

Revelation 1

1. Verses 1-3 are clearly the introduction to the book. They set us up in terms of what to expect. What many have noticed is that they very clearly are related to Daniel chapter 2, especially 28, 29 and 30. Let's take a look at Daniel 2 to get a sense of how perhaps John saw himself in the light of what happened years before.
 - a. Who was Daniel? What were the circumstances surrounding his life in Babylon? Who were the "people of God" in that context? Notice the universalization here.
 - b. What similarities would we imagine John would see himself in connection with Daniel?
2. Compare these two verses:
 - a. Dan 2:28 (Greek transl) "but there is God in heaven *revealing (apocalypton)* mysteries/secrets, which he has **shown** to King Nebuchadnezzar *that which must happen in the latter days.*
 - b. Rev. 1:1: *The revelation (apokalyptis)* which God gave him to *show* his servants/slaves *that which must happen soon.*
 - c. It is clear that John sees himself standing in a similar situation as Daniel, but the progression has advanced forward. What even has taken place?
 - d. How does this relate to the end of Daniel chapter 2?
 - e. What, however, is the contextual similarity between the two?
3. The next phrase too is deeply connected to Daniel 2: "and he signified/signed"
 - a. The meaning of this verb here is clearly "made known" but also to foretell. The noun form of this word we generally translate "sign".
 - b. The gospel of John is divided into two books: the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. The Book of Signs revolves around the miracles that Jesus does and what they signify.
 - c. In Daniel this verb is found (in the Greek translation) only in chapter 2 in verses 15, 23 and 45. Verse 45 says in Greek: "The great God has signed/signified to the king what will be in the latter days..." Again, you can see the tie in with Dan 2:28 and earlier in verse 1.
 - d. This "signify" or "signing" is not just an unusual word selection, it communicates the manner of communication. King Nebuchadnezzar received a dream of images which were then told by Daniel and interpreted. For John the visions he is about to receive are received in continuity with what happened with Daniel.
 - e. Notice also the visual earlier in the verse. These are "shown". It is clear that this book will communicate by symbols. This may frustrate us, but think back on how Jesus communicated many of these things he did, often through parables and symbols as well.

4. This “was signed by sending his angel to his servant/slave John who testified/witnessed to the word of God and to the testimony/witness of Jesus Christ, all of which he saw”
 - a. This verse is very important because we are locating the visions in a sense in the passed tense in the revelation (1:1) of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ/the word of God is now being tied directly to Daniel 2. John is claiming that this kingdom set up in Daniel 2 is in fact the kingdom brought about in Jesus Christ. This book is the revelation of Jesus Christ and John is now locating that revelation in the context of the struggle of the churches he is writing to.
 - b. Some of you love the Pauline epistles. It is important to see that John is not doing anything different than Paul has done in Ephesians or elsewhere, he is simply using a different form of communication. He is locating the listener (1:3) in the drama, in the warfare that is taking place around them.

5. In verse 3 we have the first of 7 Beatitudes in the book. If we want to understand the root of beatitudes see the Psalms: 1;1, 2:12, 31:1, 32:12, 33:9, 39:5, 40:2, and many more. Our utilitarian, angle seeking minds quickly grab onto them in search of a formula for acquiring our own blessings. Jesus’ beatitudes wonderfully short circuit this temptation for us by their irony. We need a bit more care with John’s beatitude here.
 - a. The beatitude begins we imagine by announcing the blessedness of the intended and imagined recipient of the letter who will be reading it to their congregation in Asia Minor. Also blessed are those who hear and those who “keep/guard/observe” what is written in it.
 - b. The basic meaning of the word is “to keep in view”. Keeping in view that which is written in this book allows the Christian to live. Again, I think of Ephesians 6. “In the remaining time”.
 - c. The conclusion is I think so often heard by us as a scary warning. “Clean up your act because judgment day is right around the corner.” Nothing could be further from the intent. “Keep what is written here in view, and be encouraged because the time is near!” For the Christian beset by the empires of the world, the shortened time is a godsend.