

## John's Introduction

Rev 1:1-8

### “Book of the Revelation”

In Greek – ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ

In English - The Revelation of Jesus

The book of Revelation resembles strongly the OT books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah; like them, is the product of a writer who belonged to a minority group who was either threatened with, or was actually persecuted. Revelation belongs to the later part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Christian century when the Church had withdrawn from Judaism and was initially recognized as a separate movement by the Roman world.

It has been said that one rule for biblical interpretation that is valid for the study of any OT or NT text is this; “**lean is better than luxurious.**” We should beware of interpretations that import into the text itself premises or conclusions which the interpreter has already determined ahead of time. When it comes to biblical studies, if we are to err, it should be on the side of interpretative restraint rather than on the side of interpretive excess. In order to derive as much as possible from this study we need to come with an open mind and heart, with an innocent approach - no preconceived ideas. Our first goal as Christian interpreters must be to let the text speak for itself, and in its own terms. We must take the Book of Revelation as it is, and listen closely to what John tells us about his vision. Then we must try to understand what it means in its own setting, and for our lives today. *The scope of the Book of Revelation covers the progress of Christianity from the first century to the end of time.*

The visions contained in the Book of Revelation were given by Christ to His beloved apostle, John, during his exile on the Isle of Patmos. It was first distributed not long after his death, about the year AD 97. John, now about ninety, was on Patmos, but he found himself, “**on the Lord's Day... in the Spirit**” and received the vision - glorious, inspiring, thrilling. Patmos was surrounded by the sea, making escape impossible. Even when the enemy of Christianity would try to isolate the apostle, he could not keep John from being freed that morning into a spiritual freedom and vision that only the Creator God could bring.

There are many legends and traditions gathered about John. Some of the early church fathers who had been John's disciples have left it on record that on his release from Patmos, he returned to Ephesus, where he fell asleep, and passed once more into the presence of his Master.

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## Prologue

**The** revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed is the one who reads 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.

## Greetings and Doxology

<sup>4</sup>John,

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

**To** him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup>and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

<sup>7</sup>Look, he is coming with the clouds,  
and every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him;  
and all the peoples of the earth will mourn  
because of him.

So shall it be! Amen.

<sup>8</sup>"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

## I. **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**

- an unveiling or a disclosure

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- A. Christ is Revealed
  - 1. for understanding
  - 2. with authority

John brings into light a central theme of this book right here in the beginning - **Authority**

What is it that grants meaning to life?

He was not becoming something different, He was *Unveiled*

- B. Mt. of Transfiguration (Matt 17.1 -9)

## II. The Blessedness of Believers

John tells his readers that they are “**blessed**” if they hear and keep the message of this writing. Eight times in the Revelation the word “**blessed**” appears (1.3 twice, 14.13, 16.15, 19.9, 20.6, 22.7. and 22.14). “**Blessed**” in Greek means “**happy**,” but the Hebrew word that lies behind this word in John’s mind is probably *ashar*, and its meaning is very interesting. In the Old Testament the two words used for “**bless**” are *bâarak*, which means kneel or bow down before, and the second is *ashar*, which means to find the right pathway in the face of false pathways. *It has to do with finding meaning in the face of chaos.*

According to John we are in the deepest sense **blessed** when we discover the meaningful pathway. The times may be dangerous, but neither the circumstances nor a timetable about potential circumstances are the pathway. Our meaning and worth comes from the One who is the Pathway. (Jn 14.6)

When we understand the word “**blessed**” in the Biblical context, we will not be so inclined to use the word casually as we may have in the past. The word is tough. It does *not* express superficial sentiment **but** rather the rugged tested assurance that is a good thing to be walking in the pathway of God’s will.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed it this way, “**We live each day as if it were our last, and each day as if there was a great future because of Jesus Christ.**” Our pathway in the present we live from a decision to surrender our personal will into the hands of our Eternal Father. Christ is the Lord of our history, present and future - **everything** else helps affect us, **but does not define us.** This is the Bible’s definition of success.

## III. The Letters to The Churches

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A. **Grace and Peace** v.4 - a surprise gift and wholeness and health come from God.

B. **Who is, and who was, and who is to come** vv.4,8 - **The being, who was, and the one coming**

“**is to come**” vv.4,8 - He who is coming, the expected Messiah (Matt 11.3)

C. *From the Spirit*

D. *From Jesus*

1. *the faithful witness*
2. *the first born from the dead*
3. *the ruler of the kings of the earth*

“**ruler**” v.5 - one invested with power and dignity, chief, ruler, prince, magistrate.

4. *deserves our praise*

a. *he loves us* v.5

“**he who loves us**” v.5 *present tense* - to love, value, esteem, feel or manifest generous concern for; be faithful towards; to delight in; to set store upon.

b. *he has freed us by his blood* v.5

“**has freed us**” v.5 - to cleanse from sin

c. *has made us to be a kingdom and priests in order to serve* v.6

The kingdom of God is not seen in the NT in territorial terms, but rather in relationship terms. “**It is the Kingly Reign of Jesus Christ**” (Bonhoeffer).

d. *he deserves the glory and power forever, Amen* vv.6,7

“**Amen**” vv.6,7 - used as a particle both of affirmation and assent, i.e., in truth, verily, most certainly, so be it

e. *he is coming* v.7

f. *he is the beginning and the end* v.8

g. *he is the Almighty* v.8

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“**Almighty**” v.8 - almighty, omnipotent (2 Cor 6.18; Rev 1.8; 4.8)

**Take notice!** In the NT world of thought we make discoveries about who we are while we are pondering the revelation of who *God* is (Is 6). We discover our own belovedness when we perceive the love of God. When we catch a vision of God's love for all the earth, we then catch a clear and awesome vision of our task toward the creation as His priests. God is in control, we need not panic over our generation; instead, we are challenged to take hold of our time as disciples of Jesus Christ. What we do and say has lasting significance **because of Jesus Christ.**