

Revelation Reveals Jesus

Chapter Revelation 1

Mark A. Finley

Around the world today, there is a renewed interest in the book of Revelation. There is a sense that our world is moving toward some impending crisis. The last book of the Bible addresses these events that are about to unfold on earth.

“Revelation” Means “Revealed”

What does the word, *revelation*, mean? It means something that is *revealed*. It means the very opposite of “hidden,” or “secret.” The book of Revelation was originally written in Greek, and the Greek word translated “revelation,” is *apocalypse*, which literally means “taking away the veil.” When we read Revelation, the veil is taken away from our eyes so that we can see clearly what God is revealing to us. The first verse outlines the theme of the entire book.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place (Revelation 1:1).

The Bible's last book is given specifically to reveal Jesus Christ and the things that are going to be taking place on this earth.

There is a war going on—a war between good and evil, between God and Satan. The book of Revelation identifies key religious and political players in the great controversy down through the ages. Had it exposed those powers plainly, they might have destroyed those portions of the Bible. For centuries, before the printing press was invented, the Scriptures existed only in handwritten documents. Copies of the Bible were not readily available, and many people could not read in any case. So, these powers might have been able to change or delete portions of Revelation if it identified them too clearly. An all-wise God protected His Word by putting it in symbolic language.

God also used symbols as word pictures to describe the rise and fall of nations and religious powers as a powerful way to get His message across succinctly.

Remember, too, as we study this book, that it is a revelation of *Jesus Christ*. The first verse of the first chapter of the book tells us that it is a revelation, a revealing, of Jesus Christ. And in the last chapter—almost the last verse—Jesus tells us, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches” (verse 16). He says, “I’m sending my angel to make last-day events plain to you.

The Theme of Revelation

Since Revelation is the last book of the Bible, it focuses on the second coming of Jesus. The theme of the entire book is centered on the last days and the return of Jesus.

Revelation 1:7 declares, “He [Jesus Christ] is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him.” And three times in Revelation 22 Jesus Himself repeats that He is coming “quickly.” He says, “I am coming quickly!” (Verse 7). In verse 12, He declares, “Behold, I am coming quickly.” And again, in verse 20, he says, “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely, I am coming quickly.’” Jesus wants us to know for certain that He is coming soon.

From Heaven to John—the Steps in the Revelation

The first verse of Revelation tells us the divine content of the book.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw” (Revelation 1:1, 2).

These verses tell us that the content of Revelation came from God the Father. He gave it to Jesus Christ. Jesus sent it by “His angel” to the apostle John.

John says that he was on the island of Patmos when he received the visions that make up the book of Revelation. Patmos is a little island in the Aegean Sea between the coasts of Turkey and Greece. It’s about nine miles long, rocky and barren. In John’s time it was a Roman penal colony where prisoners were exiled. There was a small mining community there as well—and little else.

John was an old man, probably in his 90s, when he received the visions of Revelation. He had lived a long life in the service of his beloved Master. Sometimes it’s in the greatest trials of our lives that God speaks to us most clearly.

The book of Revelation is a book about the Jesus who intervenes. He does not merely sit on His throne in heaven; He enters the affairs of life here on earth. There is no place we can find ourselves that is beyond of the reach of God.

A Special Blessing

The prophecies of the book of Revelation outline the events that are soon to come upon our world. Revelation says that God

gave us the prophecies in this book “to show His servants—things that must shortly take place” (verse 1). It goes on to say

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near (verse 3).

Jesus pronounces a special blessing on us if we will do three things: (1) read the prophecies of this book; (2) hear them, that is, pay attention to them; and (3) keep those things which are written in the book. Read, hear, and keep. The purpose of these prophecies is not just to satisfy our curiosity or fill our minds with speculative information. Revelation is a book to be lived out in our lives. Its purpose is to reveal Jesus Christ. It will draw us closer to Him. It puts demands on our lives.

The Jesus of Revelation

As John begins to write down the revelation Jesus is giving him, he addresses it to “the seven churches which are in Asia” (verse 4). In chapters 2 and 3 there will be specific messages from Jesus to each of these churches. But for now, John wants to paint a picture of Jesus—the One who is giving this revelation to His people. John

makes several descriptive statements about Jesus in these verses.

He says that Jesus is:

- the One “who is and who was and who is to come” (verse 4). Jesus never had a beginning; He never had an ending. He is eternal.
- “The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last” (verse 11). These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. We would say “the A and the Z.” He has no beginning, and He has no end. He has always existed and always will.
- “The faithful witness” (verse 5). What does this mean? Jesus knows all about us. He knows our joys and our sorrows. He understands what we are going through.
- “The firstborn from the dead” (verse 5). Jesus died, but the grave was not able to keep Him. He is the resurrected Redeemer. Because He is the firstborn from the dead, we do not need to fear death.
- “The ruler over the kings of the earth” (verse 5). As we noted in the book of Daniel, kings rise and fall, but King Jesus reigns over them all—and He reigns forever. There may be chaos in the world and in our lives, but Jesus is still on the throne. He will make things turn out right in the end.
- the One “who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (verse 5). Jesus is the One who can take away all

your sin and guilt. “The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

In the Spirit on the Lord’s Day

John says that He “was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice as of a trumpet” (verse 10) Whatever day John is referring to as “the Lord’s Day,” it was on this day that he received a vision of the glorified Christ. We will study more about this expression in a further study. In this Lord’s Day vision, John describes the magnificence of Jesus.

I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength (Revelation 1:12-16).

This is the glorified Jesus. John continues,

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid: . . . I am He who lives, and was dead, and

behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things that will take place after this (verses 17-19).

The Master Key to Interpreting the Prophecies

Verse 19 gives us a master key to interpreting the entire book of Revelation. Jesus tells John to write (1) the things which you have seen; (2) the things which are and (3) the things that will take place after this. Jesus says that some prophecies were fulfilled in John's Day. Some are being fulfilled as time progresses. And some were yet to be fulfilled. That is a key principle to keep in mind as we examine the prophecies of Revelation. There is a sequence, a progression.

For example, in Revelation we will see several prophetic series—seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, etc. Some of the truths relating to the seven churches would be applied in John's Day. Some would be applicable to succeeding generations. And some are for the time of the end. That's a master key to understanding the prophetic picture in the book of Revelation.

Nothing Can Separate!

Jesus goes on to tell John. 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 which you saw are the seven churches” (verses 17-20).

John saw Jesus walking among seven golden lampstands. These lampstands, we're told represent the seven churches. And as we will see, these seven churches are representative of the Christian church in its entirety from the beginning of Christianity until Jesus comes again. The picture is one of Jesus, walking about among His people. Jesus is intimately acquainted with each person on earth. He is close to His church, His faithful people. Each church has an “angel” who is held in Jesus' hand. This is another representation of the close union between Jesus and us. He holds us in the hollow of His hand, and nothing or no one can pluck us out of His protecting hand (John 10:27-29)

Nothing can separate! That is the message Jesus was giving John as He walked among the seven golden lampstands, holding seven stars in His right hand. As we study further into the book of Revelation, we will see Satan trying his best to separate us from Jesus using various powers and forces that will arise in the last days to do his bidding. But Jesus walks among His people, and nothing— “things present nor things to come”—can separate us from His care and His love.

