

Today open with me to the only book exclusively devoted to introducing us to what our Master and Savior Jesus is doing RIGHT NOW: the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Have you paused yet today to check in with Jesus Christ? The best way to do that is through your Bible, because Jesus Christ is revealed to us as the Word of God. He is the Word, and the Word reveals Him. Each time we open God's Word we can hear His Voice.

At Creation God the Son, the Creator spoke and made all things; and through His Apostles and Prophets, His Word has been given.

As you open to the last book of your Bibles, you open to the climactic conclusion of God's Word written down for us.

The first word in the Greek New Testament text of Revelation is the word **apocalupsis** which can be translated as either "revelation" or "unveiling". The next two words are Jesus Christ. That means in this last book we are:

Getting to See The Real Jesus

So we are opened to the "revelation of Jesus Christ", or the "taking the cover off of Jesus Christ", or the "disclosure of Jesus Christ", or the "manifestation of Jesus Christ", or the "unveiling of Jesus Christ" the Word of God. There is so much to think about as we open to these Last Words of Christ, God's Word.

Revelation completes God's revelation of Himself to humanity through Christ.

In Genesis the Creator, God the Son, walks and talks with Adam and Eve the first two humans to ever exist, created from the Hand of God. But God does not stay walking and talking to them. Because they sinned, He banishes them from the Paradise He made for them. Thus began all the sorrows and woes that have plagued humanity all these thousands of years.

But in the book of Revelation the Creator explains that He is back, actively walking on Earth again, among His people.

The Book of Revelation explains for us that God the Son, Jesus Christ the Creator is here on the ground guiding His Church to accomplish His purposes in the world.

Much like a coach on the floor with his team, Jesus Christ is walking around and watching us play our positions He gave us to play. That is perhaps the most arresting truth in all the Bible for us. We are not alone, the Coach Himself, our Creator is personally wanting to help us get done what He desires us to do.

To begin our look at Christ's Last Words, we need to listen to His Voice, and so join me in Revelation 1 as we read v.1-8, 19

Revelation 1:1-19 (NKJV) *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near. 4 John, to the seven churches which 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 from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” 19 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.*

Amazingly Jesus tells us that the events in Revelation are going to fall upon the earth: not gradually but quickly. V. 1 says “shortly” [Greek **taxos** “speed”; swiftness (speed), i.e. done as quickly (speedily) as is appropriate to the particular situation. From the same as tachus; a brief space (of time), i.e. (with en prefixed) in haste -- + quickly, + shortly, + speedily.

The Three Purposes of The Book of Revelation

By observation we can see that Christ's Last Words are divided into three parts, note the outline contained in 1:19, where John is instructed to write:

1. The **“things you have seen”** (this is chapter 1, or John’s sight of the Risen Christ gathering with His local churches).

Jesus is the Owner of our Team, He calls His Team the Church.

Jesus is right now on the ground, walking through life with us as His Church, seeking to see us accomplish His will and plan each day. He is watching our every move with His eyes that see everything, He never leaves our sides, and is always available to each of us at any moment.

2. The **“things that are”** (this is chapters 2-3, or Christ's Warning about the Challenges facing the Local Churches, after His personal tour around each of His local churches).

As the Owner of the Church, Jesus warns us of the pitfalls, dangers, and difficulties we will face.

As our Coach He explains what makes some team members displeasing their Master and Owner, and He warns us what to do, how to avoid these traps that render team members useless to their Savior and Master.

3. The **“things which shall be after those things”** (this is chapters 4-22, or the description of the End of Days as seen in both Heaven and on Earth).

Amazingly in the final chapters of Revelation, Jesus reveals that He has another team that He wants to use for that period of time.

The Church is His second team, He now reverts back to His first team called Israel. They did not obey Him and were set over to the side for two thousand plus years, but now He is ready to use them once again.

They become His witnesses and His visible sign to the world. Through the absolutely darkest days of humanity, they will shine as His Chosen People of Promise.

Applying Revelation’s Message To Our Lives Today

So that is the message of the Book of Revelation. But what was God’s purpose in sending it? The key lies in our response: how do we best use our days of life?

How can we respond to these truths that God has left us? When God sends us His final written message it has three parts. Each of these three sections of this final book has a clear message to our lives today.

What is chapter 1 all about? Jesus Christ our Owner and the One who calls the shots of our lives, our Coach: He is visiting us, checking on us, and watching us as His Church.

The lesson of Revelation is first and most importantly: the ONLY way to understand life, living, purpose, meaning, destiny, and anything else that matters is when Jesus Christ is shined upon our lives.

When He is unleashed, when His truth is unveiled, when His plans are opened and followed, life makes sense. The very first message we need to hear is all about what Jesus is doing now that He has risen and ascended back to Heaven. Revelation 1 is all about showing us what is Christ's Highest Priority right now.

Revelation 1: Seeing the Risen Christ Gathering With His Local Churches

First, Jesus wants us to know He is walking among us and watching our lives.

The simple message Jesus Christ gives us is that His Highest Priority is gathering with His local church. Look where John first saw Jesus in v.12, He was walking around His local churches (that is what v. 20 says that those lampstands represent: Christ’s local churches).

That means that He is right now watching us. He is walking around His gathered Church looking to see if we are being and doing what He left for us to be and do.

Notice that Christ walks about His Local Churches, places when people gathered in a recognizable community. Christ's Church is His priority, it is where He is spending His time. The first message of the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is that the local Church is His PRIORITY, it is where He goes, what He does, and where He is at work in the world today.

For a moment ask yourself a question. If the local Church is Christ's highest priority, is it also my highest priority? Or have I ignored Christ's obvious priority of His local assembly of believers, and said that other things can also be priorities; and that I must make wise choices between the priority of work, the priority of school, the priority of sports, the priority of rest, and so on. In other words, instead of highest priority meaning what we do first, it becomes choosing between several activities that WE have decided are all equal in importance. Everything is not equally important to Christ, He displays by His actions, and says with His words that His chosen focus is His local church.

Pause for a moment and ask yourself if you really believe God's Word. If so, then you believe Jesus Christ is here right now. He walks among us looking at us as we gather to see if we are being what He asks us to be; and doing what He left us to do.

Doing and Being

What did Jesus ask us to be? His followers or disciples, those who learned by imitating Him and following him. So first, are you “being” His disciple by wanting to follow Him in all I do through each of my days?

Secondly, are you “doing” what He left you to do. What was that? Remember, Jesus said go and make disciples. Build your life around getting people connected to Christ through His local church.

Everything in this special period of time revealed in God's Word, revolves around the church Jesus said He was building.

Are you doing and being what He asks each of us to do and be for His church?

Is Christ's Church your Highest priority?

We as His Church are Christ's focus, we are His Highest priority. He owns this team, He is here with us in the game of life wanting to help and encourage us to play our part in His plan.

Why not renew your decision in your heart that you will follow Christ's example and make Christ's local church your HIGHEST priority in life? Now look at the next section:

Revelation 2-3: Christ's Warning about the Challenges facing the Local Churches

The second message that we find in Christ's last words is that He warns us about areas that have tripped up past generations of believers. He wants us to stay on the right path.

Now look at the second section of this book: the “things that are” (this is chapters 2-3, or the State of the Local Churches as given by Christ Himself, after His personal tour around each of His local churches).

When Jesus toured His local churches He names seven of them, using seven local, geographic gatherings of believers. He describes each assembly and uses His assessment of these local churches to challenge all of the churches.

These churches were real gatherings of people 2,000 years ago. That means that Jesus saw seven different types of believers gathering at that moment in the history of His church. Have you ever thought about that? In some part of the end of the First Century AD there were Ephesian types of believers (2:1-7); Smyrna types of believers (2:8-11); Pergamos types of believers (2:12-17); Thyatira types of believers (2:18-29); Sardis types of believers (3:1-6); Philadelphia types of believers (3:7-13); and Laodicea types of believers (3:14-22).

Every believer back then was like one of these seven. But even more than just back then, these letters were written in God's Word to instruct all of us down through the ages that even to our time, more than likely, the Son of God has walked among us and has found here:

That some of us are like the believers in Ephesus: we have declined from that first love we had for Jesus. We are like them we had a great start, but now seem to lack that initial consuming love.

Christ's message for them and to us today is: ***Love Me most; Come back to Me.***

Smyrna was in great persecution and stood fast through it; true believers discover Jesus is all I have, and need. Then by faith they remain faithful to Him, no matter what the price they have to pay. We like them can be purified by persecution, and be faithful to the Lord.

Christ's message for them and to us today is: ***Trust Me to the end; Stay true to the end; Suffer for Me.***

Pergamum was drowning in worldliness; true believers will resist worldliness. Today in every church there are some of these Pergamite Christians:

- Pergamites are wed to the world;
- Pergamites are worldly Christians with no standards;
- Pergamites have a focus and grip on their money, car and job;
- Pergamites are only doing what is socially acceptable;
- Pergamites are compromising the absolutes of Scriptures;
- Pergamites are more concerned with fashion than with Holiness.

Christ's message for them and to us today is: ***Stay separated from false doctrine and evil practices.***

Thyatira was being seduced by the false teacher Jezebel; true believers resisted all such evil teaching and lifestyles. Some Thyatiran Christians are believing and following false doctrine, with a social gospel not a divine call to the new birth.

Christ's message for them and to us today is: ***Stay pure; live for Me.***

Sardis had a big name but no life; true believers did not defile themselves with the corpse. Some Sardian Christians, are dead as last week's cut flowers, cold and lifeless, in a spiritual stupor.

Christ's message for them and to us today is: ***Live the Life for Me.***

But no condemnation for Philadelphia, no blame just a warning to overcome and hold on!! Some Philadelphian Christians, sound in doctrine, zealous in ministry, are outreaching the world and deeply in love with the Lord Jesus Christ!

Christ's message for them and to us today is: ***Speak for Me.***

Some Laodicean, are apostate, counterfeit and sickening to Christ. A member of the Christless church that will thrive in the tribulation under Satan's leadership.

Christ's message for them and to us today is: ***Sacrifice for Me; invest in Me.***

Revelation 4-22: The Description of the End of Days as seen in both Heaven and on Earth

Finally, the last part of Christ's message to us is that He wants us to know what He has planned for the ending of the earth.

Starting in chapter 4 we learn things only hinted at in all the other chapters of God's Word. In the final section of this book we see woven together all the pieces that the apostles and prophets had reported, but now Jesus Christ Himself, God's Final Word to Mankind makes sense of all those pieces.

Probably this section holds more fascination, for more people than any other part of God's Word. And into that section pause with me briefly to feel the intensity of what God has given to us.

Revelation 4-22 continues the same picture that Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Zechariah, Matthew, and Paul all share with Jesus: the End of Days is very easy to spot.

In Matthew when Jesus taught His disciples on the End of Days, He gives some irrefutable signs for when He would return. Those signs agreed with the signs already presented in the Old Testament. We could sum up Christ's words in Matthew 24 by saying He promises and predicts what the world will look like when He Returns.

Jesus gives an even clearer picture of what the last days will look like, so that we as His servants would not be caught off guard, and be unprepared for what will happen so swiftly, taxos on the Earth.

Seven Clear Indicators Given by Christ To Describe the End of Days

In Revelation Jesus Himself, the very Word of God explains the future to us His servants. He says that He is walking in His Church, encouraging us until our work for Him is done. Then, He will take us to surround His Throne and watch Him go back to His Chosen People of Promise and win their hearts back to Him.

So what does Jesus say that the world will look like when He comes back?
He says there will be seven clear trends that MUST be present for Him to return.

1. Global Travel (Daniel 12:4a) Revelation 6:1-4
2. Global Information/Data Explosion (Daniel 12:4a) "horseman earth" Revelation 6:1-4
3. Global Death/WMD (Matthew 24:22) Rev 6:8 "one-fourth"
4. Global Communications Revelation 11:9 "see"
5. Global Commerce Revelation 11:10 "send"
6. Global Currency/Digitalized Money Revelation 13:16-17 "number"
7. Global Weather Gone Wild (Luke 21:25-26) "scorch" Revelation 16:8-9

In the days ahead we will trace each of these trends in our Bibles.

Before we go ask yourself a question: If the local Church is Christ's highest priority, is it also my highest priority? If you really believe God's Word, then you believe Jesus Christ is here right now. He walks among us looking at us as we gather to see if we are being what He asks us to be; and doing what He left us to do.

Secondly, are you "doing" what He left you to do. What was that? Remember, Jesus said go and make disciples. Build your life around getting people connected to Christ through His local church.

Everything revolves around the church Jesus said He was building. Are you doing and being what He asks each of us to do and be for His church. Is Christ's Church your Highest priority? We as His Church are Christ's focus, we are His Highest priority.

Why not renew your decision in your heart that you will follow Christ's example and make Christ's local church your HIGHEST priority in life?