

HEAVEN

THE REVELATION

OF

JESUS CHRIST

Revelation 1.1-8

The author of the Book of Revelation.

“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” (Rev 1.1-2)

The Revelation of Jesus Christ:

The ancient Greek word translated **Revelation** is *apokalupsis* (apocalypse). The word simply means “a revealing, an unveiling.” The Book is simply 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.

If we catch everything else, but miss Jesus in the book, we miss the central message of the Book of Revelation.

“The great fault of many professors is that Christ is to them a character upon paper; certainly more than a myth, but yet a person of the dim past, an historical personage who lived many years ago, and did most admirable deeds, by the which we are saved, but who is far from being a living, present, bright reality.” (C H Spurgeon)

Which God gave Him to show His servants:

God gave this **Revelation of Jesus Christ to show His servants**, that it might be shown, not hidden. This is an *apocalypse* – a revelation, not an *apocryphal* which means “something hidden”.

Things which must shortly take place:

This describes *when* the events of this book will **take place** – they will happen **shortly**, and they **must** happen **shortly**. This means that 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.

i. Not all prophecy is predictive, but this prophetic book clearly is predictive. It describes things that **must shortly take place**. *The time is near* (Revelation 1:3) for the fulfillment of these things, but the time was not present at the time of writing.

Shortly take place:

Short and near are relative terms, and this is God’s timetable, not man’s. Yet for 2000 years, history has been *on the brink* of the consummation of all things, running parallel to the edge, *not* running

towards a distant point in time. **Shortly** comes from the ancient Greek phrase *en tachei*, which means “‘quickly or suddenly coming to pass,’ indicating rapidity of execution after the beginning takes place. The idea is not that the event may occur soon, but that when it does, it will be sudden.” (Walvoord)

He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John:

This tells us *who* wrote the Book of Revelation. It was **His servant John**, and the best evidence points to this being the Apostle John, the same writer of the Gospel of John and the books of 1, 2, and 3 John.

“John had visions from heaven; but he described them in his own language and manner.”
(Clarke)

John uses much symbolism which is tremendously powerful language where words may not be. For example, it is one thing to call someone or something evil or bad, but it is far more vivid to describe the image of a woman *drunk with the blood of the saints* (Revelation 17:6). The Book of Revelation is rooted in the Old Testament, which, of course John was very familiar with. It contains more than 500 allusions to the Old Testament, and 278 of the 404 verses in Revelation (that is almost 70%) make some reference to the Old Testament.

Many of the signs and visions of the Book of Revelation came to John through the supervision of an angel. Examples are found in Revelation 5:2, 7:2, 10:8 to 11:1, and 17:7. John knew he was recording Holy Scripture because he called it a **revelation** from God. He knew it came from the Father through Jesus, and not from any mere human. He also knew it was Holy Scripture because he called it the **word of God**, as an Old Testament prophet would say and he referred to it as the **testimony of Jesus Christ**.

The promise to the reader and keeper of this book.

“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” (Rev 1.3)

Blessed is he who reads... and keep those things which are written in it:

The Book of Revelation promises a particular and unique blessing to those who *read* and *keep* the message of this book. This is the first of the seven beatitudes found in the book of Revelation. The other six are found in Revelation 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, and 22:14. Because they neglect the book Revelation, many people miss this blessing. Fortunately, John didn't say that we had to *understand* everything in the Book of Revelation to be **blessed**. There are some difficult things in

this book that may only be understood as we look back at fulfilled prophecy; but we can be blessed by *reading* and *hearing* even when we don't understand.

“Neither must we only live up to the words of this prophecy, but die for it also, and be content to be burned with it, if called thereto; as that holy martyr, who when he saw the Revelation cast into the fire with him, cried out ‘O blessed Revelation, how happy am I to be burned in thy company!’” (Trapp)

John's Greeting of grace and peace.

“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” (Rev 1.4-5b)

This letter was originally addressed to seven selected churches of Asia from *God the Father*, who is described with the title **“Him who is and who was and who is to come”** which speaks to the eternal nature of God. It has the idea of a timeless Being, and is connected with the name *Yahweh* found in the Old Testament (Exodus 6:3, Exodus 17:15).

John says the letter is also from **“the seven Spirits who are before His throne”** which is a reference to *God the Holy Spirit*. This title, **“The seven Spirits who are before His throne”** speaks to the *perfection* and *completion* of the Holy Spirit. John used an Old Testament description of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 11:2 describes seven aspects of the Holy Spirit: *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord*. It isn't that there are seven different spirits of God, rather the Spirit of the Lord has these characteristics, and He has them all in fullness and perfection.

Further, John brought a greeting from God the Son, who is described by who He is and by what He has done: **“From Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth:”**

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. (Rev 1.5c-6)

To Him who loved us: What a beautiful title for Jesus! When **loved** is used, it is in the *aorist past tense*, meaning it points back to a particular time and place where Jesus **loved us, which of course is a reference to the cross**. It should be pointed out that many translations have incorrectly translated this verb as “*loves us*” (NASB, NIV, and NLT). Every believer should feel 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.

And washed us from our sins in His own blood: This is what happened when Jesus **loved us** at the cross. He **washed us** – cleansed us from the deep stain of sin, so that we really are *clean* before Him. Notice the order: first He **loved us**, then He **washed us**. It wasn’t that God washed us out of some sense of duty and then loved us because we were then clean. He loved us while we were dirty, but then He washed us.

Some scholars believe that John wrote *and loosed us from our sins*. There is only one letter different between the words washed and *loosed* in the ancient Greek language. Both words show up in ancient manuscripts, so it’s hard to say which one John wrote. Nevertheless, both are true – we are both washed and *loosed* from our sins.

And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father:

This is the status Jesus gives to those whom He **loved** in His work on the cross and who are **washed... in His own blood**. It would have been enough just to love them and cleanse them. But He goes far beyond and makes **us kings and priests to His God and Father**. As **kings** we are *God’s royalty* – this is privilege, status, and authority. As **priests**, so we are *God’s special servants*. We represent God to man and man to God. We offer sacrifice unto Him (Hebrews 13:15). We have privileged access to God’s presence (Romans 5:1-2).

To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever:

In light of all that Jesus did for us, it is right to praise Him. We should honor Him with all **glory and dominion forever and ever**. When we say this, we aren’t *giving* Jesus **glory and dominion**. We are simply *recognizing* that He has it and honouring Him for it.

To recognize the **glory** of Jesus is to be totally sold out for Him.

“Some of you are very like a mouse behind the wainscot. You are in the Lord’s house, but you are not known as one of the family: sometimes you give a little squeak in your hiding-place, and sometimes come out at night, as the mouse does, to pick up a crumb or two, without being seen. Is this worthy of yourself? Is it worthy of your Lord and Master?”

(C H Spurgeon)

To recognize the **dominion** of Jesus is to let Him truly rule over us.

Amen: This word – in the ancient Greek language, brought over from the Hebrew of the Old Testament – simply means “Yes.” It isn’t a wish that it *may* be so, but it is an affirmation that, through God, it *will* be so. *Jesus will be praised.*

“The Greek word *amen* is a transliteration of a Hebrew word of similar sound meaning ‘truth’ or ‘faithfulness,’ hence the meaning ‘be it true’ or ‘so be it.’” (Walvoord)

A description of the second advent 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” (Rev 1.7)

Behold, He is coming:

This is a command to *look* – to *check it out*. John moved from praising Jesus to describing His return. He wants *us* to **behold** the coming of Jesus. Jesus said that we should watch and wait for His coming (Matthew 24:42). It is something to *keep before the eye of our mind*, to **behold**. This wasn’t a supernatural vision of Jesus’ return. That supernatural vision will come later. This description is based on John’s understanding of Old Testament promises of the Messiah’s return and Jesus’ own words about His return. For example, John knew that Jesus was **coming** because Jesus said He was **coming**. Jesus said, *I will come again and receive you to Myself* (John 14:3).

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*. Understanding this connection with the glory of God, it is fitting – and wonderful – that the multitude of believers is called a *cloud*. God’s people are His glory. They are His “cloud,” His *Shekinah*.

And every eye will see Him: 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.

d. **Even they who pierced Him:** When Jesus comes, it will be a particularly meaningful revelation for the Jewish people. Of course, it was not the Jews alone **who pierced Him**. But we know John had in mind the revelation of Jesus to His own people because this is an allusion to Zechariah 12:10.

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

All the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him: When Jesus comes, it won't be only the Jewish people who **mourn** because of their previous rejection of Jesus. Since there will be people saved from **all the tribes of the earth** (Revelation 7:9), everyone will have a part in this mourning. We will all look at His scars and say, “We did this to Him.” John didn't need a special revelation to know **all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him**. He just needed to remember what Jesus said at Matthew 24:30:

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

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.” (Rev 1.8)

I am the Alpha and the Omega:

John is finished with his introduction, and now Jesus introduces Himself. After all, it is His revelation (*the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Revelation 1:1), so it isn't strange that He introduces it.

i. Some wonder if it is God the *Father* or God the *Son* speaking here. We suspect it is the *Son*, Jesus Christ, and we believe this for many reasons. First, since it is Jesus' Revelation, it seems appropriate that He introduced it. Second, the titles **Alpha and Omega** and **the Beginning and the End** are titles claimed by Jesus (Revelation 22:13). Third, though the title **who is and who was and who is to come** is used of God the Father in Revelation 1:4, it is also true of God the Son, and seems to be directed to Jesus in Revelation 11:17 and 16:5.

Who is and was and who is to come: As shown in the comments above on Revelation 1:4, this phrase communicates the *idea* behind the great Old Testament name for the Triune God, *Yahweh*. It

reflects His eternal nature and His unchanging presence. Jesus has this eternal nature just as much as God the Father does.

Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. (Micah 5:2)

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

The Almighty:

This word Almighty translates the ancient Greek word *pantokrater*, which literally means “the one who has his hand on everything.” It speaks of the great sovereign control of Jesus over everything – past, present, and future. This great word Almighty is used ten times in the New Testament, and nine of the ten times are in the Book of Revelation. This book has a striking emphasis on God’s sovereignty.