

# The Revelation

## Lesson 3

### IV. The Study of the Book

#### A. The Authority of the Book (1:1a)

Rev 1:1a **The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him**

The first verse says, **“The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”** What does the word Revelation mean? If we look at the Greek word, we see *apokalupsis* from which we obtain our word *Apocalypse*. The books and movies have put a gloomy spin on that word but all it really means is *to uncover* as with something hidden or concealed. More than fifteen years had passed since the completion of that little book called Jude, the last book of the Bible until the Lord offered this Revelation, this uncovering of things concealed from plain sight in God’s Holy Word. Time had come for all the loose ends of the prophecies to be summed up in one last book, the uncovering, the Apocalypse, the Revelation. Of Whom? We find that name right in the text – Jesus Christ. Jesus means *Yahweh is salvation*; Christ means *the anointed one*. This book is the uncovering of the things yet to be in eternity future and it was a story to be presented by no other than *Jesus Christ*.

From Whom did Jesus Christ obtain the authority to uncover that which was concealed in order that mankind might know the future? The authority to tell the tale of this story was that **“which God gave Him.”** Jesus obtained His authority to unveil the rest of the mysteries of His Second Coming and have them written for the Church from God the Father Himself! That was nothing new! Jesus, while on earth, during His earthly ministry said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). No one else possessed the authority to give this permission but God the Father – not another, no one at all!

#### B. The Purpose of the Book (1:1b)

Rev 1:1b **to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place;**

Look at the purpose of the book. **“To show to His bond-servants,”** He said. The word bond-servants may be misleading. Our English translators wanted to instill the idea of a voluntary servants position between man and God and therefore they used the word *bond-servants*. But we find it as one word in the Greek, *doulos* and it simply means *servants*. They are not slaves to God, they are servants of God. Servants, in the true definition, *want to serve their leader*. Slaves on the other hand, forced into labor, do not serve with a *willing heart but out of compulsion*. For instance, an employee who volunteers to work for a master for pay is called a servant; an employee forced to work for a master is called a slave. Between the two, there is a great difference.

The plural *doulos* (servants) cannot mean one person, it must mean all of God’s true servants. God wanted His servants to be shown the message within the pages of this book that refers to **“the things which must soon take place.”** *Ginomai* is the Greek word for “place” and it means *to come into being*. *Tachos* is the Greek word for *soon*, but it does not indicate any specific length of time. How short is *soon*? How long is *soon*? Some commentators teach that *soon* means within a few years. They attach this passage to the fall of the Temple in 70 AD at the hands of Titus. They relegate all the rest of the Revelation as

being fulfilled then and dismiss anything within its pages that still must be fulfilled. One problem can be found in that thinking – this Revelation was delivered 25 years after the destruction of the Temple. How do we know? We know the ruler who used the Island of Patmos as a prison. His name was Caesar Domitian and he reigned from September 14, 81 AD to September 18, 96 AD. The beginning of his reign was a full decade after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The “soon” could mean after 95 AD when John received this Revelation. But then we still have a problem with that interpretation. In chapters 2 and 3, the Lord mentions seven Churches by name. As we will see, none of the “**things soon to take place**” can begin to occur until those seven Churches cease to exist in their cities. Here we must look deeper into the word “soon.” In the translations of Wycliffe (1380) and Tyndale (1525) the word “soon” meant *sudden as without notice*. It was not used to describe a length of time, but rather the quickness in which it will happen when it occurs. And so, the purpose of this book is to reveal those things that will happen suddenly and without warning in the world when the seven Churches are no more. And when these things begin to occur, they will happen in rapid succession, soon, or rather, suddenly!

### C. The Communicator of the Book (1:1c)

Rev 1:1c **and He sent and communicated it by His angel**

The text says, “**and He sent and communicated it by His angel.**” Who sent the angel to communicate this message? Was it God the Father or Jesus Christ? Why does it matter? The angel was sent by God – either the Father or the Son. What is the name of the angel? That did not matter either and we will never know. What matters is that an angel was sent to deliver the message as the messenger of God!

### D. The Recorder of the Book (1:1d-2)

Rev 1:1d **to His bond-servant John,<sup>2</sup> who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.**

And God sent the angel to deliver this message “**to His bond-servant John.**” We met this John about 67 years earlier in the Gospel records. He was the younger son of Zebedee and Salome. His older brother was James. Their mother, Salome, and Mary, Jesus’ mother, were sisters (John 19:25); therefore, James and John were first cousins of Jesus. These two had a nickname in the Gospels – the sons of thunder because of their father, Zebedee.

In the early years the two boys worked in the fishing trade on the Sea of Galilee with their father. When they heard of John the Baptist and his ministry in the wilderness of Judea, James and John, along with their parents and many others, gathered around the Baptist and were deeply influenced by his teaching. We must not forget that the Baptist’s mother was Elizabeth and she was the first cousin of Mary and Salome; therefore, Jesus, James and John were second cousins to the Baptist.

In 27 AD, at about the age of 17, John heard the Baptist announce, “Behold the Lamb of God” at the Jordan River. It was directed at Jesus, John’s cousin. Jesus invited him to become a disciple along with his brother along with all the other followers of the Baptist. For a while they joined the thousands of disciples who were following Jesus from Judea to Galilee and back. But when it came time to earn a living, John, with his brother and father, returned to their fishing business in Bethsaida. Passing through that region, Jesus again called

them to follow Him and they left all they had and permanently attached themselves to His company of disciples. After about eighteen months, Jesus selected twelve of the disciples to become His Apostles and John became part of the Lord's innermost circle. The Scripture says he was the disciple whom Jesus loved.

At the betrayal of Jesus, John and Peter followed Jesus at a distance to see what the Sanhedrin was going to do to Him while the other Apostles hid in the woods. At the trial, he followed Jesus right into the council chamber and thence to the praetorian and then on to the place of crucifixion.

At the crucifixion, John was with Mary, Jesus' mother. From the cross, Jesus asked John to take care of Mary after His departure (John 19:25-27).

John and Peter were the first to be told by Mary Magdalen of Jesus' resurrection. They were the first to arrive at the tomb to see it empty. John and Peter then returned to the Sea of Galilee where Jesus approached them and invited them to have breakfast.

With Jesus' ascension, John remained in Jerusalem and became a leader in the Church. However, he was not there at the time of Paul's last visit after his Damascus Road conversion which was about four years after Jesus' ascension. It seems that John had moved to Ephesus, but when, we do not know. Tradition tells us that Mary was with John in Ephesus where they both eventually died and were buried. He was especially close to the seven churches in Asia mentioned in the Revelation. He appointed pastors to these churches from his group of disciples. He suffered persecution and banishment to Patmos by Caesar Domitian. He then returned to Ephesus upon release after Domitian's death in 96 AD. John died in 98 AD, having outlived all the Apostles by many years and nearly all those who were alive during the days of Jesus' life here on earth.

We are especially thankful for the written accounts of John. Had it not been for his Gospel, all we would have known about Jesus' ministry covered about eighteen months of His ministry also included in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke along with the final week in Jerusalem and the crucifixion. Matthew was a tax collector in the Galilean area. As the oldest of the Apostles, he held an important job in the Roman Empire. He was an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry but from a distance for most of his life. He personally knew about Jesus' miraculous birth because Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth within his taxing district. He knew Jesus' heritage because he was a Jew in that lineage. But, as a businessman he was limited in what he knew about Jesus' ministry until he dropped everything and became one of Jesus' Apostles. Therefore, his Gospel did not record the entire ministry of Jesus. The Gospels of Mark and Luke represent the eyewitness testimonies of Peter and Paul. Peter was a fisherman in the Galilean area and his experience with Jesus was much like that of Matthew – he had to work, he had a family to feed, he had little knowledge of Jesus' ministry until he dropped everything to be an Apostle. On the other hand, Paul was known during the days of Jesus' ministry as Saul the Pharisee. He was opposed to everything Jesus did during His time on earth. He followed Jesus, watched Him, listened to Him, reported back to the Sanhedrin about Him and was part of the plot to put Him to death. From that counter position, Paul knew more about Jesus than most of His Apostles except this John whose Gospel filled in all the gaps in the story telling what was left out by the other three authors. His three letters to the Church added more detail in his Gospel and they all shed great light on the intent of Jesus' eternal message.

In a similar way, in the Revelation, John was privileged to be selected by Jesus to tie together all the unfulfilled prophecies into one dramatic story, sent from the Father, through the Son and onto the pages of the Holy Bible.

The passage said that John was the one **“who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.”** Yet, at this point in the story of the Revelation, John had not seen anything. This statement from Jesus must have been a reference to the eyewitness testimony that John had already written about and dispersed throughout the body of the Church within the pages of his Gospel and three letters. In one letter he said, “We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). In his Gospel and letters, John had fully and faithfully testified to what he had seen during the days of Jesus’ life on earth. And now, in this new communication with Jesus, he will see more than he ever could have imagined and will faithfully record it and send it to the whole body of the Church.

#### E. The Blessing of the Book (1:3)

**Rev 1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.**

Without this prophecy, many unexplained mysteries from the pages of the other sixty-five books of the Bible would still exist. This special book holds an extra blessing for those who read its words, hear its message and heed its warnings. “Reads” is not a mistake in this translation, it is absolutely correct. The Greek word is *anaginosko* and it means *to know over and over again* or *to learn it over and over again*. We might say it like this, “Read it until it makes sense! Read it until you know it by heart.” This instruction was given through John to the Church, mainly a Converted Jewish Church that understood all the history and prophecies back to “In the beginning God created” (Gen. 1:1). For that body of believers in John’s day, the message in this book might have been alarming, but by no means was it new. We will find that out as we discover all the many references extending back through the New and Old Testaments to the first chapter of the first book called Genesis. For the Church today, which is composed mostly of Gentiles, it is imperative that its members accept and incorporate the entire Old and New Testaments into their hearts and minds so that they, too, can have the same assurance of the promises Jesus’ Second Coming found within the pages of this book as its first readers did in 95 AD.

We understand the word **“hear;”** it means the same today as it did in the original. However, a distinction exists between *hearing* and *listening*. We can hear something while not listening to its message. We do that all the time with music from the radio and racket from the TV. But here, to “hear” means *to listen*, to take into account the message being presented.

We might think that the word **“heed”** means *to pay close attention*, but the proper definition is *to actively watch over and guard*. Do not let this book be cast aside as fable! It is not. Every word will be fulfilled, and Jesus made that point here. Why?

Jesus said, **“For the time is near.”** It could be said, *the season is at hand*, which is a good and proper translation. Did Jesus mean it was nearly time for the fulfillment of this prophecy? Hardly! Jesus meant that it was time for the fulfillment of this prophecy to begin! We often speak of the Revelation as dealing with the “last days,” and it does. We also speak of it dealing with the “end of times,” and that is true. But this book is a blessing because it

reveals the culmination of all the prophecies and tells their end. Even when this Revelation was given, many of the Old and New Testament prophecies were still to be fulfilled. For instance, Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue with the head of gold, breast of silver, belly of bronze, waist and legs of iron with toes of clay and iron was not fulfilled. John was living in the time of the "waist" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the legs would not be formed for another two hundred years and the prophecy about the uniting of the toes still must take place before the Revelation can begin to be fulfilled. It is a major facet in the structure of the plan of God. But the absence of that fulfillment does not stop other prophecies that must be completed, some of which are necessary steps that will lead to the reformation of the toes in Nebuchadnezzar's prophecy. How soon will the prophecies of this book begin? They will start to be fulfilled within fifty years of its writing, long enough for the Church to have this message in every hand of every believer. Every Christian will know the events of the future.

#### F. The Recipients of the Book (1:4a)

Rev 1:4a **John to the seven churches that are in Asia:**

John may have been the recorder of this unveiling but the message within its pages was to be delivered to **"the seven churches that are in Asia."** These seven Churches, which will be listed in Revelation 1:11 were special to John. He had personally trained the pastor in each of those Churches. He knew them well! He knew their theology and methodology but more than that, he knew their hearts. But, regardless of what John knew about the pastors and the congregations of each town, Jesus knew them better, and, they all had a problem that would one day bring their existence as a local Church to an end. That does not mean that Jesus will not bless them, He will. But Jesus will also pronounce a curse on them – because each Church will cease to exist. As we will discover, nothing within the pages of the Revelation starting in chapter 4 can begin until the demise of these seven Churches. How long will that take? We know! Here, let us just say, it will take a long time to fulfill the prophecies about these Churches and we will leave the details of that discussion for chapters 2 and 3.

We must not miss the reason for this sentence beginning with **"John."** He may have been writing in Greek, but John was definitely Hebrew at heart. Among the Jewish writings, the author always signs his name at the beginning of a letter and then he concludes with the name of the recipients. In the western world, we do that in reverse. For instance, we say "Dear Church of Ephesus, ... Sincerely John." But the eastern world of the Hebrew customs the proper way to say it is "Sincerely John, ... Dear Church of Ephesus."

#### G. The Gift of the Book (1:4b)

Rev 1:4b **Grace to you and peace,**

John gave the seven Churches the customary Christian gift in the words **"Grace to you and peace."** This apostolic blessing can be found somewhere in every letter of the New Testament penned by an Apostle. "Grace ... and peace!" Wonderful words! "Grace" means *kindness or favor*, "peace" means *welfare*. John wanted the seven Churches to experience the kindness and welfare that he knew, the kindness that comes only from God. John expected the seven Churches to experience those two qualities as they read the pages of this Revelation in their worship services. In other words, this Revelation was seen by John as a

*gift* to each of them. What exactly would that *gift* be for each congregation? They would soon discover that the majority of this end times prophecy found in the Old and New Testaments was not directed at them but pointed directly at the Jews who rejected Jesus at His first coming. All the tribulation of the days still to come would fall on the Jews shoulders to force them to take a new look at Jesus and, in the end, finally accept Him as their Savior. The Church needs not worry, the Church will not experience any of the tragedies of this Revelation beginning in chapter 4.

#### H. The Givers of the Book (1:4c-5)

##### 1. The Eternal One (1:4c)

Rev 1:4c **from Him who is and who was and who is to come;**

Where did this *gift* of this Revelation come from? John said, it came **“from Him who is and who was and who is to come.”** It could have been said this way, it came from the “I am, I was, and I will be in the future!” In other words, the Eternal One gave this book to the Churches. He created it. He has sustained it. He will rule it! He is coming! Never deny it, never forget it, but we had better accept it!

##### 2. The Spiritual Ones (1:4d)

Rev 1:4d **and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne;**

The *gift* also was delivered to the seven Churches by **“the seven Spirits who are before His throne,”** those who reside in front of Jesus’ throne in heaven. They should not be misinterpreted as some symbol of the Holy Spirit; they are not. These are the seven spirits who have attended the throne of Jesus in heaven and who have had that responsibility since He created them. These seven spirits have an important role in the message of this story. They will blow trumpets and pour bowls during its telling; therefore, they are part of the delivery system put in place to distribute this gift to John and the Churches. Lest we forget, angels do not have flesh and blood; they are spirits. The word for angel is *aggelos* and it means *messenger*. These angels are the messengers of the LORD and will help deliver this story by performing certain duties under the direction of the LORD in order that John might see their roles in the LORD’s Second Coming. In the future, when the prophecy actually occurs, the angels will perform those same duties again exactly as they have practiced them here to show John what to write.

##### 3. The Trusted One (1:5a-c)

###### a) His Loyalty (1:5a)

Rev 1:5a **and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,**

Finally, John identified the Eternal One as Jesus Christ. His name means *the Savior Anointed*. From the Hebrew it would be translated *Joshua Messiah*. But John wrote the Revelation in Greek; therefore, it is rendered *Jesus Christ*. John said the *gift* was from the Trusted One by saying, **“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness.”** Jesus’ words are always true. What He said, He will do. What He said will come to pass. He testified that He would die and rise from the grave and He did. No one else in this world has ever done that. Even His resurrection was not good enough for the Jews to throw away their man-made

religion rules and return to Jesus as their Savior; rather, they would look for another. It is so strange that the Jews are still looking for the resurrected Messiah, the Christ. For example, on June 12, 1994, the beloved Menachem Medel Schneerson died. He was a Russian born American Orthodox Jewish rabbi. During his life, his followers thought that he was the one person worthy of being the Messiah. His supporters held off burying him for a few days to see if he would rise from the dead. He did not. They buried him after there was no sign of a resurrected life. Even today, many of his supporters are still waiting for him to rise from the grave. In his life, he did many good things, but he never healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, raised anyone from the dead or returned from the grave. Yet, these Orthodox Jews still think he must be the Messiah. Why are they so stubborn in the rejection of Jesus Who was the Messiah? In fact, John told us about His resurrection!

#### b) His Linage (1:5b)

Rev 1:5b **the first-born of the dead,**

Here are the words of John concerning the lineage of Jesus, He was **“the first-born of the dead.”** He is the *proto-tokos*. *Proto* means *the chief, the best, the head, the principle and sometimes the first*. *Tokos* means *to bring forth*. In both English translations by Wycliffe of 1380 and Tyndale of 1525, the translators used the word *first-borne*. We should not misconstrue this word to mean the same as *born*. When we hear the word *first-born*, we immediately think of the first child born to a family. That definition for the word *born* came into being in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. When Wycliffe and Tyndale used the word *borne*, it meant *to carry on, to sustain, to endure*. It had nothing to do with the birth of a child. What John meant in this phrase was that Jesus was the *principle One to carry on from death*. Death had no sting, death had no victory over Him. He was the first, the chief, the head to sustain or rather withstand the doom of death and overcome. He was the original *overcomer!* And, as the first victor in that, He was the first in a long lineage of people who would have victory over death because of their belief in Him as Christ. They are the subsequent *overcomers!* Therefore, it is this Jesus Who is the trusted One. He promised life after death, He obtained life after death, and He will give life after death to those who belong to Him.

#### c) His Leadership (1:5c)

Rev 1:5c **and the ruler of the kings of the earth.**

Finally, as the Trusted One, Jesus will return one day as **“the ruler of the kings of the earth.”** This is not the first time that this message has been given; it is in the Old and New Testament. But what is unique about this reference is that in this book, the details of Jesus’ Second Coming as Ruler of the kings of the earth are given.

### I. The First Benediction of the Book (1:5d-6d)

#### 1. Our Present (1:5d-e)

##### a) His Love (1:5d)

Rev 1:5d **To Him who loves us,**

In a unique move, John gave two benedictions in the book. He told the seven Churches of Asia that Jesus loved them – that was the first part of His gift to them.

b) His Gift (1:5e)

Rev 1:5e **and released us from our sins by His blood,**

John told the Churches that it was Jesus who freed them from the guilt of sin by His personal sacrifice – that was the second part of His gift to them.

2. Our Place (1:6a-b)

a) As a Kingdom (1:6a)

Rev 1:6a **and He has made us *to be* a kingdom,**

John also told the Churches that they had a special place in Jesus' plan. Together, they were part of His kingdom. It was not something still to take place in the future, it was already done. John's selected word was *basileia*. The word "kingdom" does fit as a meaning in this context, but we ought to think about it with a larger meaning such as a *royal power*. Why? Because we are the children of the King, living under His care, in His kingdom, whether in heaven or eventually back on earth. That sense of royalty becomes clearer with the next phrase.

b) As a Priesthood (1:6b)

Rev 1:6b **priests to His God and Father;**

The original Greek actually says we are a *basileia hierous* or translated *kingdom of priests*. By putting the kingdom and priest together we see the royalty. As Christians we are a kingdom of priests, or, as Peter said, "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Every Christian has a place as a royal priest to God the Father, which is the title of the first Person of the Trinity. When John says, "**to His God and Father,**" he means that Jesus recognizes God with the title of "Father." Jesus will hold the title of "God the Son" and the Holy Spirit will hold the title of "God the Spirit." All three make up the one essence of God in three persons. We as priests in Jesus' kingdom are in fact priests to Jesus' God Whom He recognized as the Father.

3. Our Praise (1:6c-d)

a) For His Glory (1:6c)

Rev 1:6c **to Him *be* the glory**

John gave glory to Jesus when he said, "to Him be the glory." It is his praise as well as a call to the Churches to honor Jesus by giving Him praise. As a result, it also gives praise to the Father.

b) For His Dominion (1:6d)

Rev 1:6d **and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

Why did John say we needed to give Jesus a word of praise? Because He is worthy of that glory and dominion. What does dominion mean? It means *strength or might*. No one exists who is stronger or mightier than Jesus. Furthermore, for all the past and for all the



present as well as for all the future, He is worthy of our praise in His “**dominion forever and ever. Amen.**” The word “Amen” means *truly*. Truly means *accurately!*

#### J. The Second Benediction of the Book (1:7)

##### 1. Look Up (1:7a)

Rev 1:7a **BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS,**

Now in his second benediction to the seven Churches John said, “**BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS.**” He might as well have said, “Look up!” Get ready! Look to the heavens! He’s coming again! Watch for the clouds! Look up – He is coming.

##### 2. Look All (1:7b)

Rev 1:7b **and every eye will see Him,**

John also said, “**and every eye will see Him.**” He will not be hidden away in a cattle stall this second time. People will not need to seek Him out from the distant kingdoms or the pastures nearby. No angel will have to say to anyone, “Go see!” Yes, the angel will screech the trumpet sound and Jesus will make His entry by breaking through the clouds and everyone in the world will see Him arrive. Look All – He is coming.

##### 3. Look Back (1:7c)

Rev 1:7c **even those who pierced Him;**

John, a Jew himself, must include “**even those who pierced Him.**” That statement is a direct reference to the Jews. They wanted Him dead. They killed him. They then had to lie when He came to life. They have lied about His resurrection to this day. But the day is coming when the Jews will have to look back and admit their mistake. Millions of Jews though the last 2000 years have denied the LORD and failed to accept Him as their Savior! What a tragedy! You who pierced Him - look back – He is coming!

##### 4. Look Out (1:7d)

Rev 1:7d **and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.**

Speed ahead to the day when Jesus will break through the eastern skies, when people from every tribe, nation, and ethnicity will gather to fight Him when He arrives. In three words, all the millions of people who will be against Him will begin to rot where they stand. John knew that and said, “**and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.**” Why? What are the three words He will say? They are, “It is done!” Look out – He is coming!

##### 5. Look Ahead (1:7e)

Rev 1:7e **Even so. Amen.**

Then John ended this second benediction with these words, “**Even so. Amen.**” What does that really mean? It could be said, “*This is it and it is accurate!*” In other words, John was saying to the seven Churches, look ahead – He is coming! And, nothing in this world that can be done to stop it.

## V. The Introduction of the Participants (1:8-9)

### A. An Overview of the Lord (1:8a-b)

#### 1. Who is this Lord (1:8a)

Rev 1:8a **"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God,**

The Lord introduced Himself to the seven Churches. Who is this LORD? He did not need to introduce Himself to John for John knew the LORD very well! Here on earth they were cousins. Jesus invited him to be one of His Apostles. He sat next to the LORD at the last supper. He took care of Jesus' mother in Ephesus until she died. John knew Him well!

To the Churches of Asia Jesus said, **"I am the Alpha and the Omega,"** says the Lord God." *Alpha* the first letter of the Greek alphabet, *Omega*, the last letter. He is the beginning and the end of all knowledge. He is also the LORD God – the *Kurios theos*. He is God and He was directing this message of truth to the seven Churches of Asia.

#### 2. Where is this Lord (1:8b)

Rev 1:8b **"who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.**

So, He is the LORD God, but where is this LORD **"who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."** Where is this LORD? He has always been here; He is here now; He will be coming back to earth soon and He will be here to stay forever! He is the Almighty. This REVELATION is Jesus' story about His coming and He is going to tell it to the seven Churches.

### B. An Overview of John (1:9)

#### 1. Who John Is (1:9a-d)

##### a) His Participation in the Community (1:9a)

Rev 1:9a **I, John, your brother**

But then there was John, the cousin of Jesus, but also a brother in the faith of Jesus Christ with all the members of the seven Churches. He was a participant in the community of faith in the LORD. He was John, the sole surviving Apostle who had seen Jesus ascend from the Mount of Olive and, at this point, he has the privilege of communicating the story of Jesus' return and he will distribute it to these Churches. It will be preserved and passed down to all the generations of Churches and church members to come.

##### b) His Participation in the Trouble (1:9b)

Rev 1:9b **and fellow partaker in the tribulation**

John was not different from the members of the seven Churches for he was a **"fellow partaker in the tribulation."** Domitian was the Roman Emperor and he was ruthless. No one in his empire was immune from his wrath. John was in trouble with him. Members in these seven Churches were in trouble with him. For 14 years Domitian had reigned terror on the empire. John knew about tribulation. He was experiencing what the members of the Churches were in fear of experiencing.

### c) His Participation in the Kingdom (1:9c)

Rev 1:9c **and kingdom**

But in spite of the tribulation they were living through in that day, they were all still part of the LORD's **kingdom**.

### d) His Participation in the Persistence (1:9d)

Rev 1:9d **and perseverance ~~which are~~ in Jesus,**

But in spite of the tribulation they were experiencing, they were still able to live in the **“perseverance in Jesus.”** Domitian could not take that away from them. He could not take their salvation away. He could not beat it out of them, cut it off them or drive a spear through it to kill the salvation of their souls. They were safe.

## 2. Where John Was (1:9e-g)

### a) The Residence (1:9e)

Rev 1:9e **was on the island called Patmos,**

But, because of Domitian, John had a new home, **“on the island called Patmos.”** Patmos was a small island in the Aegean Sea, on the east side of Greece, about ten miles long and six miles wide, located about thirty-seven miles southwest of Miletus. The Romans used it to house political exiles. John's mention of the island in this passage means that he was a prisoner, having been sent there for preaching the gospel. Eusebius, an early church historian and theologian, wrote that John was sent to Patmos by Emperor Domitian in A.D. 95 and released after about a year. That historical entry gives us the date of REVELATION. Why was John released? Domitian was assassinated by three senators on September 18, 96 AD. His successor, Nerva, was more amiable and released most of the political exiles. Why was John a political exile? Why was John thought to be political at all? We must not forget that all the Caesars, including Domitian were considered gods, but John had only One God. Therefore, John was politically at odds with Domitian who punished him and those who would not worship him as god.

You can visit the Island of Patmos today. Visitors can make their way about halfway up a mountain in the middle of the island and enter the *Cave of the Apocalypse*. It is now a place considered a *World Heritage site* and recognized as the place where this prophecy was delivered to John.

### b) The Reason (1:9f)

Rev 1:9f **because of the word of God**

What did Domitian have against John? John was guilty of being loyal to one thing. He said he was in prison on the island of Patmos **“because of the word of God.”** That is the first reason - the truth found only in the word of God. That is one of the two things that landed him in prison on that little island.

### c) The Relationship (1:9g)

Rev 1:9g **and the testimony of Jesus.**

The second reason is that it dealt with a relationship that John daily spoke of in “**the testimony of Jesus.**” In other words, Domitian did not like that John gave a witness about Jesus and asked people to make Him LORD of their lives. Domitian wanted to be their god, not some dead Jew.

## VI. The Introduction of the Setting, the Things John Saw (1:10-11)

### A. The Day (1:10a)

Rev 1:10a **I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day,**

And so the story started that he had been commanded to write to the seven Churches. He started by describing the setting. He said, “**I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.**” In other words, John was praying, just like we all do, with the help of the Holy Spirit on a Sunday.

### B. The Voice (1:10b)

Rev 1:10b **and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound of a trumpet,***

While he was praying, he heard this voice and John wrote, “**and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound of a trumpet.***” It was sudden. It was unexpected. It was loud. It was not like the sound of a ram’s horn, a *shofar* as in the Old Testament. By 96 AD, brass trumpets were in use everywhere, not the instrument of old made from the horn of a ram but a straight instrument that could deafen the ear of anyone. But it was not a trumpet. It was a voice that was as loud as a brass trumpet.

### C. The Instruction (1:11)

#### 1. Record It (1:11a)

Rev 1:11a **saying, " Write in a book what you see,**

The loud voice said to John, “**Write in a book what you see.**” John was about to see something wonderful, something marvelous, something magnificent. It would be the events of the future Second Coming of the LORD played out in living color. It was John’s job to describe what he was seeing to the best of his ability. John lived in 96 AD. It has now been almost 1900 years since this vision was given to John. The events in REVELATION that will begin in chapter 4 have not occurred yet. John knew nothing of cars, airplanes, trains, rocket ships, televisions, cell phones, skyscrapers, copiers, computers or remote controls. Yet, the LORD was going to reveal to him all the events just as they will occur still in our future and John was going to have great difficulty putting into words the description of what he was seeing, things he had never seen in real life and things he will never see in 95 AD. Some of the things he was trying to describe we might not have seen either because they have not been invented yet. We have never seen them because they do not exist! The instruction to John from the LORD was this, record it! Write what you see! A big task for a man in 95 AD.

#### 2. Send It (1:11b)

Rev 1:11b **and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."**

Then the loud voice said to John, “When you get all of what you see written down, ‘**send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.**’” John was not totally responsible for the establishment of these Churches. Paul was most likely responsible because he was the one who personally evangelized a great swath across the Eastern Roman Empire all the way from Syria to Yugoslavia. These were not new Churches; they had most likely been established more than sixty years before. But the connection with John was special for each of these Churches because he had placed one of his own disciples, trained by him, in the position of pastor in each. Without a doubt, those pastors would have taken a letter from John extremely seriously, especially one as phenomenal as this one. Coming from their mentor, it would not be doubted.

#### D. The Response (1:12)

##### 1. What John Did (1:12a)

Rev 1:12a **And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me.**

John responded as we would expect when he said, “**And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me.**” When he turned, he saw the first scene he had to put into words.

##### 2. What John Saw (1:12b-c)

###### a) Lampstands (1:12b)

Rev 1:12b **And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;**

John said, “**And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,**” seven individual lampstands. This was not a menorah which was one lampstand with seven branched that had flaming wicks. These were individual candlesticks. We do not know their size; however, they are large enough for the Person speaking with a loud voice to walk between them.

###### b) Son of Man (1:13a-16c)

Rev 1:13a **and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man,**

John then said, “**and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man.**” This title comes from the Old Testament. When Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace to see the plight of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he was surprised to see a fourth man in the fire, one who looked like the “son of man” (Dan. 7:13). It was the pre-incarnate Jesus then and it is the resurrected Jesus now in this passage.

###### (1) His Robe (1:13b)

Rev 1:13b **clothed in a robe reaching to the feet,**

John said, He was “**clothed in a robe reaching to the feet.**” We understand this description and so did John. Jews were always modest in their dress. Long robes were common in his day in opposition to the short clothing worn by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.

### (2) His Girdle (1:13c)

Rev 1:13c **and girded across His breast with a golden girdle.**

John said, “**and girded across His breast with a golden girdle.**” What is a girdle? It is best that we think of this as a sash wrapped around His chest. It may have been sewn rather than wrapped but John does not address its construction.

### (3) His Hair (1:14a)

Rev 1:14a **And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow;**

John looked up from His chest and said, “**And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow.**” This is new in the Scripture as the description of Jesus. It meant that Jesus had taken on the same characteristic as the “Ancient of Days” mentioned in Daniel (Dan 7:9). This, too, is a reference to the pre-incarnate Jesus and now the resurrected Jesus. In other words, before He humbled Himself to become a babe, He appeared at least once with snow white hair.

### (4) His Eyes (1:14b)

Rev 1:14b **and His eyes were like a flame of fire;**

But the eyes drew John’s attention. They were not human eyes as we might expect. Rather, John said, “**and His eyes were like a flame of fire.**” Everything so far in John’s description speaks of Jesus’ royalty and priesthood, but the eyes reveal something different. Just His eyes instill fear – fear of His eternal and final judgment!

### (5) His Feet (1:15a)

Rev 1:15a **and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace,**

John must have dropped his eyes as soon as he saw the flaming eyes of Jesus. In his gaze downward, he saw Jesus’ feet. He said, “**and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace.**” John was already struggling with his descriptive words and that shows here as well. Jesus’ feet looked like burnished or rather polished bronze. But that definition was not good enough. John may have been able to see himself in the reflection of Jesus’ feet, but the glow was so intense that they looked like hot molten metal still sitting in the crucible in the fire – such a glow that it burned the eyes.

### (6) His Voice (1:15b)

Rev 1:15b **and His voice was like the sound of many waters.**

John had already mentioned that His voice was loud like a trumpet, but here he added to that description by saying, “**and His voice was like the sound of many waters.**” Five times I have visited to Niagara Falls. Five times I have been awed at the incredible noise of Niagara Falls. It is so loud that you cannot hear the normal speaking voice of a person one foot away – a person must scream to be heard.

### (7) His Hand (1:16a)

Rev 1:16a **And in His right hand He held seven stars;**

John did not need to look up to explain the sound of Jesus' voice; most likely his eyes were still focused on the LORD's feet. As he looked up toward the waist of the LORD, he saw His right hand which held seven stars. We understand the robe, girdle, hair, eyes, feet voice and the hand, but what was the meaning of these seven stars? We will have to wait for that answer.

### (8) His Mouth (1:16b)

Rev 1:16b **and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword;**

As John continued to lift his eyes, he saw the mouth of the LORD and said, **“and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.”** We cannot see it in the English translation, but the Greek uses the word *romphaia* in describing this type of sword. We will see it used again in this book five times (Rev 2:12; 2:16; 6:8; 19:15; 19:21). It was the kind of short sword used by Romans for stabbing with the intent to kill. It was not a long sword used in sword fights – no dueling action on the part of the LORD and His enemy. This short sword was meant to inflict death in hand to hand combat.

### (9) His Face (1:16c)

Rev 1:16c **and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.**

Finally, as John traced the line of the sword upward, he, once again, saw the face of the LORD. Who can look directly into the sun and bear it? Not one of us. We can move around in this world as we do our daily tasks under its brilliance, we count on it for all it does for us, it is stronger and mightier than all of us, but to look into it is impossible except for a milli-second's glance – the time he could stand to look into the face of the resurrected LORD of glory.

## 3. The Reaction (1:17a)

Rev 1:17a **And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man.**

What did John do? He said, **“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man.”** The same thing happened to Paul sixty years before when he was on the road to Damascus. The light of the radiance of the LORD was so bright that his companions could not stand it and Paul was blinded that day and never fully recovered from the damage to his eyesight (Acts 9:4). Not so with John. He needed to see the rest of the story that he was instructed to write. He also fell to the ground! *Nekus*, the Greek language says. It means he was like a *dead body* – motionless. But, John does not describe how he felt as he lay on the ground; rather, John is speaking about how he felt as he “fell” to the ground.

## 4. The Reply (1:17b-18b)

### a) The Lord's Comfort (1:17b)

Rev 1:17b **And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid;**

And then John felt the touch of the hand of the LORD and said, “**And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid.’**” In the Greek the LORD said, “Do not have a *phobeo*.” We have an English word for that called *phobia*. It means *a fear of something*. “Oh, John,” Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid of Me. In Me there is comfort.”

b) The Lord’s Time (1:17c)

Rev 1:17c **I am the first and the last,**

Jesus told John, “**I am the first and the last.**” There we see the LORD’s timing. Nothing and no one existed before Him and nothing and no one will outlast Him.

c) The Lord’s Life (1:18a)

Rev 1:18a **and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore,**

I would like to think that when Jesus said, “**and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore,**” He was reminding John of their life together when He was here on earth. “John, do you remember when I walked with you, remember when I ate with you, remember when I taught you? Do you remember when I died? But pay attention, that is what ‘Behold’ means do you remember when I rose from the dead? Yes, I was alive, and I will be alive eternally.”

d) The Lord’s Power (1:18b)

Rev 1:18b **and I have the keys of death and of Hades.**

Then, in a strange moment, Jesus said to John, “**and I have the keys of death and of Hades.**” That cannot be good! Remember, John had seen a special sword coming out of the LORD’s mouth. It was one used for stabbing and killing. At that point we explained its use as an interesting fact. But here, Jesus confirms the purpose of that short sword coming from His mouth. He intends to do some killing, and He alone has the keys to unlock the portal to death and doom in the place prepared for those He is about to send to eternal torment. Surely John was shocked. Surely, John had no idea of what was about to happen in the story.

5. The Requirement (1:19a-d)

a) Record - Things Seen (1:19a)

Rev 1:19a **“ Write therefore the things which you have seen,**

Jesus continued and said to John, “**Write therefore the things which you have seen.**” In other words, “Write down on paper what you have just seen. Write about Me! Tell the seven Churches what I look like. Draw the picture you have seen in words. Paint it pretty now! Paint it like it is. That is your first assignment. Get at it John; do it now!”

b) Record - Things Which Are (1:19b)

Rev 1:19b **and the things which are,**

Jesus then said, “**Write therefore ... and the things which are.**” What things? John does not know the promises about them yet, but that is his next assignment. “Write about the



things that are.” What does that mean? What things were in existence at that time in 96 AD that Jesus wanted included in this story? Could it be the seven Churches? Jesus was about to make a big hoopla about them. They were thriving at the time. Surely the Churches are “the things which are.” “Don’t start yet John, I will show you what I want you to describe and write as we go along.”

c) Record - Things Which Shall Take Place (1:19c)

Rev 1:19c **and the things which shall take place**

Then Jesus said, **“Write therefore ... and the things which shall take place.”** “I want you to write down those things which are going to take place. They are not occurring right now, but they are going to take place in the future. I am going to show them to you – write them down. Write about the things which are and then I will show you the things that are going to take place later.”

d) Record - Timing of the Things (1:19d)

Rev 1:19d **after these things.**

With that, Jesus added an interesting phrase, **“after these things.”** After what things? If we have followed the progression in this passage, we have seen that Jesus gave John an outline for this book. First, He said, “write down what you have just seen.” That was to be a description of the LORD. Second, He said, “write down what I am going to show you about the things that are.” That was to be a description of the LORD and His interaction with the seven Churches. Third, “write down what I am going to show you that will take place.” When? “After the LORD has fulfilled the prophecies, His promises, about the seven Churches,” He says, “then write all the things I will show you about the future after they are gone.” What were His promises about these seven Churches? The LORD will deliver those promises in the next two chapters.

6. The Reading (1:20a-c)

a) The Mystery of the Stars and Lampstands (1:20a)

Rev 1:20a **“As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands:**

Two things that Jesus had shown John needed to be interpreted. He addressed them by saying, **“As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands.”**

When John turned to see Who was speaking to him with the loud voice, the first things he saw were the seven golden lampstands. Then he saw Jesus walking among them. This picture means that those seven lamps were important to Jesus and they were part of the story line concerning His Second Coming.

Then, there was also the need to explain the meaning of the seven stars he saw in Jesus’ right hand. What did they mean? As with most of REVELATION, Jesus interpreted all the promises in this story and these are no different.

b) The Interpretation of the Stars and Lampstands (1:20b-c)

(1) The Stars the Angels (1:20b)

Rev 1:20b **the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,**

Jesus said, **“the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.”** These seven stars were angels. The Greek work is *aggelos* and it means *messengers*. In the Scripture it is most often translated *angels* and an angel could have been set aside by the LORD for each church, but that would mean a supernatural conversation would be transpiring among these seven angels and the seven Churches at all times. That kind of interaction does not fit any previous example in the Bible. The LORD could do that, but it seems more likely that these seven angels were the seven messengers, or ministers of each of the seven Churches. Ministers were the ones who were tasked with the duty of communicating with the congregants. Whether or not they were truly angels or simply the ministers of the Churches makes no difference, each one had a unique relationship to a Church and the LORD intended to continue to use them at the Church for some period.

(2) The Lampstands the Churches (1:20c)

Rev 1:20c **and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.**

Finally, the LORD identified the lampstands; they represented the seven Churches of Asia that were part of Jesus’ plan to tell the story about the chronology of the events surrounding His Second Coming. Those Churches were in existence then and the LORD had a message for each one. Each message contained a blessing and a curse. Both were important, but the curse will be the promise that affects the timing of the Second Coming of the LORD.