

The Revelation to John

Chapter 1

Written by the apostle John near the end of the first century, Revelation shows how events will play out in the end times: "the end of the world." The title of the book, Revelation, is a translation of the Greek word apokalypsis, which means "an unveiling or a disclosure." The book offers a blessing to everyone who reads it and a blessing to those who obey.

Revelation is John's fifth and last New Testament book. In the Gospel of John, he wrote about Jesus as God's Son and the Savior of all who believe on Him. In the letter 1 John, he offered several evidences of the believer's salvation. In 2 John, he emphasized the importance of Christian love and sound doctrine. In 3 John, he wrote about loyalty to the truth and the need to walk in the truth.

Revelation reveals how prophetic passages in the Old Testament that foretell yet future events will be fulfilled. It also shows how the events predicted in Matthew 24, Matthew 25, and 2 Thessalonians will come to pass.

The book of Revelation begins with John's declaration that God had given him the revelation of Jesus Christ, and he extends a greeting like the apostle Paul's greeting in his letters. John greets his readers with grace and peace from Jesus Christ, whom he identifies as trustworthy, eternal, and sovereign. He ascribes glory and power forever to Jesus because of His love and redemption. John views believers as appointed by the Lord to be a kingdom of priests to serve God (Revelation 1:1–8).

In the first chapter of Revelation we read that Jesus appears to the apostle John, who was banished by Rome to the Island of Patmos because of his faith. Jesus tells John to write about what he saw, about the present, and about what will take place in the future. John describes his personal circumstance when Jesus appeared to him and commissioned him to write seven letters to seven churches. He also describes Jesus in His glorified form, these descriptions suggest power, wisdom, and majesty (Revelation 1:9–16).

The churches are represented in this passage as individual lampstands, among which Jesus is standing (Revelation 1:17–20).

The following passages will describe Jesus' message to each of these congregations.

Verse Context:

Revelation 1:1–3 is the prologue to the book of Revelation. It establishes the authority for the entire writing by stating that this uncovering, this "revelation", is from Jesus Christ, given by God to John. John testifies that what he saw was a message from and about Jesus Christ. He promises that all who read and obey the words of Revelation will be blessed.

Revelation 1:4–8 identifies John's audience as the seven churches in Asia. John addresses these churches with a greeting from God, and he ascribes praise to Jesus. Jesus

is coming in glory, John declares, and His coming will be visible to everyone. At that time, the tribes of Israel will express remorse because of His crucifixion. John concludes this passage by quoting Jesus as saying He is the beginning, the eternal Almighty One.

Revelation 1:9–11 explains why John is on the island of Patmos: "the word of God and testimony of Jesus," likely referring to some kind of persecution. He further explains that he was "in the Spirit." This possibly refers to a spiritual state of mind, a sense of being controlled by the Holy Ghost, or a feeling of overt communication from God. While in that condition, John heard the Lord command him to write on a scroll what he saw, and send it to seven churches existing in that era.

Revelation 1:12–16 unfolds what John saw when he turned after hearing a loud voice command him. The speaker stood in the midst of seven golden lampstands. He was wearing a long robe and a golden sash around His chest. His hair was white. His eyes resembled a blazing fire. His feet were like bronze. When He spoke, His voice sounded like the roar of many waters. He held seven stars in His right hand. A double-edged sword protruded from His mouth, and His face shone like the noonday sun.

Revelation 1:17–20 reports John's dramatic response to seeing the glorified Son of God and Jesus' comforting actions and words. Jesus also describes Himself and repeats His command to John to write what he has seen, the present things, and what lay in the future. Finally, He explains the meaning of the seven stars and the seven lampstands.

Chapter Summary:

The Roman government had banished John to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. While John was at Patmos, the risen, glorified Son of God appeared to him and commanded him to write "the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this" (Revelation 1:19). John pronounces blessings to those who read and obey Revelation, and then he greets his readers warmly and describes Jesus' appearance.

Book Summary

The word "revelation" means "an unveiling or disclosure." This writing unveils future events such as the rapture, three series of judgments that will fall on the earth during the tribulation, the emergence of the Antichrist, the persecution of Israel and her amazing revival, as well as Jesus' second coming with His saints to the earth, the judgment of Satan and his followers, and finally, the eternal state. This content, combined with the original Greek term apokalypsis, is why we now refer to an end-of-the-world scenario as "an apocalypse."

Chapter Context

The apostle John begins this chapter by stating that he received the revelation of Jesus Christ by divine activity. God sent this vision to John while he was on the island of Patmos, likely as a punishment from the Roman government. This book follows John's four prior messages contained in the New Testament: the Gospel of John and the letters 1,

2, and 3 John. Chapters 2 and 3 tell what Jesus dictated to seven churches in Asia Minor, while the rest of John's message concerns future events.

Outline Revelation 1:1-20

I. Revelation of Christ

- A. The Source of Revelation (Rev 1:1)
- B. The Purpose of Revelation (Rev 1:1-3)
- C. The Person of Revelation (Rev 1:4-8)

II. Response to Revelation

- A. John's Vision and Response (Rev 1:9-11)
- B. The Call to Hear and Heed (Rev 1:3)
- C. The Importance of Obedience (Rev 1:19)

III. Reality of Christ's Authority

- A. Christ's Eternal Nature (Rev 1:8)
- B. Christ's Sovereign Power (Rev 1:17-18)
- C. Christ's Assurance to Believers (Rev 1:19-20)

Three-Point Outline

1) Jesus is the Revealer who communicates God's plan (Revelation 1:1-3)

- **The book begins with a divine unsealing:** "The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what soon must take place." (Rev 1:1)
- Jesus is the mediator who conveys God's message to His people. God plan is entrusted to the Jesus and then delivered to John for the church.
- The blessing rests on those who read, hear, and keep the words of this prophecy (Rev 1:3). The text invites active engagement: we listen, study, and obey.
- **John 1:18** (no one has seen the God except the Son), showing that Jesus is the divine revelation to humanity.

2) Jesus is the Eternal One who stands in the midst of His churches (Revelation 1:4-8)

- The letter is addressed to "the seven churches" in Asia, yet it is from the one who is, who was, and who is to come, and from the sevenfold Spirit before the throne (Rev 1:4-4:5). The risen Christ is present where His people gather and endure.
- **John's worshipful depiction:** "I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me" and he saw the Son in radiant glory, with a voice like a trumpet (Rev 1:10-13). The vision centers on Jesus' walking among the lampstands, symbolizing His intimate presence with His churches (Rev 1:12-13, 20).

- Jesus as exalted Judge and Savior: He identifies Himself as the first and the last, the living one who was dead and is now alive forever (Rev 1:17-18). This is the foundation for confidence in trials and temptations: He has conquered death and holds the keys of Hell and Death (Rev 1:18).
- Cross-reference: Matt 28:20; Heb 1:3; Isa 6:3; Christ's perpetual presence and glory among His people.

3) Jesus is the Source of radiant glory who communicates truth for holy living (Revelation 1:9-20)

- John's exile on Patmos becomes a theater of divine revelation as Jesus appears in cosmic splendor yet seeks to bring comfort to the persecuted and faithful (Rev 1:9-12, 17-18).
- The vision emphasizes a living, personal Christ: "I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!" (Rev 1:18). This is the grounding for hope amid suffering and the motive for steadfast faithfulness.
- The imagery of the Son of Man among the lampstands and the alpha and omega titles point toward Christ's authority over the churches: to each church, He speaks with authority about what is true, what is commendable, and what must be corrected (Rev 1:13-16; 1:20).
- **Application for today:** Christ's presence with His people reassures us that truth is not a distant doctrine but a living person who shepherds, judges, and sustains His church through every era.