

Sermon – Revelation 1
Rev. Bruce Stanley - “The Future makes sense of the Present”
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1. The Future

III –Concept car video

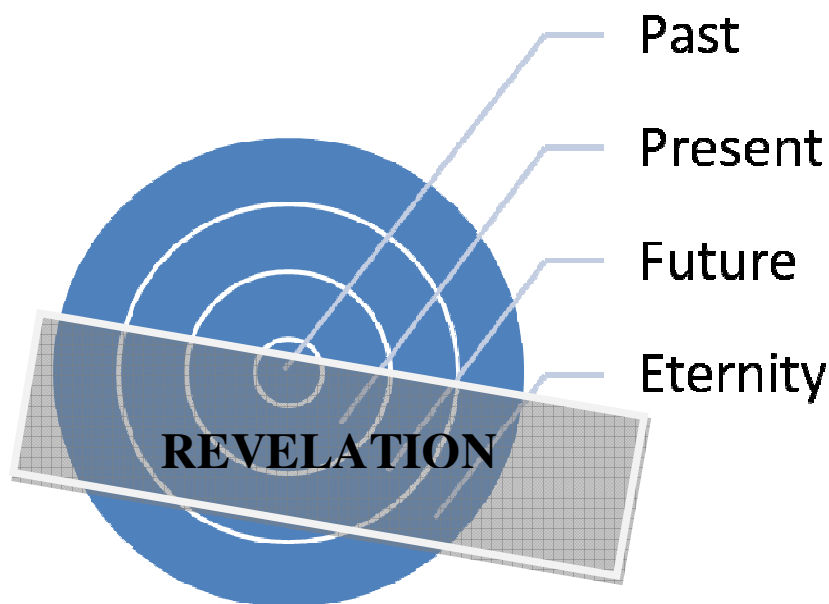
A lot of people like to think about the future of our world. What it’s going to be like. Especially when it comes to the end of the world. And many people think that the book of Revelation is a book just about the end times.

* **PPT** – Revelation 1:1 – “*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.*”

But it’s much more than that. Revelation is an “unveiling” of the world from God’s perspective so we know how we need to live **today**.

Let me explain with a quick diagram...

III – Whiteboard diagram:



The book of Revelation takes us **across all of time**, because it’s a view of the world from **God’s** perspective. And it’s not written to predict the future, but to encourage us how to live NOW because of the future. Which is why John says in 1:3 –

* **PPT** – “*Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and takes to heart what is written in it, BECAUSE the time is near.*”

And the big truth we must begin with is how **Jesus** is revealed to us in chapter 1. We must get the right perspective on who he is to understand how to respond to Him.

III – Truck and bridge.

A truck driver was driving along on a country road. A sign came up that read "Low Bridge Ahead." Before he realised it, he got stuck.

Cars were backed up for miles. Finally, a police car comes up. The policeman gets out of his car, walks to the cab of the truck and says to the driver, "Got stuck, eh?"

The truck driver says, "No, I was delivering this bridge and ran out of petrol!"

It depends how you look at it! Perspective is important, especially when it comes to knowing who Jesus is.

If I said “close your eyes and think about Jesus”, what do you think of? What is your *perspective* of Jesus? Is it the Christmas Jesus? The baby wrapped up and lying in a manger. Or do you think of the Easter Jesus – hanging on a cross, crown of thorns, bloodied body, nails in his hands and feet. Or do you think of the Jesus in the old Sunday school books – long blonde hair(!), blue eyes, playing with the children gathered around him.

Revelation gives us the picture of Jesus TODAY – NOW and FOREVER. And although it’s good to remember Jesus as a baby and Jesus crucified, we need to KNOW who Jesus is NOW.

Listen to these snapshots we get just from chapter 1:

* **PPT** –

V5 – Jesus is the faithful witness, the first born from the dead, the ruler over the Kings of the earth.

V7 – he is the one coming in the clouds who will be seen by everyone.

V13-16 - He is the one who looks “like a son of man” in a robe, with a golden sash, head and hair white like snow, eyes like blazing fire! His voice sounds like the rushing waters of a powerful waterfall, his face is as brilliant as the sun!

V17 - He is the one John sees and immediately falls down at his feet as though dead.

This is Jesus NOW – the resurrected, powerful, ruler of the universe.

And in verse 18 he says:

* **PPT** – *“I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

Jesus is “THE LIVING ONE”. What does that mean? How do we interpret that?

III – Lost in translation:

* **PPT** – Some years ago, an ad for KFC was apparently translated into Mandarin and their famous phrase “finger-lickin’ good,” was translated as “eat your fingers off.”

* **PPT** – Pepsi had a similar problem when their ad slogan “Come alive with the Pepsi generation” translated in Taiwanese as “Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave”

[[[* **PPT** – Parker pens had another one – “It won’t leak in your pocket and embarrass you” – In Mexico it was translated as – “It won’t leak in your pocket and impregnate you”]]]

* **PPT** – We can’t miss the importance of these words about Jesus. We’re not given a picture of Jesus as the baby in a manger, or the crucified Lord hanging on the cross. Jesus is **THE LIVING ONE**. He is not just alive. He is alive **forever**. He is the beginning and the end and everything in between. And he holds the keys to death and Hades. In other words – he holds the keys to our future beyond life on this earth.

III – I have a lot of keys. For the front door, screen door, car, church, shed, gate, parent’s house, clothing bin. I even have some keys that I have no idea what they open! Keys give you access. They allow you to control access to certain places.

Jesus is the one with access to the living and the dead! He controls the door! He has authority over it. And that’s the picture of the living, right now Jesus that we need to know as we read Revelation. We cannot be stuck in the past. We should **remember** the past – that Jesus came to earth as a man and saved us. But we need to **live** in the present and **look** to the future.

III – I remember when petrol was 26 cents a litre. But do you think I could walk into a petrol station today and PAY 26 cents a litre? Of course not. I have to live and act in today’s world. We can remember the past, but we can’t live in the past.

And it’s the same when it comes to our picture of Jesus.

We don't live today as though Jesus is still a baby. We don't live as though Jesus is still hanging on a cross. We live today knowing that he is not only resurrected, but he is alive for ever, all powerful, and he holds in his hands the power over death.

And just to reinforce that, have a look at the two symbols in this vision that the chapter finishes with:

* **PPT** – map

III – light candles

The seven golden lamp stands represent the seven churches of Asia Minor – Ephesus, Pergamum, Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. And this circle of churches are of course not all the churches in the world, but they **represent** all the churches of the world. In Revelation, the number 7 represents **completeness**. So the seven lampstands represent the whole complete church of Jesus. So the letters in chapters 2-3 which we will read over the next few weeks, are written to the **whole** church of God.

* **PPT** – Now look at verse 13:

“and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man”.

This reference is to Jesus – the son of man. And Jesus stands among his church. He is there, alive, in our presence, today.

Then we have the **7 stars** which we're told represent the 7 angels of the 7 churches. The angels represent the Spirit of each church. You could say they're like the guardian angels over the churches. But the meaning is that these stars represent the spiritual life and direction of the 7 churches – in other words, all the churches of the world.

* **PPT** – Verse 16:

“In his right hand he held seven stars.”

Jesus holds the spiritual direction of each church in his hands.

Revelation gives us a picture that's BIGGER than ourselves.

It's a picture of the worldwide church. The true church of God. It's not the Anglican church or the Protestant Church. It's a picture of Jesus, alive, powerful, in control of death, standing among his churches and holding their spiritual life in his hands. Simply put:

Jesus is standing with us all and holding on to us. He knows us. (Picture – father and baby?)

Jesus gives US these words to listen to and to respond to. These letters that follow are encouragements and rebukes written to us by someone who KNOWS us. And if we listen to these words as a church, verse 3 says, we will be blessed.

We have to hear the rebukes. Hear the encouragements. And respond. **Together.**

* **PPT** – Let me finish with verse 9:

“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus...”

* **PPT** – John wrote around 90 AD – a time when God's people suffered greatly under persecution. And this is a picture of us today. **Companions in suffering.** Every day. But also **companions in the kingdom** – that's what we're waiting for. That's our great hope – the kingdom of heaven. And that makes us **companions in patient endurance.** TOGETHER we suffer and TOGETHER we endure.

Pray that we as a church will listen intently to these next few chapters. That we don't misinterpret them. That we don't get the wrong perspective. But that we hear them as one body.

Revelation is about hearing God's perspective about us. Listening to him together. And responding together. Otherwise, this is what we will look like:

(Picture of two headed Lama or Donkeys going in two directions against each other)

Pray – for open ears and hearts, and for unity.