

## *Revelation Chapter 1*

### *Introduction to Revelation...*

*The Book of Revelation represents the climax of human history, and the fulfilment of God's plan for mankind (for you and for me)...*

The first two verses: “**The revelation** (singular, ἀποκάλυψις, *apocalypsis* = unveiling) **of Jesus Christ, which God gave [to] him** (to whom? To Jesus Christ – the revelation is a gift from the Father to the Son – that is why it is so precious! Why was it given?), **to show to his servants the things that must soon** (ἐν τάχει, *en tachei* = quickly, suddenly) **take place. He made it known** (ἐσήμανεν, *esemanen* = literally, he ‘signified it’, ‘rendered it into signs’) **by sending his angel to his servant John...**”

The entire Book of Revelation is in code, but each part of the code is explained somewhere else in the Bible, if not in Revelation itself (for example, see verse 20). The 404 verses that make up the Book of Revelation contain over 800 *allusions or references* to Old Testament passages – so if the book seems a little strange to our ears, it means that we have not done our homework properly, and we don't know our Old Testament well enough!

Revelation is the only book in the Bible that has the audacity to say, ‘Read me, I'm special!’ (see verse 3; see also Luke 11 v 28). It is also the only book that contains its own outline. In verse 19, John is told to write

- (i) “the things that you have seen” (i.e. the risen Jesus, Chapter 1);
- (ii) “those that are” (the seven churches of Asia Minor, Chapters 2 and 3, the most important chapters for us as they concern the Church); and
- (iii) “those that are to take place after this” (μετὰ ταῦτα, *meta tauta* = ‘after these things’, Chapters 4 to 22).

After what things? From Chapter 4 onwards the book becomes very Jewish, and the Church is conspicuous by its absence! So where is the Church, after Chapter 3?

There are several different viewpoints concerning this book:

1. **Preterist** – then only (i.e. everything in Revelation happened before AD 70, the fall of Jerusalem)
2. **Historical** – historical only (i.e. everything in Revelation happened generally in history)
3. **Idealist** – allegorical only (i.e. nothing in Revelation need be taken literally)
4. **Futurist** – prophetic.

However, the Book of Revelation actually claims to be the last of these, i.e. ‘prophetic’ (see verse 3).

The book was written by the apostle John, suffering persecution under Roman rule – probably under Emperor Domitian, around 96 AD, as his exile to the prison island of Patmos suggests (verse 9). The struggle between the people of Christ and Rome had reached a state more severe than that experienced in the Book of Acts. Emperor worship had become common in Nero's reign (60 AD onwards), and the outlook was dark...

*[MORE OVER...]*

### ***John's prayer and greetings (verses 4 to 8)***

- Notice the titles describing Jesus in verse 5: “faithful witness”; “firstborn of the dead”; “ruler of kings on earth”. How does John then describe Jesus’ attitude to us, and what he has done for us (verses 5 and 6)? See also Ephesians 1 v 7, 1 Peter 2 v 9.
- The “seven spirits” (verse 4) refer to the sevenfold character of the Holy Spirit, as described in Isaiah 11 v 2.
- Verse 7 refers to Christ’s Second Coming (see Daniel 7 v 13, Zechariah 12 v 10, Acts 1 v 9 to 11). How do you view the prospect of his Second Coming – with fear, or with joy, or a mixture of both?

### ***John's vision of Christ (verses 9 to 20)***

- In verse 9 John refers to his own personal experience. In what ways do you think all Christians share in such experiences?
- Next, in verses 12 to 16, John sees a vision of Christ, which is symbolic. For each feature described, what aspect of Jesus’ character is revealed? What is the total impression given? (See also Daniel 10 v 5 and 6).
- How would you describe John’s reaction at the beginning of verse 17? Notice how this compares with Daniel’s response in similar circumstances (see Daniel 10 v 7 to 9).
- In verses 17 to 20, what does Jesus say about himself, and his relationship with the seven churches of Asia?

*Prayer –*

*Lord, thank you for the Book of Revelation. Help us not only to read and hear these words, but to take them to heart, and to be faithful and obedient to the truth of your Word.*

*Amen.*