a garment down to the foot and guarded about the breast with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow and his eyes were like a flame of fire and his feet like fine bronze as if they burned in a furnace and his voice like the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand Seven Stars and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword and his countenance was as the sun shining in its strength and when I saw him. I followed his feet is dead and he laid his right hand upon me saying that to me, "Fear not, I am the first and the las. I am he who livithed and was dead and behold I'm alive forevermore amen and have the keys of Hades and of death.""

That Island of Patmos is one of the rocky islands in the Mediterranean. He was there because he was exiled for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. He was in the Spirit on
the Lord's Day. He was not thinking this revelation up. This was not some plan worked up in his own fertile mind. It is not something we've been studying in some book, he was in the Spirit of God on the Lord's Day. The Spirit of God took full possession of him as the Spirit of God did in Old Testament times where the Old Testament prophets.

Then he heard behind him a great voices of a trumpet. It was a matter of great public concern. The text states where he was, why he was there, how he was positioned spiritually and even the notation of the day. It was the first day of the week the Lord's Day. The great Memorial Day of the resurrection triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ. He heard a voice as of a trumpet saying what they'll see is right in a book. Send it to the seven churches. This message is to be a written, a recorded message.

There are seven literal churches in Asia Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.” If you have a map before you you will notice it's in the form of a half moon or crescent. You must always in these studies of the word. Have a good Bible map before you. The maps of the new Scofield reference bible are eminently valuable and effective. Notice next this picture of a glorified resurrected Christ. His head and his hair were white as wool, white as snow. Eyes were as a flame of fire, feet were like under the burnished brass or bronze as if it had been refined in a furnace. It's a picture of judgment wherever you see. Bronze in the Old Testament connected with the altar, there's judgment. The bronze serpent in the book of Numbers does judgment which had been meted out upon Israel and fiery serpents were sent among them. Notice his voice was as the voice of many waters. He had in his right hand Seven Stars and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two edged sword. His countenance was the sun shining in his strength.
You see, the word out of his mouth is as a sharp two edged sword, a cutting sword. The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword cuts asunder divides between the soul and the spirit and the bones and the marrow. Yes his countenance was as a sun shining in his strength. When John saw it and he fell at his feet as one did. Think of it. It's John who had company with the Lord Jesus Christ for three and a half years. He is the one that lay reclined upon the bosom of our Lord at the last supper and at the institution of the Lord's Supper. At the Passover time, he had leaned upon the bosom of our Lord Jesus Christ. When he sees our Lord Jesus now in his resurrected body, he falls at the feets of the Lord Jesus Christ as one dead. And our blessed Lord laid his right hand upon John said, "Fear not, I’m the first and the last the living one where we serve our risen Savior. I was dead on the line for ever more over the keys, yes, of Hades and of death." This wonderful picture from verse twelve through 18 is of Christ. He's seen as the high priest coming in judgment, he's going to judge on the basis of his immediate trial work. In plain English, what have you done with my sacrificial work on Calvary? That's going to be the great issue. He's also seen as the serving one, he's wearing a girdle. There's allusion here to the lamp stand in the Tabernacle. The difference is quite clear that here are separate lamp stands. There they were all together in one huge candelabra and Christ is in the midst, in the place of authority and preeminence.

Colossians 1:18 tells us that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. The churches are seen in the sphere of earthly testimony. The vision reminds us very much of chapter seven of Daniel where there is a judgment set for the beast of the fourth kingdom and rule is taken away from him. He is destroyed and when that's done there is one brought with a greater rate and you one like under the sun a man under the ancient of Days. He received the kingdom which I'll never pass away. Now it's not the voice that speaks in gentle tones but the voice that roars out of
Zion like a lion. He's coming in judgment now. His voice is the voice of many waters. We're reminded of Psalm 29. That voice of omnipotent power that breaketh the cedars asunder, maketh the hinds to cave. It's not like that voice that spoke peace to the troubled sea. So many centuries ago in Galilee, or speaks peaceably to your heart now and to mine as redeemed once when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ to save. Now the picture revelation 1, he's now come in judgment. What's the basis of his power? The first and the last the living one. He was dead. He is alive forevermore he can make any adjudication of his any judgment at his stand. He can make it stick he can make it effective. The Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be His name, has rested. He snatched away the power from Satan and come out triumphantly. We need not be in fear of death and of the grave of Hades and of death. Why? The Lord Jesus Christ has that glorious power.

We're told it in a friendly conversation a French general once said to a British general. "Yes it's true. You're British one Waterloo, you've certainly won the battle of Waterloo. But it cost you a great deal." Ah said the British officer. "But it cost you more, it cost you a Napoleon." The great victory on Calvary cost the life of the victor. The Lord Jesus Christ, but thank God through death he destroyed him that had the power of death the devil. And unlike Napoleon our blessed victor is alive. Alive forever more to die no more. Notice that in verse 19 we have the key verse of the book, as we've said. It's the only safe guide to the correct interpretation of the book.

Someone has indicated that there are some 2000 different interpretations of the revelation in a certain museum in Europe. But my dear friends, the only safe guide to the correct interpretation of the book is in the 19th verse of the first chapter of the Revelation. Write therefore, write the things which though has seen and the things which are the things we shall be hereafter. Verse 19:20 the mystery of the seven stars which though saw in my right hand and the
Seven Golden Lamp stands. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lamp stands which though sawist are the seven churches.

We have seen the things which John saw the vision of the glorified Christ. Then John speaks of the mystery of the seven stars in Christ right hand. Those seven stars are the angels or the messengers of the seven churches and the seven lamp stands are seven churches. What do we have here? Well the angels are not literal angels, nor are they true believers or believers in general. We have here a reference to the basic meaning of angel, Angelus just as Molech in the Old Testament. These are messengers to the churches. Who are the messengers? They are pastors of the local congregations, they are in places of responsibility and authority. The Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of the churches and the place of supervision in the place of administration in the place of complete plot is absolute control of the churches in their spheres of earthly ministry shining as they are for God as lights in the world. We are lights in the world just as the Lord Jesus Christ was the light of the world when he was here.

I often wonder how well we are shining. Let's make it very personal intimate. Are we telling folk about the light of the world. Are we telling them that Christ Jesus died that just for the unjust that he might bring us to God. Now the things which are relate, notice it. They relate to the church age. In chapters two and three we have the things which are that is in the present church age in which the apostle John lived, the very age in which we live. So in chapter two to which we've come things that are, the seven churches a message to Ephesus and then it will be to Smyrna and Pergamum and so on. Here we have a faithful portrayal of the course, the moral spiritual course of the church from the beginning to its end, earthly sojourn here on Earth. That's chapters 2 and 3 of the revelation.
Now the first letter is in the chapter two is to the church of Ephesus. We’ve been called the church of Ephesus, the church of departed love. It's the church of the apostolic age.