

Revelation
Introduction
"The Unveiling"
Revelation Chapter 1

Introduction

The book of Revelation is arguably the most controversial writing in all of Scripture. It has been misinterpreted, misunderstood, and often even completely avoided by many who claim to be legitimate Bible teachers! Any time the book is even mentioned it has a chilling effect even on people who claim to be Christians. But I am here to tell you that no true believer in Jesus Christ should ever fear the message of Revelation. For to the unbeliever, the message of the book speaks of the coming wrath of God. But to the believer, it speaks of the day when all things will be set right in this wicked world. This is why that John, the author of the book is able to boldly proclaim:

"Amen! Come LORD Jesus!"

Revelation 22:20b

For you see, to the believer, the book of Revelation speaks of the day when Jesus Christ will be fully "revealed" to the world. The word that John uses as the title of this book, translated "Revelation" is "apokalupasis" in the Greek. It is the word from which we derive our English word "Apocalypse", which to us in modern times carries with it a sense of dread. But the word actually means to unveil or make something visible that was not previously seen. The book of Revelation, therefore is the story of Christ's unveiling to the whole world. When He came to earth the first time, His nature, His very deity was clothed or veiled as it were, in human flesh.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us....."

John 1:14a

But in the book of Revelation, the veil of flesh is removed and all will see Christ as He truly is! This is the very time when those who have believed in Him will be vindicated for all the world to see. It will be a time of great mourning for those who have refused to believe. But it will be a time of great celebration to those who are anxiously awaiting the return of our Savior. This is then, the reason that no believer should respond to this particular portion of Scripture with any sense of fear or dread. For it simply speaks of the day that we are all longing to see! Namely the return of The LORD Jesus Christ.

As previously mentioned, the book was penned by the Apostle John. John along with many other followers of Christ, had been exiled to the Isle of Patmos during the reign of Roman Emperor Domitian. Although all the other disciples had been martyred for their faith in Christ, God was obviously not finished with John, the beloved disciple. He had one more important task to complete. He was to be given the both details of The coming of Christ, and God's wrath upon the disobedient. And then He was commanded to share this vision with those who believe and are awaiting the return of Jesus.

The book was written sometime around 95-96 AD. The temple in Jerusalem had already been destroyed by the Romans, and many Jews were scattered throughout the known world. It would have been a time of great distress for the people of God. But God had not abandoned His people. And to them, John's vision given on the Isle of Patmos was meant to be a message of hope and encouragement.

The Book of Revelation, is best interpreted by the formula given in Chapter 1:19, which divides the message into three sections: "What you have seen, What is now, and What will take place later." It is the story of the past the present and the future in regards to Christ and His Church. Much symbolism is used throughout the book to illustrate truth. Just a few of these symbols are "horns" which represent power, "Eyes" which represent wisdom.

Also as is the case in The Gospel of John the number "seven" is often used to represent fullness and completion. Keep in mind that Revelation is the story of the "finished work" of the all-powerful, all-knowing God, Who will see to it that all He has promised will indeed come to pass. The righteous will shine like the stars of heaven and the wicked shall perish in everlasting judgment. God will complete what He has begun. And His Christ, Who first came in humility, shall one day return to be revealed in power and glory.

“Christ Jesus, Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be exploited. Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when He had come as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross. For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the Name that is above every name, so that at The Name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God The Father.” Philippians 2:5b-11

This is the very essence of the book of Revelation, the day when Christ Jesus will be revealed and revered by all mankind. From the very first chapter we see the The Seven Spirits of God, The Son of Man, And the Seven Churches.

The Seven Spirits (vs. 1-8)

As I have said many times before, Revelation is a very Jewish, very “Old Testament” kind of book. According to John MacArthur’s commentary on Revelation, it has been estimated that as many as 278 of its 404 verses are derived from Old Testament Scriptures. This is important to understand as we interpret this very important book of Scripture. It takes the Old Testament to understand the New Testament. There are so many churches today that ignore this reality when teaching the Scriptures, and this is one of the many reasons that there is so much false doctrine prevalent in our churches today.

John begins his writing by saying that he was “in The Spirit on The LORD’S day” (vs. 9) when he was given this revelation from God. The LORD’S day was a common term in the early church for Sunday, the day that Christ rose from the dead. As a result of this resurrection miracle, Christians began worshipping on Sunday the first day of the week. John was doing exactly that when The Spirit of God began to reveal to Him what was to take place when The Son of God returns in power and glory.

John credits the revelation that was given to Him to the One Who is, Who was, and is to come, and from The Seven Spirits before the throne. Now most believers are aware that Jesus is the Alpha and The Omega, The One Who is, and was, and is to come. But many are confused as to Whom are the Seven Spirits before the Throne? This is simply a reference to the fullness of The Spirit of The Living God. And at once we are reminded of the old Testament nature of this book. Listen to the words of The Prophet Isaiah as he describes the Messiah filled with the Ruach HaKodesh (The Holy Spirit) in sevenfold sequence.

“Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. (1.) The Spirit of The LORD will rest on Him— (2.)The Spirit of wisdom, and (3.) understanding, (4.) a Spirit of counsel, and (5.) strength, (6.) a Spirit of Knowledge and of (7.) the fear of The LORD.” Isaiah 11:1-2

So you see, Jesus, Who is the image of The Invisible God (Colossians 1:15), is the complete (sevenfold) manifestation of God Himself, and as God, He is the revealer of all Scripture. He is the One Who came to John on the Isle of Patmos on The LORD’S Day and showed him all that would take place when he returns to bring justice and healing to the nations. Make no mistake, The Book of Revelation makes it plain for all to see, that Jesus, the One Who was crucified, is the Alpha and the Omega and is fully God. This universe belongs to Him. And those who believe in Him shall not perish but will have everlasting life (John 3:16)

The Son of Man with Seven Stars and Lampstands (vs. 9-19)

When John hears a “voice like a trumpet” he turns to see a marvelous sight. It is none other than The LORD Jesus Christ appearing in all of His power and glory. He is dressed in a white robe with a golden sash wrapped around His body. To those of us who are Gentiles this choice of apparel has no real

significance other than a symbol of Christ's purity, but to the Jew it means so much more. For you see, the high priest of Israel would similarly clothe himself in this manner upon Yom Kippur the Day of Atonement. Yom Kippur comes near the end of the Jewish year, and it was the day when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood upon the mercy seat in order to atone for the sins of the people. He would change from his regular garments, take a cleansing bath and then go about his duties for the day as the high priest.

When John sees Christ in His glory, He is dressed as the ultimate High Priest, Who shed His own blood as an atonement for the sins of all believers. And the message here is very clear, just as the Day of Atonement comes near the end of the year, the time is at hand for those who believe. Jesus is coming soon. In the prophetic books of the Old Testament, there is a day that is mentioned several times. This day is called "The Day of The LORD," and it speaks of a time that will come in the future when God will pass judgment upon those who are rebellions to His commandments. The prophets speak of this being a terrible time of wrath. The feast day of Yom Kippur has often been associated with The Day of The LORD, for in ancient Israel it was believed that to those who had not repented of their sin during this fearful time, would not survive the coming year. In much the same way, those who have refused to turn away from their sin and follow Christ, will also be doomed when the Day of The LORD comes. But many, including the nation's of Israel will see this day for what it is and repent before the end comes. The prophet Jeremiah says of The Day of The LORD:

"How awful that day will be! There will be nortner like it! It will be a time of great trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it." Jeremiah 30:7

So you see, when Christ appears dressed in the garb of a High Priest upon the day of Atonement, we know that The Day of The LORD is come. And Christ appears to John, first to warn His Church to be ready, and then to describe in great detail the things that will take place hereafter. Revelation is a message that can only be understood by believers.

" The revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave to show His SERVANTS what must soon take place." Revelation 1:1 (emphasis added)

So you see, to the non-believer, this book reads as some kind of "science fiction" novel. But to those who belong to Christ and are awaiting His return, the message is abundantly clear. A terrible time of wrath is coming upon this world, and the Church needs to be about the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), for our LORD, The Son of Man is coming soon.

To us, the book of Revelation, is a history lesson as well as a vision of what will take place during the great and terrible "Day of The LORD" also known as The Tribulation, the seven year time that will come at the end. Many will perish, but some will believe and be saved during this time of unprecedented wrath that shall come upon the earth. But make no mistake, the reason that the Tribulation period will last seven long years is to give as many who will come to faith in Christ, the opportunity to repent and be saved from the eternal fires of hell.

Christ appears to John standing amidst seven golden lampstands holding in His hand seven stars. As previously discussed, there is much symbolism in the book of Revelation. But in many cases, we do not have to speculate as to what the symbols represent. The scripture plainly tells us what we are seeing here: The lampstands are the seven churches located in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) during the time of John. And the message is un-mistakingly clear, Jesus Christ is LORD of His Church! He is standing among the lampstands and holding the stars in His hands.

The Seven Churches (vs. 20)

Christ appeared to John with a specific message to the churches of Asia Minor. The churches there listed in a kind of "clockwise" geographical order are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. As LORD of The Church, Christ has the wisdom and also the right to offer praise and or criticism to His followers. Some of the churches in John's day were doing quite well

indeed, even in the midst of severe persecution from Nero's Roman Empire. Others however, were not performing well. Christ gives encouragement where appropriate as well as warnings where necessary.

Although we know that these were indeed real churches in very real ancient settings and times, these seven churches are also representative of seven different ages of church history. In the weeks to come we will examine not only each of the known churches in Asia Minor, but also the church eras in history that they represent. For you see, Christ is the All-Knowing God, and He sees not only the present age with crystal clarity, but He sees every age looking forward in time as well. Before God ever said, "Let there be light" in Genesis Chapter one, He could foresee everything that would happen in the book of Revelation. His omniscience is perfect. This is how we know that we can count upon every promise that He has given.

As we begin the study of this wonderful book of Scripture, let us do so looking forward to all that we have been promised in Christ Jesus. The Believer has nothing to dread from the writings of this wonderful book. We have only to look forward to the Marriage Supper of The Lamb that awaits the Bride of Christ when He comes for us! So let study this Word and prepare ourselves for His coming. All the while remembering that we shall be blessed for our study efforts as we "read aloud" and examine the words given to John so many years ago. For God has promised us:

**"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near."
Revelation 1:3**