

Chapter 1

Verses 1 -3

A. Verse 1

- a. The Revelation of Jesus Christ
 - i. It is by or from Jesus
 - ii. It is about Jesus
 - iii. Both
- b. Verse 1 favors the fact that it is just as much from Christ as it is about Christ.
- c. 3 facts to note about verse 1
 - i. God gave the message to Jesus who, in turn, gave it to John.
 1. Some suggest John borrowed from pagan sources such as major mythologies (Babylonian, Greek, Roman and Jewish).
 2. John's message was from God!
 3. He simply wrote down what he saw and heard (vv. 11,19)
 - ii. God gave the message to benefit HIS people – his “bond-servants”
 1. Greek word “douloi” translated as servants, bond-servants or slaves
 2. Indicates we are not our own – we have been bought with a price
 - a. Rom. 6:17,18
 - b. 1 Cor. 6:19,20
 - iii. He gave this message to show His servants thing which would soon take place.
 1. Greek word “tachos” translated as “soon” literally means “quickly” or “immediately”
- d. Also, God used a chain of revelation:
 - i. God gave it to Jesus
 - ii. Jesus sent his angel
 - iii. The angel took the message to John
 - iv. John would deliver it to God's people
- e. The angel!
 - i. This is a pattern seen throughout the Bible used by God.
 1. Moses and the burning bush – it was the angel of the Lord (Ex. 3:2)

B. Verse 2

- a. John gives a “personal guarantee” that the message is REAL!
- b. John was by far one of the most faithful witnesses of God's Word throughout his life

C. Verse 3

- a. A special blessing...to the one who reads the book and those who hear the reading.
 - i. The one who read it would have done so in the public assembly of the church.
 - ii. Notice the singular “he” and plural “those”
 - iii. One would read, but many would hear.
 1. In those days, not everyone could read – but anyone could hear.
 2. Public reading would have been a necessary part of KNOWING the Scriptures.
 3. Much akin to public reading of the Law or Word in the synagogue and carried over to Christian worship.

- a. Rom. 10:17
 - b. Luke 4:16
 - c. Acts 13:15
- 4. Even today, public reading of the word is still a strong and important part of our worship!
- b. Designated as a prophecy
 - i. Emphasizes that the Revelation is from God and is not to be taken lightly
 - ii. A prophecy is not necessarily a prediction of the future...although it can mean that...
 - 1. More accurately, a prophecy is a message from God that is to be obeyed
 - 2. Could be sermon-like, a message of warning, a prediction, etc.
 - 3. In this case, commands that are to be obeyed.
 - a. Commands abound in Revelation
 - i. Explicit
 - 1. Said outright
 - 2. Mostly found at the beginning and end of the book
 - ii. Implicit
 - 1. Implied by what is said
 - 2. See 2:10
- c. "The time is near"
 - i. Perhaps the most encouraging part of this passage for the Christian of the time
 - ii. The Greek word here (engus) is related to the word (engizo) which in Mark 1:15 is translated "is at hand"
 - iii. This told Christians that the revelation was for THEN not thousands of years in the future.
 - 1. "A church with its back to the wall, fighting for its life, does not need a celestial timetable to tell what is going to happen twenty centuries later. It needs to know that Jesus Christ is present, caring for its life *now*." -- Harold Hazelp

Verse 4-7

A. Verse 4

- a. These verses follow the standard form for epistles or letters of the NT.
 - i. Sender = John
 - ii. Recipients = the seven churches that are in Asia
 - 1. Roman province of Asia, what is now Turkey
 - iii. Why these 7?
 - 1. Seven was selected in keeping with the overall emphasis on the number seven.
 - 2. These seven were located on roads that circled the interior of the province and the message could spread from there.
 - 3. They represented typical churches in that day (or any day).
 - iv. Why Asia?
 - 1. This was an area where Roman persecution was hardest, where Christians were hurting the most.
 - a. Emperor worship was strongest in Asia
 - b. Christianity was strongest in Asia

2. God KNEW where the need was.
- v. Salutation came next = Grace to you and peace.
 1. Fairly customary of the NT epistle writers
 2. See Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal 1:3; Philem 3; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3
 3. Grace = unmerited favor of God
 4. Peace = the result of God's work in our lives
 5. No doubt, John's readers (as do we) long for both.
- vi. John added in his greeting = from Him who is and who was and who is to come.
 1. Literally = The Being (One), the He Was (One), and the Coming (One).
 2. How John referred to God would have had powerful implications to the audience
 - a. "Him who is" in OT references would be akin to "I AM" or "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex 3:13,14)
 - b. This would have been a key reference to those readers who knew OT scripture:
 - i. It would have signified a God of deliverance
 1. Egyptian captivity
 2. Religious persecution
 - ii. It would have signified a God who was not intimidated
 1. By Pharaoh
 2. By Caesar
 - c. Still means that to us today...or it should!
- vii. Greeting also = from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.
 1. Likely refers to the Holy Spirit
 2. Context dictates that it points to the Holy Spirit as the Father and Son are included here as well.
 3. Some think this refers to angels or spiritual beings...possible but not likely.
 4. *Seven* indicates or symbolizes perfection or sacred completeness.
 5. "Before His throne..." = "ready to do His will"
- viii. Verse 4 begins John's writing about the "Godhead" or "Trinity" with God the Father and the Holy Spirit and verse 5 completes it with Christ.

B. Verse 5

- a. Christ is mentioned last because the rest of the chapter is about Him.
- b. Notice John's names here:
 - i. The faithful witness
 1. The perfectly faithful witness of the will of God (John 3:32;18:37)
 2. The Greek word *martus*, translated witness, is where we get the word martyr.
 3. Jesus was faithful unto death (Phil. 2:8)
 4. We too are called to be faithful unto death (2:10).
 - ii. The firstborn of the dead
 1. Christ was resurrected – a huge piece of the Gospel story!
 2. The term "firstborn" harkened back to the OT teaching of the preeminence of the firstborn son (Deut 21:15-17).
 3. This also gives the idea that Christ was the first, and faithful Christians will follow suit (1 Cor. 15:54-57).
 - iii. The ruler of the kings of the earth

1. Forty days after the resurrection, Christ ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.
 2. There he reigns as king over all (1 Tim. 6:15)
 3. Caesar was not the ruler of the world, Christ was – and is (1 Cor 15:24-28).
- c. Praise comes next = To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.
- i. John was reminding his readers of:
 1. Christ's love for us
 - a. Greek word translated love is agapao (we often say agape)
 - b. This word is in the present tense indicating continuous action.
 2. Christ's releasing us
 - a. Some manuscripts say "washed" instead of "released" which is why we tend today to still say we are "washed of our sins".
 - b. The Greek words for "wash" and "release" are very similar.
 - c. This word is in the aorist tense meaning a one-time, past action.
- C. Verse 6
- a. John continues his praise = And He has made us to be a kingdom.
 - i. Some translations say "kings" – more accurately "a kingdom"
 - ii. Some have said the "to be" indicates future tense
 - iii. However, the "to be" is not in the original Greek; literally it translates "He made us a kingdom".
 - b. Christ also made us "priests to His God and Father."
 - i. Refer to Exodus 19:5,6 to see this promise made to the Israelites.
 - ii. That promise found fulfillment in the church, the spiritual Israel.
 - iii. We, as Christians, are all priests and called to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God (1 Peter 2:5; Rom. 12:1)
 - c. John exclaims = To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- D. Verse 7
- a. John next declares Christ to be "the Coming One"
 - b. It would be hard to deny that this is in reference to the second coming.
 - i. And it will be witnessed by *every eye* and *all the tribes of the earth*.
 - c. This would have also had a meaning to John's readers that there would be a near judgment coming against their oppressors.
 - d. "Tribes of the earth" indicates or symbolizes non-Christians
 - i. They will mourn because of their hopelessness and judgment in the same way the Egyptians mourned when their firstborn sons died.
 - ii. They would reap what they had sown.
 - e. John closes the verse with a double Amen...
- E. Verse 8
- a. The Lord interrupts John's discourse.
 - i. Alpha = first letter of the Greek alphabet
 - ii. Omega = last letter of Greek alphabet
 - iii. We would say, the "A and the Z"
 - iv. God is the beginning and end, the first and last.
 - b. Notice the same words uttered here as in verse 4.
 - c. "Almighty" indicates the total sovereignty of God.
 - d. There is some debate as to whether the Father or the Son says this...
 - i. Regardless, it is a personal seal of authenticity from the Lord.

Verses 9 – 11

F. Verse 9

- a. 3 pivotal themes in Revelation introduced in this verse
 - i. Tribulation
 1. referred to the suffering Christians were undergoing
 2. Greek word – thlipsis – simply means “pressure”
 3. In NT, came to describe “that pressure of events which is persecution.”
 - ii. The Kingdom
 1. Christians were persecuted because they were part of the kingdom
 2. We know that according to scripture the kingdom is the church!
 - a. Acts 1:6-8; 2:1-4
 - b. Matthew 16:18,19
 3. The kingdom for John and his fellow believers was a present reality not a future hope.
 4. Their loyalty to Christ the King and not Domitian, naturally resulted in their tribulation.
 - iii. Perseverance
 1. Remaining steadfast in spite of their troubles
 2. KJV has “patience”
 3. Being “fellow partakers” would help them persevere – burdens are lighter when shared.
 4. Jesus was the common bond and would be their strength
 - a. “In Jesus” – a common phrase or term in NT Church.
- b. John tells us where he is physically – Patmos
 - i. Literal Greek translation of “was” is “came to be” (ginomai)
 - ii. Patmos was a barren island used as a Roman prison.
 - iii. John exiled there because of his boldness in preaching the Gospel and his refusal to be quiet about it.
 - iv. Rome had sent him to Patmos to keep him quiet and prevent him from spreading the message – but God has other plans and gave him a new voice in the revelation!

G. Verse 10

- a. John then shares where he was spiritually – “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day”
 - i. “the Lord’s Day” not to be confused with “the Day of the Lord”
 1. This means a day belonging to the Lord, not the Lord’s judgment.
 - a. Found only two times in NT
 - i. Here
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 11:20, which speaks of the Lord’s Supper
 - b. We refer to it even today as “the Lord’s Day” – Sunday, the first day of the week – the day Jesus was raised from the dead.
 - c. Today we partake of the Lord’s Supper on the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7)
 2. Seventh-day Adventists try to make “the Lord’s Day” refer to the 7th day (or Saturday) by misquoting Mark 2:28
 - a. “the Son of Man is Lord of the *Sabbath*”
 - b. Actually the passage emphasizes that Jesus is Lord of *every* day including the Sabbath.

- b. "I was in the Spirit"
 - i. Literal translation – "I came to be in the Spirit"
 - ii. Probably refers to John's becoming receptive to the Holy Spirit
 - 1. Other possible meanings:
 - a. John's state of mind – "in spirit" – John 4:24 – same Greek word
 - b. Could mean simply that John was worshipping on the Lord's Day.
 - 2. Whatever the meaning, John was ready to receive the revelation of Christ!
 - 3. Even today, when we are:
 - a. In prayer
 - b. In worship
 - c. In fellowship
 - d. In study of the Word
 - e. We often become more receptive to really focusing on God and listening to His Word...
 - iii. John saw, but not with physical eyes
 - iv. John heard, but not with physical ears
 - v. John had a pipeline to Christ so direct it was unlike anything he had probably ever experienced...
- c. "A loud voice, like the sound of a trumpet"
 - i. Much like a trumpet fanfare would be used to get attention and introduce important events or people!
 - ii. See Numbers 10 for OT uses

H. Verse 11

- a. "Write in a book what you see"
 - i. Greek word (biblion), from which we get the word "Bible" is translated book here.
 - ii. NIV more accurately renders the word as "scroll"
- b. Some translations begin this verse with "I am the Alpha and the Omega"
 - i. Earliest manuscripts did not include these words and therefore they are not found in the NASB or many of the more recent translations.
 - ii. A good lesson in being careful about an English translation! (but that's for another class).
- c. John was to send the message to the seven churches of Asia
 - i. Churches are listed in an order in which one would come upon them starting at Ephesus and ending at Laodicea – from where you could travel back to Ephesus.
 - ii. A complete circle – a symbol of completeness perhaps.

Verses 12-16

- I. John's first vision – "one like a son of man"
 - a. This vision sets the stage for the remainder of the book
 - b. John's visions
 - i. These are *visions* not reality – don't get confused!
 - ii. Imagine a dreamlike state where shapes shift and change and that which seems the exception may now be the rule!
 - iii. John was wide awake, but seeing things not of his physical eyes.
 - iv. Keep in mind, anything is possible in a vision...so we look at the underlying meaning of the text

1. The symbols
 2. The context
 3. The references and what it all may mean
- c. The vision
- i. Displays:
 1. Glory
 2. Majesty
 3. Holiness
 4. Power
 5. Authority
 - ii. The details shout, "This One like a son of man is powerful!"
 1. His king-like dress – power to rule
 2. His thundering voice – power to command
 3. His piercing eyes – power to know
 4. His burning feet and sword from his mouth – power to punish
 - iii. Often details in a vision have little or no significance
 1. But in this vision, the details are important!
 2. Therefore, we will focus on the details of this vision than will normally be the case

J. Verse 12

- a. Seven golden lamp stands
 - i. KJV says "candlesticks"
 - ii. While this may remind us of a seven-branched lampstand (as seen in the tabernacle perhaps – Exodus 25:31,32) – it is not; these are seven separate, freestanding lampstands
 1. Jesus was able to stand in the middle of them
 2. These are the seven churches of Asia (verse 20)
 3. Made of gold – the most precious of metals – the church being precious to Christ in the same way.

K. Verse 13

- a. John sees Jesus
 - i. We know it to be Christ because
 1. the reference to him being "the Son of Man" – Matthew 8:20
 - a. A term found more than 80 times in the Gospel accounts
 2. Verse 18, he furthers identifies himself
- b. John describes Jesus
 - i. Not a literal description
 - ii. Jesus clothing
 1. A robe reaching to the feet and girded across His chest with a golden sash.
 - a. Not clothing of a common man, but of royalty (see Isa. 6:1)
 - b. Working man – short robe with a cloth belt or leather belt around the waist not chest.
 - c. Perhaps similar to a description of the garb of a high priest
 - i. See Ex. 28:4, 39
 - ii. Ex. 29:5
 - iii. Lev. 16:4

L. Verse 14

- a. The person of Christ
 - i. "head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow" (See Dan. 7:9)
 - 1. White indicates purity and holiness
 - 2. May also imply wisdom of age
 - ii. "eyes were like flame of fire"
 - 1. See Dan. 10:6

M. Verse 15

- a. "His feet like burnished bronze..."
 - i. Greek word 'chalkolibanon' translated "burnished bronze" includes word for copper 'chalkos' – not clear what copper alloy is intended here...
 - 1. Brass – copper and zinc
 - 2. Bronze – copper and tin
 - 3. Both known for their strength and endurance since they do not rust
 - ii. Micah 4:13
 - 1. Daughter of Zion given bronze feet to "pulverize many peoples"
 - 2. Similarly, the symbolism here is of Christ's ability to "tread down the wicked" (Mal 4:3)
- b. "Voice was like the sound of many waters..."
 - i. Ezek. 43:2; Dan 10:6
 - ii. Powerful and majestic like waves pounding against a rocky shore

N. Verse 16

- a. "In his right hand he held seven stars..."
 - i. Right hand is the hand of power (Ex. 15:6)
 - 1. Psalm 63:8 – "your right hand upholds me"
 - ii. Jesus held them here to keep and protect them.
 - iii. Verse 20 reveals they are the angels of the seven churches.
 - 1. "Angel" is a transliteration of the Greek word 'angelos' a word that simply translates *messenger*.
 - 2. "Angel" can be either earthly or heavenly in nature...the context here must determine the meaning...
 - a. In the rest of Rev., "angel" always refers to a heavenly messenger.
 - b. But this raises some questions:
 - i. Why are these angels addressed in Chapters 2 & 3?
 - ii. Why are they held responsible for the sins of the congregation?
 - 1. Are they "guardian angels"?
 - a. Bible does suggest that angels watch over certain individuals, but not one angel being assigned to each congregation.
 - b. Why would Jesus send an angel to give John a message that he was to write to angels?
 - 2. Perhaps earthly representatives of the churches?
 - a. Why would Jesus hold the sins (2:1,2) of a congregation to the responsibility of these representatives?
 - b. Are they elders?

What John Felt (vs. 17-20)

P. Verse 17

- a. John's reaction
 - i. "Fell at His feet like a dead man..."
 - 1. Not a "bowing" of worship, but collapse of fear at Christ's feet
 - 2. Note Jesus' response – "Do not be afraid"
 - a. Perhaps this reminded John of the Mt. of Transfiguration (Matt 17:5-7)
 - b. This has been a common message given by the Lord to men throughout history:
 - i. Luke 1:13
 - ii. Luke 1:30
 - iii. Luke 2:10
 - iv. Mark 5:36
 - v. Acts 18:9
 - vi. Many, many OT examples
 - 3. Jesus came to encourage John, not frighten him!
 - 4. He also, placed his right hand on John
 - a. As one might put his arm around a friend who is hurting
- b. "I am the first and the last"
 - i. Remember verse 8 – Alpha, Omega
 - ii. These words serve as a reminder of Jesus' divine nature.
 - iii. But they also served as a help that Jesus existed before the Roman empire and would exist after it...

Q. Verse 18

- a. "I am...the living One"
 - i. Gives a designation of deity
- b. "...was dead...I am alive...I have the keys of death..."
 - i. Note the significance of the word "was" opposed to "am"
 - ii. He controls the realm of death and Hades
 - 1. Jesus was stressing his power over death
 - a. To prevent an eternal death for those who died in faith
 - b. To cast those who do not believe into eternal death

R. Verse 19

- a. "Therefore, write the things which you have seen..."
 - i. Gives a strong statement about what Revelation is all about
 - 1. No matter how bad our situation is or seems right now, a brighter future awaits the faithful!
 - 2. John's readers, as well as ourselves, need to know that – we need that assurance for the present and the future!

S. Verse 20

- a. "As for the mystery of the seven stars..."
 - i. Greek word *musterion*, translated mystery, does not mean "unknowable" but "something not known being revealed."
 - 1. Homer Hailey:
 - a. "The word does not imply...that which cannot be understood by man, but refers to that which can be understood only when the

meaning is revealed to the initiated by the Holy Spirit through the apostles and prophets. John and those to whom he was writing were about to be initiated into an understanding of something that otherwise they could not know.”

- ii. Again, we do not know who the angels are, but they are somehow connected with the churches.
- iii. Churches are lampstands, not lamps, the pedestals upon which the lamps were placed.
 - 1. Jesus is the light
 - 2. Christians reflect that light
 - 3. The church is to hold up that light for all the world!

-- APPLICATION OF CHAPTER 1 --

Notice the similarities of God’s response to Israel’s cries and God’s response to Christians’ cries.

Israelites	First-Century Christians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Slaves in Egypt ✓ Cried to God ✓ God heard ✓ God spoke to Moses ✓ The desert ✓ An angel ✓ A burning bush ✓ God promised deliverance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Persecuted by Romans ✓ Cried to God ✓ God heard ✓ God spoke to John ✓ Patmos ✓ An angel ✓ The glorified Lord ✓ God promised deliverance

Comfort For Christians (1:1-8)

- † It is important to emphasize the comfort that the first eight versus can bring to us even today!
 - But we MUST believe the truths found there!
 - We must believe in our Father rather than our eyes...
 - If we relied solely on our eyes as our basis of faith, we would be doomed!
 - If God says that the faithful will be victorious, we must cling to that promise!
 - Not to say we won’t feel defeated and alone sometimes, but overall, we must walk by faith and not by sight.