

Revelation 1 (NASB) **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**

Message to the Seven Churches

In this study, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translation is used because it seems to be the most accurate translation. Unless otherwise specified, the scriptural references listed in this study are NASB.

One-fifth of the Bible addressed the future before the events took place. Christ's return to earth is recorded 318 times in the New Testament. The book of Revelation is difficult to interpret because some of the book is written in symbolism and because John is writing about future events that he himself doesn't understand. People have trouble understanding Revelation because it requires understanding that only the Holy Spirit can give them. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says *"But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. (NLT)"* One BIG difference between John's prophecy in Revelation and Daniel's prophecy in the book bearing his name is that Revelation reveals and Daniel closed up or sealed up the prophecy. Revelation 22:10 says *"And he said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.'" Daniel 12:4 says "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."* There are 500 references in the Revelation to the OT. Of the 404 verses in Revelation, 278 verses make some reference to the Old Testament.

1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

The real word of Revelation is "Apocalypse". The Apocalypse conjures up pictures of the end of the world, human annihilation and complete destruction of the world. Apocalypse can also give a majestic sense of God's unveiling of Himself to us. What images does that conjure up in your mind? Revelation really translates as "the unveiling or uncovering". So the opening five words of Revelation tell us the book is concerned not with the coming disasters but will show the true greatness of Jesus who is the Christ. The Greek words for "*shortly*" in verse one are 'en tachei', and it means "suddenly or quickly coming to pass" like Tacos - tachometer (RPMs). The words, "*shortly take place*" in verse one means it will happen "all at once," in the blink of an eye, and "*the time is near*" in verse three means that it will take place in the near future.

John ended up on the Island of Patmos because he was exiled there by Nero after surviving being boiled in oil. In John 21:20-23, when asked about John's future demise, He replied: *"what is that to you?"* These verses in John 21 do not say John will be alive (on earth) forever. Only that Peter and others should not be concerned about death, our time is under God's control. In the sixteenth century, John Foxe wrote about Nero's treatment of John and how Domitian exiled John to the island of Patmos. John referred to himself as "the disciple Jesus loved" and who is now receiving the Revelation.

1:2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

John testifies to this Revelation. Scripture backs that up in John 19:35, John 1:32 and John 21:24. God includes the book of Revelation in His Word because He always reveals what He will do before He does it. As it says in Amos 3:7, *"Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret*

*counsel to His servants the prophets.” He would do that so men will not be able to say, “You caught us by surprise. No fair!” Romans 1:20 confirms this, it says, “For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.” The Greek word for servant is *doúlos* (Strong’s #1401) and means “someone who belongs to another; a bond-slave, without any ownership rights of their own”.*

1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

It says outright that if we read it and keep the things in it, we will be blessed. Some denominations teach that we are not supposed to be able to understand the book of Revelation. Some pastors find it acceptable to preach on the first 3 chapters of Revelation but do not touch the last 19 chapters. Verse 3 contradicts that false teaching, this verse says we will be blessed if we heed what the book says. This verse is one of the beatitudes of Revelation which are found in Revelation 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 22:7, 22:14. These beatitudes promise blessings which contradict the false teachings. Only one of the 10 commandments comes with a promised blessing. Exodus 20:12 says “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.” If we believe the 10 commandments, it becomes ridiculous not to believe Revelation.

Verse three speaks to the Rabbi, now also Pastors, who read (“*He who reads*”) and to the congregation (“*Those who hear*”). BUT you receive the blessing by keeping the things written in the book. The Greek word for keep is ‘*téreó*’ which means “to watch over and guard”. Contrary to popular belief, Revelation is meant to be a comfort to Christ’s followers. When you truly understand it, it will bring peace to your hearts. For those that believe that the Rapture is going to occur before the Tribulation or even early in the Tribulation, the horrible things described in the second half of the Tribulation won’t impact them. They will be in Heaven during these terrible times.

1:4 John to the seven churches that 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 of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Asia here is not China, India or Vietnam, it is Turkey. The difference between Paul’s letters to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, etc. and John’s letter is that Paul wrote individual letters to individual churches. John wrote one letter to be read by all of the churches. The title, “Him who is and was and is to come” is God the Father. We know this because The Holy Spirit and Jesus are mentioned separately in these same verses. We know that the seven spirits refer to the Holy Spirit because Isaiah gives us the seven attributes of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:2 says “*The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*” The number seven represents completeness or finished in Scripture. Genesis 2:2-3 says “*By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.*” Jesus is described as “the faithful witness.” The word “witness” means martyr. It is taught that the Bible never mentions the Trinity. However, these two verses give us the Trinity.

Romans 5:8 says, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* The NASB translation of Revelation 1:5 says “loves us” and some say “loved us” but loved us is correct. It is similar to what we read in John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world”*. He DOES love us still but this points to the moment salvation was granted to all who believe. The continuation of the verse confirms our teaching. The order is loved us and washed us and not loves us and washes us. Notice the order: first loved, then washed. It wasn't that God washed us out of some sense of duty and then loved us because we are then clean. He loved us while we were dirty, but then He washed us.

It is important that we are made both Kings and Priests. In the past, you could only be one or the other. We are now declared to be both. See 2 Chronicles 26:16-23. King Uzziah became so arrogant that he went into the Temple and burned incense to God. Only priests were allowed to burn incense to God in the Temple. God punished him with a disease for the rest of his life. Being made kings shows that we are royalty to God. That is how valuable we are! As Priests, we are God's special servants. We represent God to man and man to God. We offer a sacrifice unto Him. We can give to God sacrifices of praise. Hebrews 13:15 says *“Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”* The high priests have access to God that no one else on earth had. (Think about the Tabernacle.) This privilege is now granted to all believers. Mathew 27:50-51 tells us that when Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. We are called priests. See also Romans 5:1-2. This is significant because we are now joint heirs with Christ in the realm of heaven. (See Hebrews 4:14 and Romans 8:17.) The final word in these verses is ‘amen’ which simply means, “yes.” It is an affirmation of the statement. We say ‘amen’ at the end of a prayer because we want God to know that we agree with what was said in the prayer.

1:7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

The word ‘Behold’ means to watch. Matthew 24:42 (NIV) says *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”* Verse 7 is a fulfillment of prophecy. (See Acts 1:9-11.) He went up to heaven in a cloud and will return the same way. God appeared to the Israelites in times past in a cloud or as a cloud. See Exodus 13:21-22, Exodus 16:10, Exodus 19:9, Exodus 24:15-18 and Daniel 7:13-14. Jesus describes His own return as coming in a cloud. (See Matthew 26:64.) The phrase “Every eye will see Him” is important to believers because it tells us not to be fooled. EVERY person will know when He returns. (See Matthew 24:26-27). The phrase “Even those who pierced Him” refers to the Jews. Zechariah 12:10 says *“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”* Verse seven is not referring to an ‘angry’ Jesus. By this time the Jews will have accepted Jesus as their Lord. (See Matthew 23:29 and Romans 11:25-26.) The phrase “all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him” fulfills the prophecy from Matthew 24:30. It says *“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.”* I hope you are seeing how the whole Bible fits together.

1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

The "Alpha and the Omega" refer to the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. We know that this is Jesus and not God the Father because this verse speaks of Jesus' return to earth. (See Revelation 22:12-13) Revelation 22:13 differs from Revelation 1:8 in that the words the phrase 'the first and the last' are added. It says "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.*" Jesus is speaking of the beginning and the end of the Law, not of God, who is eternal. The phrase "Who was and is and is to come" reflects His eternal nature. (See Micah 5:2, Hebrews 13:8 and Psalm 90:2.) The word "Almighty" comes from the Greek word '*pantokrater*', which literally means "the one who has his hand on everything."

The Patmos Vision

1:9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

John was sent to the island of Patmos and it was credited to Emperor Domitian. Patmos is believed to be comparable to Alcatraz. It is most like Alcatraz in that it was a small, rocky and barren island used to keep criminals were they could serve out their prison terms. Both Alcatraz and Patmos were islands surrounded by water to limit the chance for escape.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, 11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

As verse 10 begins it says that John was "In the Spirit." Are there times when you feel especially close to God? At this point, John goes way beyond that feeling. Not only is he close to God in the Holy Spirit but he is an open vessel awaiting God's revelation. "John was carried beyond normal sense into a state where God could reveal supernaturally the contents of this book." (Walvoord) The idea isn't simply that John was *walking in the Spirit*, but that he received this unique revelation from the Holy Spirit. John was also in the Spirit in the following verses: Revelation 4:2, 17:3 and 21:10.

"The Lord's Day" and "The Day of the Lord" are not the same. "The Lord's Day" for most Christians is Sunday. It is the day set aside for worshiping our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for what He has done for us and for who He is in our lives. "The Day of the Lord" is often referred to as a day in the future where the Lord will perform His final judgment. Joel referred to it as the "terrible day of the Lord" in Joel 2:31, "*The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and terrible day of the Lord arrives.*" (NLT)

According to the following verses, tell us who gives the Revelation to John.

Isaiah 41:4 Jesus, "*It is I, the Lord, the First and the Last, I alone am he.*" (NLT)

Isaiah 44:6 Jesus, "*I am the First and the Last; there is no other God.*"

Isaiah 48:12 Jesus, "*I alone am God, the First and the Last.*"

John was told to write down what he saw and send it to the seven churches but Daniel was told to seal up the prophecy that he saw. Daniel 12:4 says "*But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.*" According to Daniel, the phrase "to increase knowledge" points to people going here and there to increase their knowledge of Daniel's prophecy. Walvoord notes, "Whether or not physical wandering and travel is involved, the implication is that attempts to understand the truth will

require considerable effort.” Paul wrote to 7 churches: Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, and Thessalonica.

1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

The first thing John sees when he turns around are the seven lampstands. These lampstands were freestanding. They are symbolic of the Menorah (Golden Lampstand) that gave light to the Tabernacle. Exodus 25:31-37 gives a detailed description of the Menorah. In Daniel 7:13, Daniel saw Jesus as the Son of Man in a vision. Daniel 7:13 tells us “*I (Daniel) kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.*” The Ancient of Days is a title given to God in the Bible. The golden band/sash around the chest signifies that Jesus is our High Priest. Exodus 39:3 describes how this sash was made. While the threads for the priest were other colors mixed with gold, Jesus’ band being all gold shows that He is above all other priests. This is not the first time John has seen Jesus in His heavenly glory. He also saw Jesus like this during the Transfiguration. (See Matthew 17:1-2, Mark 9:2-3 and Luke 9:28-29.) All of these references describe it as Luke 9:28-29 does, “*As the men watched, Jesus’ appearance was transformed,³ and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them.*”

1:14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

This is not the first description of this kind in the Bible. Daniel 7:9 describes another one, “*I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire.*” Note the similarities. The description that “His eyes were like a flame of fire” shows judgment. Jesus will soon show John the final judgment that will come upon the whole world. The fact that His feet were made of brass is significant because brass is used to build the brazen altar used for sacrifice and it shows that Jesus is our sacrifice. (See Exodus 27:2-6, NOTE - Only the KJV has this correct.) The phrase “His voice was like the sound of many waters” shows power. Psalm 29:3-4 tell us so, “*3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; The God of glory thunders, the Lord is over many waters. 4 The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is majestic.*” The sword in Jesus mouth is the “Word of God”. Ephesians 6:17 says, “*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*”

1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 20 As for 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 are the seven churches.

No one is going to tell Jesus just how it is or how it should be. This is the disciple whom Jesus loved. He is the one who spent three years with Jesus and His closest friend. Jesus also entrusted the care

of His mother to John. He is absolutely terrified in these verses. Jesus responds to John with compassion. Satan is not the “Lord of hell or hades” because Jesus holds the keys.

Jesus tells John to write down what he was seeing or being told in the book of Revelation 16 times. The seven stars are Pastors. The word is ‘angeloi’ or plural ‘angelos’ and means head elder or Pastor. The letters in the following chapters are written to the angels of the seven churches but angels can’t be charged with wrongdoing and then be allowed to repent. We translate the word incorrectly. These ‘angelos’ are in Jesus’ right hand. This shows that they are kept and protected by Jesus.