

# **THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST**



**THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST**  
**UNDERSTANDING THE APOCALYPSE**

THE BOOK OF REVELATION VIEWED FROM A HEBRAIC MINDSET

BY STEVEN SHERMAN

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# REVELATION 1: 1-20

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

### Revelation 1:1-2

*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, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

**T**HE TORAH, THE Prophets and the Writings reveal God's plan of redemption through the promised Anointed One of Israel. The Gospels are the account of the life, ministry, substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. The Book of Acts and the epistles give an historical account of the spread of the Gospel and the sanctification of the elect. The revelation of Jesus Christ is the substance of the contents of the final book of the biblical canon. It is an unveiling of the person and work of the Son of God. The Book of Revelation is written in a unique literary form. This type of writing or *genre* is classified as *apocalyptic literature*. Apocalyptic writings transmit divine revelation which has been imparted to God's prophet by means of symbolic filled dreams or visions.

The *Apocalypse* or *Book of Revelation* is a prophetic book of the Bible that was presented in the form of an epistle or divinely inspired letter and contains much symbolic language. The symbols are spiritual pictures that represent actual persons, groups of people and events that

have already been or will be manifested in the natural realm. The Bible is its best own interpreter. The interpretation of these various symbols is found in the Book of Revelation itself or in other books of the Bible.

Revelation is a consummation of biblical prophecy disclosing the future of the Jew, the Gentile and the body of Messiah. Therefore in order to be accurately interpreted, it is necessary to have a working knowledge and Spirit-led understanding of the entire Bible. Especially important is to have an understanding of the first five books of the Hebrew canon known as the Five Books of Moses (called the Torah in Hebrew or Pentateuch from the Greek), the Messianic Psalms and the Major Prophets of the Old Testament as well as the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), 1 Corinthians and 2 Thessalonians in the New Testament. It is also beneficial to have insight into the culture and customs of the times in order to interpret the Scriptures in their proper historical context.

### Revelation 1:3

*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.*

The very first verse of the Book of Revelation declared to the churches of the first century that something “must soon take place.” As this letter was first read aloud to each of the churches before it was copied and passed along, a blessing is promised to the one who reads the words of this prophecy and a blessing is promised to those who listen and take it to heart. Do you know why are those who heed this message promised a blessing? Because the time was near for “what” must soon take place,” and they had to be prepared for it spiritually and emotionally.

“What” was to soon take place was not the Fall of Jerusalem. With the exception of the western wall (Wailing Wall), the outer walls of the city were broken down and the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Roman legions. In the A.D. 95, John the Apostle was apprehended by the proconsul of Asia and sent to Rome. Emperor Domitian banished John to the Isle of Patmos. The tyrant Domitian was slain in September of A.D. 96. All of his edicts and public acts



## REVELATION 1: 1-20: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

were declared void by a decree of the Roman Senate on account of his excessive cruelty; and his successor, Nerva, recalled all those whom he had banished. The Apostle John returned to Ephesus in A.D. 97 where he became bishop. Since this book of prophecy was penned a quarter of a century after Jerusalem fell, its prophetic message was not fulfilled in a past event. “What” was soon to take place was not the Fall of Jerusalem. “What” was soon to take place concerns today’s Christian as much as the Christians of the first century. What soon occurred was not the rapture of the church but severe persecution of the followers of Christ. Christians have suffered persecution and martyrdom for nearly two millennia. Today in Muslim countries, under dictatorships, and under communism, untold numbers of men and women are facing jail, torture, and even death for their faith in Christ. The Book of Revelation is a letter to all Christians. It is a call for patient endurance and exhorts the believer to stand firm until the end. Those who have placed their faith in the Messiah can take heart because Jesus has assured his followers of final victory.

### Revelation 1:4-5a

*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, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

In John’s salutation, he does not refer to himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ as did Peter and Paul when they wrote their epistles. By simply referring to himself as John, the writer indicates that he had an intimate, personal relationship with the members of these congregations. John most likely was a circuit preacher in western Asia where these churches resided. They were located on a circuitous mail route. Starting with Ephesus, each city was approximately 50 miles from the next city in a clockwise direction.

Since there were other churches in this area that are mentioned in the biblical account including the churches at Colosse, Miletus and Hieropolis, I believe that the seven churches of Revelation were selected because they typify the problems and the accomplishments of

local churches throughout this present evil age. I do not believe that the persecution and faithfulness of the church of Communist China is any less than that faced by the Thessalonians. Nor is the liberality of the churches of today that ordain gay ministers much different from those in Sardis who had soiled their garments of righteousness.

John's greeting is from all three members of the Godhead. Grace and peace from the "I AM" (God the Father), from the seven spirits or sevenfold Spirit before His throne (God the Spirit), and from Jesus Christ (God the Son).

### Revelation 1:5b-6

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 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.*

We who were dead in sins and trespasses have not only been set free by the shed blood of the sinless Lamb of God but have been made a royal priesthood to minister to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

### Revelation 1:7

*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.*

Many of those who embrace a pre-tribulation rapture view believe the rapture is a secret event. In such a view, the elect in Christ only hear the loud command and call of God. A secret rapture is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture that states that every eye will see Jesus at His appearing in the air. Is it not logical that the rapture will be an event of biblical proportions emphasized by a worldwide demonstration of the power and glory of the Lord? It seems as though the rapture will be heralded by the glorious presence of Christ, a thunderous shout, the booming voice of the archangel, and trumpet blasts heard around the globe. There will be such a cacophony of sound and such an authoritative command from the Lord that the dead in Christ shall be raised to life. This would not be a secret event but surely one of the most dramatic and witnessed events in world history!

## REVELATION 1: 1-20: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

*On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.*  
—Zechariah 12:9-10

The return of the Lord in the air to gather the elect from the four winds at the rapture will fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah: *They will look on me, the one they have pierced.* As the church is raptured, the Lord will command His angels to pour out the bowls of his wrath upon the earth striking all the nations of the earth that have gathered against Jerusalem.

### Revelation 1:8

*“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the LORD God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

In the eight verse of chapter one of the Book of Revelation, “I am the Beginning and the End,” is the proclamation of the Eternal One, the Almighty God.

*“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*

—Revelation 22:12-13

Jesus, the soon coming King is also called the Alpha and Omega. God the Father and God the Son are coeternal and coequal. Jesus is not a created being (the Archangel Michael), as claimed by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. He is fully man and fully God.

### Revelation 1:9-11

*I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to*

*the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia & Laodicea.”*

John declared to the Christians who read this letter (the Book of Revelation), that he shared in suffering for the kingdom's sake. John encourages the church by reminding us that patient endurance, a fruit of the Spirit, is available to those in Jesus who suffer because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. “What” was soon to take place was intense persecution. Historically, the Romans regarded the Jewish Christians as another sect of Judaism called the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9,23) or the Nazarene sect (Acts 24:4,14; 28:22). During the siege of Jerusalem, there was an opportunity for the Jewish Christians to heed the words of Jesus and flee to the mountains to escape (Mark 13:14; Luke 21:21). After the Fall of Jerusalem, Jews who did not follow Jesus became even more hostile to those of The Way for deserting them during the first revolt against Rome.

The Jewish religion was officially recognized by Rome. This meant that a practicing Jew was exempted from kneeling before images of the emperor. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple was gone and Jewish people could only worship in synagogues. The leaders and members of the synagogues were exempted from emperor worship. The non-believing Jews were angered because the Jewish Christians deserted during the siege of Jerusalem. They had the members of the Way removed from the synagogue rolls and the names of those who followed Christ were given to the Roman authorities. When Christianity was no longer considered a sect of Judaism, the Christians were required to show their allegiance to the state and the state religion by bowing down to the emperor's image. Many Christians refused to bow and became martyrs for the faith.

*All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

—Matthew 10:22

*Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

—Romans 8:17

## REVELATION 1: 1-20: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Those who truly are the Lord's followers will suffer persecution. But rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is the reward given to those who suffer for righteousness sake.

### Revelation 1:12-16

*I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.*

When John looked to see who was speaking to him; John the Revelator like the prophet Daniel, describes someone "like a son of man" who is an awe inspiring figure.

*"As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.*

—Daniel 7:9

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."*

—Micah 5:2

The Ancient of Days is the eternal Son of God who was born in the town of David.

### Revelation 1:17-18

*When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

The keys to death and Hades are in the hands of the One who conquered death by being the firstborn from the dead. Jesus reigns over both physical and spiritual death.

*“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?”*

—Hosea 13:14a

*When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

—John 19:30

“It is finished or paid” Christ satisfied God’s justice by his substitutional death on the cross. The Messiah has paid your debt of sin with His own blood.

*“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

—Revelation 1:19-20

*What is now was the spiritual condition of the seven churches. What will take place later are the events of the last days: No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ” ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.*

—Acts 2:16-17

... These last days began at Pentecost.