

Love Community Baptist Church

Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

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Revelation – Chapter 1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Vs. 1-3)

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, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

The ancient Greek word translated Revelation is apokalupsis (apocalypse). The word simply means “a revealing, an unveiling.” The Book of Revelation is **the Revelation of Jesus Christ** in the sense that it belongs to Him, He is the one doing the revealing. It is also Jesus’ Revelation in the sense that He is the object revealed; Jesus is the person revealed by the book.

The Book of Revelation is a book of predictive prophecy. It speaks of things that will happen in the future — at least future from the time of its writing.

He gave us (HIS SERVANTS) this revelation: This is an important reason why God gave this Revelation of Jesus Christ. He gave it to show His servants. God gave this revelation that it might be shown, not hidden. This is an apocalypse — a revelation, not apocrypha (something hidden).

The Book of Revelation is a book of **predictive prophecy**. It speaks of things that will happen in the future — at least future from the time of its writing.

He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John: This describes how the message is delivered in the Book of Revelation. It is a book of signs: the angel **sign-ified** this message to John. It is a book that communicates in signs.

- John described things he saw, so he could only use symbolic images to explain it. To us, this book is prophecy, but John simply recorded history unfolding before him, as he saw it. “John had visions from heaven; but he described them in his own language and manner.” (Clarke)

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.

Blessed is he who reads... and keep those things which are written in it: The Book of Revelation offers a particular and unique blessing to those who read and keep the message of this book. This is the first of seven beatitudes of Revelation (Revelation 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, and 22:14).

Since so much controversy has risen over the interpretation of the Book of Revelation, it is helpful to know the four basic approaches people have used through the centuries to understand Revelation.

The Preterist View: This approach believes that Revelation dealt only with the church in John's day. In the Preterist approach, Revelation doesn't predict anything. John simply described events of his current day, but he put them in symbolic code so those outside the Christian family couldn't understand his criticism of the Roman government. In the Preterist view, the Book of Revelation **was for then**.

The Historicist View: This approach believes that Revelation is a sweeping, disordered panorama of all church history. In the Historicist approach, Revelation predicts the future, but the future of the "church age" — not the future of end-time events. In the Historicist view, Revelation is full of symbols that describe now.

- For example, many of the Reformers called the Pope the beast of Revelation chapter 13, but they didn't necessarily want to believe that the end was very near. So, they believed that Revelation spoke of their time, without necessarily speaking to the end times.

The Poetic View: This approach believes that Revelation is a book full of pictures and symbols intended to encourage and comfort persecuted Christians in John's day. In the Poetic or allegorical view, the Book of Revelation isn't literal or historic. Revelation is a book of personal meaning.

The Futurist View: This approach believes that beginning with chapter four, **Revelation deals with the end times, the period directly preceding Jesus' return**. In the Futurist view, Revelation is a book that mainly describes the end times.

Which approach is correct? Each one is true in some regard. The Book of Revelation did speak to John's day. It speaks to church history. And it does have meaning for our personal life. So, while elements of the first three approaches have their place, we can't deny the place of the futurist view. We can know the Book of Revelation speaks with clarity about the end times because of two central principles drawn from Revelation 1:1-3.

- First, we believe that the Book of Revelation must mean something. This is a book that Jesus gave to show His servants something. It isn't a book of meaningless nonsense. It has a promise of blessing, not a promise of confusion.
- Secondly, we believe that Revelation definitely claims to contain predictive prophecy. John made it clear: things which must shortly take place... the time is near. John wrote about events that were still future to him.

Revelation 1:4-5a

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, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To the seven churches which are in Asia: This letter was originally addressed to these seven selected churches of Asia. This was the Roman province of Asia, which is the western part of modern-day Turkey.

- The seven churches described are seven literal churches at the time that John the apostle was writing Revelation. Though they were literal churches in Asia Minor at that time, there is also spiritual significance for churches and believers today. The first purpose of the letters was to

communicate with the literal churches and meet their needs. The second purpose is to reveal seven different types of individuals/churches throughout history and instruct them in God's truth.

- **Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea**

Revelation 1:5b-6 - A statement of praise to Jesus.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

To Him who loved us: What a beautiful title for Jesus! When loved is used, in the past tense, it points back to a particular time and place where Jesus loved us. It should be pointed out that many translations have loves us (such as NASB, NIV, and NLT), but there is something beautiful about loved us. It looks back to the cross. Every believer should be secure in God's love, not based on their present circumstances (which may be difficult), but based on the ultimate demonstration of love at the cross. This is worth praising Jesus about.

Revelation 1:7 - An opening description of the return of Jesus.

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.

He is coming with clouds: When Jesus comes, He will be surrounded by clouds. This will be true literally, because when Jesus left this earth, He was taken up into a cloud and God said that He would return in the same manner (Acts 1:9-11). It will also be true figuratively, because multitudes of believers are called clouds in a figurative manner (Hebrews 12:1). Clouds are commonly associated with God's presence and glory (Exodus 13:21-22, 16:10, 19:9, and 24:15-18), relating to the Old Testament cloud of glory called the Shekinah.

When Jesus comes, it won't be a secret coming. Everyone will know. At His first coming, Jesus was somewhat obscure. During His earthly ministry, He never made front-page news in Rome. But when Jesus comes again, every eye will see Him. The whole world will know.

Revelation 1:8 - An introduction from Jesus Himself.

"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."

The idea behind these titles for Jesus is that He is before all things and will remain beyond all things. Alpha was the first letter of the ancient Greek alphabet, and Omega was the last letter. Jesus says, "I am the 'A to Z,' the Beginning and the End."

Revelation 1:10-11 - John is commanded to write.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

Island of Patmos

That is, John was exiled there by the Roman government because of his proclamation of the gospel. It was on the island of Patmos that John received messages from Jesus to the churches and visions related to the end times.

In New Testament times, Patmos was a destination for criminals and political prisoners. Convicts were allowed relative freedom to roam the small island, but most had to provide their own food and shelter and were guarded by Roman soldiers against leaving. Many died of exposure, violent attacks by other convicts, or starvation. Tradition holds that John's friends and followers in Ephesus sent food and other supplies to John on the island, and that is how he survived.

Patmos is significant because of its relative insignificance. Patmos is another example of the way God "chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" (1 Corinthians 1:27–29). Patmos had nothing in itself that would draw the attention of the Lord, except that His servant John was there (Revelation 1:10). Though Patmos was but a dot in the ocean, God saw John there and entrusted him with important prophecies. John was exiled by the world, but he was not forsaken by God.

The Lord's Day

The Lord's day (as distinguished from the day of the Lord) is Sunday. The term Lord's day is used only once in Scripture. Revelation 1:10 says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet." Since the apostle John does not elaborate on the meaning of "Lord's day," we can assume that his target audience, first-century Christians, were already familiar with the expression.

Some have assumed that the Lord's day is the New Testament equivalent of the Sabbath. The Sabbath day was instituted by God for the nation of Israel to commemorate His deliverance of them from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). Sabbath began Friday at sunset and ended Saturday at sunset and was to be a day of complete rest from all labor, symbolic of the Creator's resting on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 20:11; 23:12). The Sabbath was a special sign to the Israelites that they had been set apart as followers of the most High God. Their keeping of the Sabbath would help distinguish them from the nations around them. However, nowhere in Scripture is the Sabbath ever referred to as the Lord's day. The term Sabbath was still in use within the Jewish community in New Testament times and is referred to as such by Jesus and the apostles (Matthew 12:5; John 7:23; Colossians 2:16).

JOHN'S VISION OF JESUS

Revelation 1:12-13 - Jesus in the midst of the lampstands.

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

First, John didn't see Jesus. He saw seven golden lampstands. These were not candlesticks, they were not menorahs, but they were free standing oil lamp stands. The lamps set on these lampstands.

Jesus spoke to John in the vision and explained what the seven candlesticks were: "The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars

are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches” (Revelation 1:20).

Most scholars agree that the seven candlesticks carry a meaning beyond those seven Asiatic churches in John’s day, representing in some way the entire church of Jesus Christ. Because the number seven often represents wholeness or completion in Scripture, many conclude that the seven churches represent all churches, or the church universal. Still others see the seven individual churches as symbols of the local church.

Candles => “brings light to darkness”

The light doesn’t come from the lampstands. The light comes from the oil lamps themselves. The stands merely make the light more visible. Therefore, the lampstands are a good picture of the church. We don’t produce the light, we simply display it.

Clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band: The clothing of Jesus indicates that He is a person of great dignity and authority. Long garments were only worn by those who didn’t have to work much, so they were a picture of great status and authority. The golden band around the chest probably hints at the garments of the high priest (Exodus 29:5).

Revelation 1:14-16 - John describes Jesus.

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

White Hair – wisdom, antiquity

Flame of Fire – Fire represents JUDGEMENT!

Feet like fine brass - speak of someone who has been through the fires of judgment and has come forth with a refined purity.

His voice - Jesus’ voice had the power and majesty of a mighty waterfall.

Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: This is a heavy sword (the ancient Greek word rhomphaia), used to kill and destroy. Sometimes the New Testament speaks of a smaller, more tactical sword known in the ancient Greek language as the machaira. Hebrews 4:12 uses the term for this smaller, more precise sword.

- Out of his mouth – mouth is the WORD OF GOD!

Revelation 1:17-18 - John’s reaction and Jesus’ assurance.

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

John was overwhelmed by this awesome vision, even though he was an apostle who knew Jesus on this earth. Even the three years John spent with Jesus on this earth did not really prepare him to see Jesus in His heavenly glory.

First, Jesus comforted John with a compassionate touch. Perhaps the touch of Jesus felt more familiar than the appearance of Jesus. Then Jesus gave John a command: “Do not be afraid.” John didn’t need to be afraid because He was in the presence of Jesus, and Jesus clearly identifies Himself to John with three titles.

Revelation 1:19-20 - Another command to write and an explanation.

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.