

## Revelation Introduction and Chapter 1- John Karmelich

1. Let me open with a question: Why study Revelation? If you are looking for a reason to study this book, look no further than the third verse of Chapter 1: "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".
  - a) I'll be the first to say, I'm not positive what that blessing means, but if God wants to bless me for studying this book, we'll, bring it on! ☺ Here's your chance to test God with a blessing on your life! All that is required is some reading and some trust in His Word!
  - b) No other book in the bible says, "Blessed are those who read this book or letter". It is not that the other bible books are a waste of time. ☺ Revelation is considered the most difficult bible book to comprehend. It opens with the statement that one is blessed if you read this book. By the way, there are six other "blessings" to the reader of Revelation coming up in this book. This is the only one listed in chapter 1, right at the introduction.
2. With that positive introduction completed, welcome to my study of the Book of Revelation.
  - a) This lesson is not going to be just an overview study. We'll start chapter one in a few pages. Chapter 1 itself is an overview of the book. The "who, what, when and why's of Revelation are written in text Chapter 1 (except the "when", which I'll discuss later.)
  - b) I also want to give a title for this lesson at this time: "Jesus is in Charge". That is my title for Chapter 1. The idea is Jesus is in charge of our lives, Jesus is in charge of world leadership, Jesus is in charge of people who don't believe in Him and Jesus is in charge of world judgment. That pretty much covers life. ☺ More on this as we get into chapter 1.
3. Revelation is the only New Testament Book that specifically focuses on prophecy. All the other New Testament books are either narratives (straight stories) or letters with a list of instructions. Revelation is predominately a set of future prediction or "prophecy".
  - a) Revelation itself claims to be a book of prophesy. In the opening paragraph of this study, I mentioned Chapter 1, Verse 3 that says, "Blessed are those who read this prophecy". That word "prophesy" in Revelation 1:3 refers to all of the Book of Revelation. The scope of the book is a series of events that all tie to the Second Coming of Jesus.
  - b) The word prophecy means, "to shine forth". It is about expanding upon a biblical concept so the audience can understand it. The word prophecy includes predicting the future, but the concept of prophecy is much broader than just predicting future events.
  - c) When a person is accurately describing the bible to an audience in a way that helps them apply it to their life, that person is prophesying. When a person is saying, "the bible is saying such-and-such event will happen one day" they are also prophesying.
4. It is important at this time to give out some disclaimers:
  - a) Among those of us who do believe Revelation is the word of God, there are a bunch of classical interpretations. That does not mean Revelation can be interpreted any old way you want to. It's kind of like a multiple-choice test: One of the answers is definitely right, some of the answers are partially right, but there is definitely a correct answer.
  - b) Throughout this study, I will present different classical views in interpreting Revelation, even ones I disagree with. Revelation is designed to teach us to recognize the signs of His coming. When this event does happen, the prophecies will then become obvious.
  - c) I believe every prediction of Revelation has or will come true one day. I don't know the details or the timing, nor does anyone else in this world, other than what is written in the text. My point is when someone takes a verse from Revelation and says this event is being fulfilled next Tuesday, take such a prediction with a grain of salt. Just because the bible text is the Word of God, doesn't mean every interpretation thereof is correct.
  - d) Because there are a number of "classical" ways of interpreting Revelation, to those who know this book well, I promise that you will disagree with something I say in these studies. People who know this book well disagree "agreeably" with other Christians.

- e) If and when I say something you don't agree with, first of all, take a deep breath, switch to decaffeinated coffee, ☺ and then say the magic words "I disagree". My goal is not to make you agree with all my views. My goal is to draw you closer to God. I also desire you draw your own conclusions based on the fact this is the Word of God.
5. OK, back to the introduction: Why study Revelation?
- a) First, have a little faith in Verse 3. It says, "Blessed are those who read this book." Personally, I don't have a problem with wanting God to bless my life. That usually comes with some pretty good perks. ☺ If you notice God blessing your life as you study this book, don't thank me, but go stop and pray and give God the glory for what He is doing.
- b) A lot of Revelation is very dark. It describes the destruction of the world in very colorful and descriptive ways. One has to remember that the majority of Christians throughout history have been physically persecuted for their faith. They (or you) need the occasional reassurance that God is in charge and God will punish those who are hurting one of His people. The point is God does (or will) avenge who harm us for our faith.
- c) Revelation is also a reminder that God is in charge of "timing". God decided when the world began, and God will decide when the word ends. We are never given dates as to Jesus Second Coming, but we are sure given lots of details how to recognize the event when it happens. That is what most of Revelation is all about: How to recognize the signs tied to Jesus Second Coming.
- d) Another reason to study Revelation is that it is one of the best ways to learn your bible! Revelation is full of word pictures and idioms. Almost every single one of those word-pictures ties to some Old Testament verse. To learn the meaning of those word-pictures, one has to cross-reference those Old Testament Verses. One way a Christian is blessed by studying Revelation is that one becomes very familiar with the bible as a whole.
- e) Remember the focus of Revelation is on the events surrounding Jesus Second Coming. One thing that is important for all Christians to understand is Jesus once made the statement that only God the Father knew the timing of Jesus Second Coming. Jesus said that He didn't know (at that time) when it was going to happen, nor did angels. (Reference Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32).
- i) One reason Jesus mentioned He didn't know the date is so people couldn't claim, "I studied my bible and figured out the date of Jesus Second Coming".
- ii) Another reason Jesus said angels didn't know at that time is so people couldn't claim, "An angel of God revealed to me the time of Jesus Second Coming".
- iii) Another reason all of these events are given is so we are not mistaken as to when Jesus Second Coming actually occurs. If someone claims, "Jesus came back 38 years ago and is living in a condo in Chicago, ☺ we can claim it is wrong because His return did not match all (not some!) of the predictions of Revelation.
- f) The bible as a whole is full of predictions. There are hundreds of predictions in the Old Testament that tie to the events of Jesus First Coming. There are far more predictions that tie to Jesus Second Coming. The bible has more verses focusing on Jesus Second Coming than verses focusing on Jesus First Coming, including all the text in the Gospels! My point is that the events of Jesus Second Coming appear to be the most important, based on the amount of text associated with each event.
6. Suppose you are thinking, "I have enough problems in my life without having to worry about the Antichrist, plagues and Jesus Second Coming. ☺ Why should I study this stuff?"
- a) A big reason to put our lives in perspective. Making a living and taking care of our loved ones is important. God is reminding us that one day, life as we know it will end. Keeping that eternal perspective keeps our focus upon God. When we have that perspective, our problems don't seem so bad. Studying this book won't solve our problems of the moment, but it may change our attitude about what concerns us for the moment.

- b) Let me give an illustration why Jesus Second Coming is important: Imagine you are working in a large office building or large industrial plant: If you knew your boss or supervisor was out of town, would you work as hard and as consistent as if that boss was standing over your shoulder? Now suppose you were told your boss has a big bonus to give you. What you don't know is when your boss will show up and give it to you. Further, the amount of the bonus is dependant upon your work performance. What that influence your work behavior?
- i) That's sort of the idea of Jesus Second Coming. It is designed to be a motivation tool. The church apostles believed Jesus could return at any moment. Here we are, two thousand years later, and I still believe Jesus could return at any moment. That is the idea designed to keep us on our toes.
- c) One day, Jesus will return. That is one of the basic fundamental truths that Christians take on faith. To know when that event will occur, we are given lots of predictions to know it is true. A purpose of Revelation is for us to recognize when this event occurs.
- d) Every Christians who have died never got to see Jesus Second Coming. Let's assume we also don't get to see that event. With that in mind, ask some seniors how fast their life went by. Go visit a graveyard and notice all the young people who died. Compared to eternity, life is short, no matter how long we live. Our eternal rewards are not based on how long we lived, but on how we lived. God gave each of us talents and resources. We will all be judged one day based on how we used such gifts from God. Reading about Jesus Second Coming reminds us that life is short and living for God has far greater benefits than living for any temporal thing of this lifetime.
7. One final introduction thought for the Revelation first-timer: Allow time for all of this to sink in. Be patient if you don't "get it". The book can be overwhelming at times. Pray for God's guidance as you study this book. Remember how one eats an elephant: One bite at a time.
8. Chapter 1, Verse 1: 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,
- a) The English word "Revelation" has the same root word as "revealing". Think of watching a theatre show where the curtain goes up to reveal what is happening on stage.
- b) The idea of Verse 1 is that God the Father is revealing (showing) us the events of Jesus Second Coming in this book.
- c) Notice the words "servants" in Verse 1. That word applies to all Christians. The idea is when we give our lives to Jesus, He becomes our "Lord" in that we are to obey all of His Commandments. We become His servants.
- d) The first sentence of Chapter 1 gives us the book authors and audience. Notice the word "him" in Verse 1: It says, "Which God gave "Him". The "Him" refers to Jesus. With that said, here is the "flow-chart" of the author/audience information of this book:
- i) 1) God the Father giving this information about and to Jesus;
- ii) 2) That information is then given to all Christians;
- iii) 3) The "messenger" of all this information is an angel (2<sup>nd</sup> Sentence);
- iv) 4) The angel gave this information to John the Apostle for us. (2<sup>nd</sup> Sentence).
- e) Hey, if God gave this information to Jesus, Does that mean Jesus does not have perfect knowledge like God the Father? That's a good question! Glad you asked! ☺
- i) The most likely answer is at the time Jesus walked the earth, His knowledge was limited to what God the Father revealed to Him.
- ii) After Jesus resurrection, He became "fully God and fully man". We cannot fully comprehend this in our lifetime. Somehow, someday, Jesus regained full knowledge of the world after His resurrection. Sometime after His resurrection, God the Father revealed to Jesus the details of His Second Coming, which are laid out in the Book of Revelation.

- f) Let's talk about who "John" is, as mentioned in the second sentence.
- i) This is the same John that wrote the Gospel of John, and the three epistles called 1<sup>st</sup> John, 2<sup>nd</sup> John and 3<sup>rd</sup> John. This is same John who was one of the 12 apostles.
  - ii) This is not John the Baptist. To our knowledge, John the Baptist never wrote any epistles or commentary on Jesus.
  - iii) It is not yours truly. ☺ I may be getting old, but I'm not that old. ☺
  - iv) There is both internal and external evidence that John the Gospel writer and apostle wrote this book. There are titles (i.e., "nicknames") that John used to describe Jesus that no other Gospel writer used. One of those same titles is here in Revelation. That fact that only John uses such titles supports his authorship. We still have writings of early church leaders who claim John was the author.
  - v) We'll discover in Verse 4 that these verses are written to churches in Asia Minor. Again, early church writers talk about the same John who ministered to this location in the later parts of his lifetime.
- g) Verse 1 also says, "What must soon take place".
- i) Here comes the first of many controversies in Revelation. It's now been about 2,000 years since Jesus was taken into Heaven with the announcement He would return (See Acts 1:11). Here in Revelation 1:1, it says these events will happen "soon". I don't know about you, but 2,000 years is not my idea of "soon". ☺
  - ii) Know that the Greek word translated "soon" is "takh'-os". (Strong's Concordance) It is the same word we use to describe a tachometer. That's the dial in the car that shows how fast your engine is running. When you step on the gas, it jumps high. Just like when you step on the gas, in a brief span of time, the car goes faster. The ides of "soon" is describing a brief span of time.
    - a) This word "soon", is better translated, "When these events do occur, they will occur in a brief span of time".
  - iii) One of the classical views of Revelation is that the events describe over the book cover the last 2,000 years of history and beyond until Jesus comes back. If one understands that the word "takh'-os" describes a brief span of time, that is a counter-argument to this view. We'll cover that theory later in this study.
  - iv) In all fairness, the word can also be translated "soon", which is why some scholars do hold the view that most of Revelation covers the last few thousand years of history. Further, Chapters 2-3 deal with the judgment of seven specific Christian churches. That judgment did happen relatively soon after this was written.
  - v) If you study Old Testament prophecy (predictions), there is often a short-term fulfillment and a long-term fulfillment of each prediction. The short-term fulfillment validates the speaker as a prophet. For example, if a person makes a prediction that comes true say, 20 years later, it would validate the prophet. That same bible prediction often has some sort of long-term fulfillment as well.
    - a) This "double fulfillment" theory could help connect some of the debate over when the specific predictions are to come true. Some argue that these predictions are all future and some argue they have already been fulfilled.
- h) This is a good time to bring up the title to the Book of Revelation. Different bibles use different titles for this book. Remember the title itself is not part of the original text.
- i) Some bibles just call this book "Revelation". Others say "Revelation of Jesus Christ". Both titles are acceptable, but again, not God inspired like the text.
  - ii) Some older bibles call this "The Revelation of Saint John". While it is technically true, the events of this book were revealed to John though an angel. This title is misleading. It implies that the Revelation is about John. That's not true. The Revelation is about Jesus. John's just the "scribe" who took dictation from the angel that gave John the visions and the description of what was happening.

- i) Hey look everybody, there are actually more verses in Chapter 1. ☺
9. End of Verse 1 and Verse 2: He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.
- a) The first word of Verse 2 is "who". I wanted to include the last part of Verse 1 to make it clear that John was the "who" of Verse 2.
- b) One has to understand that Revelation is written in "letter" format.
- i) Like all letters, we need to know 1) who is the author, 2) who is the letter written to and 3) what does the letter have to say.
- ii) When we write letters today, we have the person the letter is "to" at the beginning, and the person the letter is "from" at the end. In biblical times, the "to" and "from" are both in the beginning of the letter. The rest of the letter is then the message.
- iii) Verses 1 and 2 state who the letter is "from". We'll get to the "to" aspect in Verse 4.
- iv) Again, the authorship has a "flow chart" to it. The letter is "from" God the Father, given about (and to) Jesus Christ, through an angel to John the writer.
- c) A quick word about angels. Angels are a special created "alien being" (for a lack of a better term). Some or all angels have free will as some have decided to side with Satan as well discover in later chapters of Revelation. The most common function of angels is they are messengers from God to give specific messages to people. Other angelic functions mentioned in the bible including fighting demonic forces and protecting us.
- i) Why does God use angels as opposed to direct communication? First of all, if God decides that angles are His method of communication, who are we to argue? If I had to speculate, it is because we might be more likely to listen to an angel as we would be intimidated by being in the direct presence of God Himself.
- d) Getting back to the text, John is essentially saying that "The Book of Revelation is the Word of God and what I am saying in Revelation is direct truth from God."
- i) This leads to the question, "Did the bible writers know they are writing the bible, or were they just "writing"? I would speculate "sometimes yes, sometimes no".
- ii) In John's case here, John understood that He was writing God-inspired text on the same level of the Gospels and the Old Testament.
- iii) I would equally speculate that Paul wrote some of his letters not thinking about whether or not they were God inspired. Paul's letters were about dealing with issues at that time. We don't know whether or not he considered them "bible text" when he wrote them.
- iv) It wasn't until the 3rd-4th Century AD, when Christian persecution finally came to a halt, there was a Roman Emperor who was a Christian. He got the leaders of the church together and formally organized the canon of the bible.
- v) One of my bible teachers gave me my favorite answer on this topic: He said, "John, I think they just knew". What he meant was people read the writings of the Gospels, Paul's letters and books like Revelation and knew that they were more special than other writings.
- vi) Again, we have the writings of the 2nd and 3rd Century Christians. They referred to these writings as "Scripture" and superior to their own letters. Again, I believe "people just knew" these letters were God inspired.
- e) Finishing Verse 2, John refers to Jesus as "The Word of God".
- i) This is another piece of evidence that this is the same John who wrote the Gospel of John. It is only John's gospel that uses the title "The Word of God" to refer to Jesus himself.
10. Verse 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.
- a) Here comes the blessing verse we already discussed in the introduction. Let me give a few more comments and I'll move on.

- b) The term "read" is better translated "read out loud". It is a blessing to read it out loud to others and have them hear it. I'm hoping typing the verses count too. ☺
  - c) I've already discussed the fact we are blessed if we read and hear it. Let's discuss the term "take it to heart". That means we believe it is true. We may not understand all of the details, but we accept by faith the information given in the text is correct.
  - d) As stated in the introduction, notice the term "this prophecy". The entire Book of Revelation is called a prophecy. That is because it is a set of predictions that focuses on the Second Coming of Jesus. It is designed to teach us how to recognize the event and what will happen to the world surrounding this event.
  - e) The last phrase is, "The time is near". John does not say, "The time is near, or it could happen several thousand years from now". ☺ How do we deal with the word "near"?
    - i) First, all of the events of Revelation have not happened yet simply because Jesus has not returned. Chapter 1 Verse 7 says that when Jesus comes back, everyone will see it. In a world of Satellite television, this is not a problem.
    - ii) One possibility of using the word "soon" is so that every generation of Christians will be on their toes watching for Jesus Second Coming.
    - iii) Another possibility is the events of Chapters 2 and 3 do happen in the lifetime of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christian, and those events are "soon".
    - iv) Finally, in relevance to the time span of human history, that time is "near" and even 2,000 years later, it is still "near". (See 2nd Peter 3:8-9).
    - v) Some argue that the judgment chapters cover the last two thousand years of history and Jesus Second Coming is a future event. We'll cover this view more as we get into later chapters of Revelation.
    - vi) Another classical view of Revelation is that the "destructive" chapters describe the destruction of Jerusalem that happen in 70 AD. In that sense, the time is "near" to the reader. I disagree with this view because there is strong evidence Revelation was written after 70AD. Still, this view fits the "shortly" argument of Verse 3.
11. Verse 4a: John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:
- a) Here we have who the letter is written to: "The seven churches in the province of Asia".
    - i) When we think of Asia today, we think of China and many other countries. The word "Asia" back then refers to Asia Minor, which is part of modern-day Turkey.
  - b) This letter is written to seven specific churches in Asia Minor.
    - i) Chapters 2-3 are a "report card" on the good and bad things each church is doing.
    - ii) It describes God's judgment on those specific churches.
  - c) Does that mean we can ignore Revelation because it was only written to those churches?
    - i) Of course not. That's like saying Paul's letter to Timothy only applies to Timothy and we don't have to study that letter.
    - ii) For starters, what God considers "good and sinful" to those specific churches also applies to all churches throughout the world throughout Christian history.
    - iii) These seven churches are picked out as examples for us to study.
  - d) One has to remember that this book was written during a time of persecution by the Roman Government against Christians. Members of these seven churches suffered during this time. One (not the) purpose of Revelation is to give comfort to the persecuted church that God will avenge His people of the harm done to them.
  - e) Remember Revelation does not just say, "And God smote the nations for harming his people". ☺ There is chapter after chapter of details. The "why" is a key issue. As we get into the "judgment" chapters of Revelation, we'll learn more about the nature of God, why judgment is necessary and why those specific types of punishment are necessary. My only point to bring out here is to understand the details of Revelation have a purpose.

12. Verse 4, Second Sentence: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.
- a) In the first sentence of Verse 4, we had the "to": The seven churches in Asia (Minor)".
  - b) In the second sentence of Verse 4 and Verse 5, we have the "from": We have titles that refer to God the Father, God the Holy Spirit and God the Son (Jesus Christ).
  - c) Notice Verses 4-5 don't just bluntly say, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Instead, they give descriptions and titles of each one. In a moment, I describe the purpose of those titles.
  - d) First, a quick side note on the "Trinity". That word is not in the bible. It was coined by the early church to describe the "three in one" aspect of God the Father, Son and Spirit".
    - i) Don't panic. ☺ The word "bible" is not in the bible either, and I do believe in that. The word "Trinity" is a solution, not a problem. It is a way of explaining the fact that each is God, each are "one" and each are separate. Just as "one nation" is a plural compound, so is the Trinity. Even the Hebrew word for "God" ("El-o-him") is also a plural compound.
  - e) Let's look at the title for God the Father: "From him who is, and who was, and who is to come". We know it refers to God the Father only because of the word "and" follows this text. After this description comes "and Jesus Christ" and the term "and the Seven Spirits".
    - i) The idea is to say God the Father, always existed, still exists and always will exist.
    - ii) Kids will ask, "Well, who made God?" If you play that game, one eventually has to come to a deity that was not created. That is the idea of God the Father. It is the God that always exists and always will exist.
    - iii) So why this title? The focus of Revelation is a "wrap up" of the world as we know it. The bible teaches we live forever, but the world as we know it will come to an end one day. Just as Genesis is a book of "beginnings", Revelation is a book of "endings". Much of Revelation parallels Genesis in that manner.
    - iv) Given that, it is appropriate to refer to God the Father in the title given here in Revelation 1:4. The idea is to emphasize it is the same God who started creation as we know it and will end creation as we know it.
  - f) Now let's discuss the title of the Holy Spirit: "from the seven spirits before his throne".
    - i) You cannot find any passage in the bible that reads, "There is a God the Holy Spirit and He is part of the trinity". To understand the role and function of the Holy Spirit, one studies all the references to Him and puts all of them together.
    - ii) I stated in the introduction that the key to understanding Revelation is to realize the book speaks in Old Testament "idioms". Isaiah 11:2 describe seven functions of the Holy Spirit: (The numbers below are added to the text.)
      - a) "The Spirit of the LORD (1) will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom (2) and of understanding (3), the Spirit of counsel (4) and of power (5), the Spirit of knowledge (6) and of the fear of the LORD (7)" (Isaiah 11:2 NIV)
      - b) Therefore, Isaiah 11:2 describes a seven-fold aspect of the Holy Spirit.
    - iii) John, if what you are saying is true, why doesn't Revelation say, "The seven-fold aspect of the Holy Spirit?" Instead, it reads, "The seven spirits".
      - a) This is why some commentators don't tie this seven-fold reference to Isaiah 11:2. Many see the number "seven" as being symbolic of completeness.
      - b) In the same way God rested on the seventh day, the number seven is associated with "completeness". (By the way, get used to seeing the number "seven". It is used hundreds of times in Revelation.)
    - iv) Remember Chapters 2-3 of Revelation are about seven specific churches. The Holy Spirit watches over the churches, and therefore, this "poetic" picture of The Holy Spirit, manifested in the seven specific churches. This letter is written to seven specific churches. Again, the Holy Spirit is watching over those churches.

13. Verse 5 (again): <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup>and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.
- a) This text describes Jesus himself, His titles, and different aspects of what He has accomplished. We know it is Jesus because Verse 5 bluntly says so.
  - b) The first title given of Jesus is the "The Faithful Witness".
    - i) If you read the Gospels carefully, you get the idea that Jesus would rather have avoided going to the cross. He prayed, "If there was any other way" other than the cross, to not let Him have that burden. (Reference Matthew 26:39). Jesus still willfully went to the cross as He was faithful to God the Father's will. One of the key ways to study Jesus life on earth is that He was always obedient to God the Father's will. In that sense, He was a faithful witness and a model for our lives.
    - ii) The point of this title is that if Jesus is faithful "then", He is faithful "now" and we can trust in Him. Remember my title for Chapter 1: Jesus is in charge! We can trust in His faithfulness to keep His promises to us.
  - c) The second title given of Jesus is the "Firstborn of the dead".
    - i) The word "firstborn" is a title. It does not mean Jesus was "born" in the sense that He is a created being. In Genesis, when Joseph had two sons. The firstborn was Manasseh (Genesis 41:51) and the second son born was Ephraim (Genesis 41:52). In Jeremiah 31:9, the text says, "Ephraim was my firstborn" despite the fact Ephraim was born second. The decedents (tribe) of Ephraim were the largest and most dominant tribe of the 12 tribes of Israel, so Ephraim had the title "firstborn". My point is the first person to be born is separate from the title firstborn.
    - ii) Jesus was the first person to be resurrected into heaven. Jesus told the story (not a fictional parable) how those who were saved prior to Jesus were put in a "nice holding tank" (my term, not the bibles) until they could be resurrected into heaven after Jesus was resurrected. (References Luke 16:19-30, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:20-23).
    - iii) The reason that title is given here is to remind us of the resurrection. God allows some Christians to be martyred for their faith. The resurrection is the reminder that it is "worth it". Our hope is not a better life in this world. If our life gets better here, that's a bonus. Our hope is in heaven.
  - d) The third title given of Jesus is the "Ruler of the kings of the earth".
    - i) If you recall, my title for Chapter 1 is "Jesus is in Charge". If Jesus is God, then He is in charge. Jesus said "All authority has been given to Him in heaven and earth" (Matthew 28:18). That means all kings, presidents, governors, mayors and emperors are accountable to Jesus whether they realize it or not. Jesus even told Pilate that he has no power over Jesus unless it has been authorized by God the Father (Ref.: John 19:11).
    - ii) So why is this title important? How many political leaders do you know of that are corrupt? We can rest assured that they may or may not get judgment in this lifetime, but they will be held accountable for the position they hold one day.
  - e) The last sentence of Verse 5 is the essential Gospel message: "who (Jesus) loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood".
    - i) The emphasis here is that we get to go to heaven, not because of any deed, but because the price for sin has been paid, period. We accept this by faith.
    - ii) The whole idea of Verse 5 is to remind us that God is faithful to His promise of the resurrection and God will judge those who do us harm. Remember that this letter was written during a time of Christian persecution. When life is falling apart, one has to take comfort in the fact we as Christians will live forever and God will "take care" of those trying to harm us.



- f) Verse 6 says, "made us (Christians) to be a kingdom and priests".
    - i) Most people are citizens of their country of birth and/or the country they currently reside in. When one becomes born again, you still are a citizen of that country, but one is also a "citizen" of a kingdom where Jesus is our king.
    - ii) Throughout the Gospels, Jesus compares the Christian life to "The Kingdom of God". The idea is to teach us about life as a member of this kingdom. It can refer to life after the resurrection, as this kingdom will continue in the next life. It usually refers to "life on earth" as a member of this kingdom.
    - iii) In the Old Testament, the priests were specifically chosen by God (only the members of the tribe of Levi could be priests). It was the priest's job to intercede (pray, help, minister to others) between God and other people. In the Christian kingdom, each one of us is "chosen" by God. He has perfect knowledge and He knows who will choose to follow Jesus. Each Christian also has the privilege of the same priestly relationship with God in that each of us can pray directly to God for ourselves, for others and as priests, can minister to other people in their needs.
  - g) Verse 6 ends with "To him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen."
    - i) The underlying point is despite whatever suffering Christians have gone through, whatever we are or will go through, is still meaningless in comparison to eternity. The idea is Jesus is "faithful" and His blood was sufficient payment for our sins. We do get to live forever and that should get us to show gratitude to God. That is what John the writer of Revelation did at this point. Jesus is in charge. Let's show our gratitude for that fact!
14. Verse 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.
- a) Remember the purpose of this book is to describe the events surrounding Jesus Second Coming. That is the key point of Revelation. Here in Verse 7, it is stated as such.
  - b) Notice that John emphasizes that "every eye will see Him".
    - i) Whenever, however, Jesus comes back, it will be seen by everyone. Since we live in an era of satellite television, I don't have a problem with this verse. Since "God is God", If He wants to manifest Himself in a way the whole world sees it, I'm sure He can pull it off with or without modern technology.
    - ii) The point is Jesus Second Coming will not be a secretive event. If someone claims Jesus has already come back, ask where the world full of witnesses are?
  - c) The next phrase is "even those who pierced him".
    - i) Remember that Revelation is full of phrases and word-pictures that tie directly to Old Testament passage. This ties to a prediction made in Zechariah 12:10 that says in effect when Jesus returns, the Israelites will realize "they blew it" and mourn for their mistake.
  - d) The next phrase says, "all the peoples of the earth will mourn".
    - i) There are millions or billions of people on this planet who are aware of Jesus yet don't believe in Him. Most adults around the world have heard of Jesus, but don't believe the story or just don't trust in Jesus for the payment of their sins. That is the idea that when Jesus comes back, much of the world will say, "oh oh". ☺
    - ii) The idea of this verse is to give comfort to the believer. We all go through doubts in our faith. Know that a day will come when a world full of nonbelievers will mourn the consequences of their non-belief in Jesus!
15. Verse 8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."
- a) In the Greek alphabet, the "Alpha" is the first letter and the "Omega" is the last one. To paraphrase, Jesus is saying, "Life starts and ends with me just as the alphabet goes from A to Z". (Hey, it even rhymes! ☺)

- b) This is another verse of Jesus reassuring us that just as He came once, He promises to come a second time. Remember that Revelation is a book of "endings" just as Genesis is a book of "beginnings". It is a reminder that Jesus was there in the beginning and will be there in the "ending".
16. Verse 9: 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.
- a) This verse states where Revelation was written: The island of Patmos. This is an island off the coast of Turkey that is crescent shaped, roughly 10 miles long and 6 miles wide at its widest point. The Romans used Patmos as a penalty colony. John was sentenced to this island for the crime of Christianity.
- b) What we don't know from the text is "when". Most (not all) scholars place the time period around 94-96 AD, based on the writings of the early church. John himself was probably in his 90's at this time. Some scholars argue for an earlier date prior to 70AD, but the better evidence and a majority of scholars argue for the early 94AD-96AD date.
- c) The point is John was sentenced to Patmos for the crime of Christianity. That is what is stated in the text of Verse 9. John calls himself "a companion in the suffering". The point is John is writing to fellow Christians who are also being persecuted and John is saying in effect that he can relate to their suffering as he a prisoner too. Remember that God often allows us to go through suffering to comfort others going through the same situation.
17. Verse 10: On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, <sup>11</sup>which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."
- a) OK, it's time to start on visions. Much of Revelation is John seeing visions.
- b) First, let's set the scene: John was praying "On the Lord's Day". To a Christian with a Jewish background, the "Sabbath" is "Saturday" and the Lord's Day is "Sunday" as Jesus was resurrected on a "Sunday". The early church was in the practice of holding worship services on Sunday's. Even though John was banished on this island, He still kept track of the days of the week and worshipped God on "Sunday's".
- c) When John says he was "In the Spirit", it is not some out-of-body experience. It just means He was praising God and the Holy Spirit was working through Him to praise God, just as the Holy Spirit works through us when we praise God. That is not the Spirit's sole function, but it is one of His functions.
- d) Now imagine John praying and singing hymns. All of a sudden he heard a voice behind him saying, "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches..." The churches are then named by name.
- e) The voice was compared to a trumpet. I believe John's point is that the voice was clear and distinct and not "murky". The words of this "voice" were also comprehensible enough so that John understood what that voice was saying, word for word.
- f) Does this mean God can only speak to us when we are worshipping Him? No. It just means God picked this exact point to approach John and start giving Him instructions. Most of us can remember the exact moment special events occurred in our lives. John is doing the same thing by saying in effect, "I remember the exact moment this vision came to me and exactly what I was doing when it happened". It adds to the validity.
- g) Back to the text itself: John was told to write down what he saw and address this in a letter to seven specific churches in Asia Minor. Those seven churches are named by name. The idea is to write one letter, and have it circulated to those seven churches. Does that mean Revelation is only for those seven churches? Yes in the sense the Book of Romans was written primarily to the Romans and Paul's letters to Timothy were intended for Timothy, etc. All of these were God-inspired and the greater purpose is for all Christians to study them.

18. Verse 12: I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. <sup>15</sup>His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. <sup>16</sup>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.
- a) I wanted to show these five verses in context. Imagine John praying to God, hearing a voice saying to write down a letter to seven specific churches. John then turns around, sees seven lampstands and this strange alien-like creature walking amongst the lampstands. My first thought would be, "Wake up John, that spicy food you ate is causing some pretty strange dreams tonight". ☺
  - b) The good news is we don't have to guess what the lampstands mean. The text itself tells us in Verse 20: "The seven lampstands are seven churches".
    - i) Remember that if the bible interprets the vision for you, stop there. There is no need for any further speculation.
    - ii) The bible is also teaching us that the lampstands are symbolic in their meaning.
  - c) The rest of the vision refers to Jesus himself, and we'll tackle that in a moment. The point here is that Jesus "walks among" the seven churches just as He walks amongst your church and my church. Jesus once said where two or more are gathered together, He is there. (Ref.: Matthew 18:20.)
  - d) OK, onto this strange vision of Jesus. We know it is Jesus because Verse 18 says that whatever John saw here spoke and said, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" That sounds pretty Jesus-like to me. ☺
  - e) Remember that John was one of the 12 apostles. He knew what Jesus looked like when He walked the earth. John also saw the resurrected Jesus. One of the titles used for Jesus in the Gospels is the "Son of Man". That refers to Jesus (God) coming in human form. It is almost as if John is saying, "I saw this strange creature walking amongst the lamp stands. John says this vision resembled the Jesus he knew, (called him "Son of Man"), but it also had these strange features.
  - f) It is important to emphasize that the descriptions of Jesus in this paragraph tie directly to a vision Daniel saw of God in Daniel 7:9-14. The description is almost identical, but there are some subtle differences. I don't believe John is quoting Daniel. If John were quoting Daniel, there would be no differences in the text. John described what He saw, just as Daniel described what he saw roughly 600-700 years earlier.
  - g) Since we know "lampstands" is meant to be word-picture of churches (Verse 20), it is logical to speculate that all the other aspects of Jesus here are designed to be word pictures to teach us something about Jesus' role in this picture. With that said, let's cover them:
    - i) "Robe down to His feet": Most likely, this represented the robe of the high priest. It is a symbol of His authority.
    - ii) "A golden sash around his chest": Another ancient sign of authority in the Middle East. A king or a tribal leader would wear such a sash.
    - iii) "His head and hair like wool: John is using terminology he understood and his audience understood. The word for whiteness is like that of pure white light. The idea is it represents his purity or His perfection in His holiness.
    - iv) "His eyes were like blazing fire": Part of Jesus' job is judgment. The idea is Jesus in his role as judge. Remember that "all authority was given to Him" (Matthew 28:18) by God the Father, which would include judgment. You can't do an end-run around Jesus to approach God the Father.

- v) "His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace": Heating bronze is a process used to rid impurities out of that bronze. It is another word picture of Jesus in His role as "judge" separating the pure from the impure.
  - vi) "His voice was like the sound of rushing waters": Imagine the sound of waters crashing on rocks. Remember John was banished to this island Patmos. This speaks of the power of Jesus' voice, speaking in authority.
  - vii) "His right hand...held seven stars": Verse 20 tells us the seven stars are seven angels that watch over the seven churches. More on that in Verse 20.
  - viii) "His mouth came a sharp double-edged sword." One can find New Testament references comparing a sword to God's word (Hebrews 4:12, Ephesians 6:17). The idea is that God's word is convincing to our heart and drives to confession. The idea with this description is that Jesus is judging us. God's word is the standard by which we are all being judged.
  - ix) "His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance." Another reference to purity.
  - h) Note that almost every one of these word-pictures of Jesus will be used again in Chapter 2-3. Understanding these pictures will help when we go through those two chapters.
  - i) Let's put all of this together: The whole thing speaks of Jesus in His role of judge over mankind. Remember my title for Chapter 1: "Jesus is in Charge". Part of that role is Jesus himself decides who gets into heaven and who does not. We will all be held accountable to Him based on what knowledge we have of Him.
  - j) So why doesn't the text just say, "Jesus will judge everyone one day"? Why this strange alien-like visual picture? ☺ For starters, we remember colorful word-pictures better than simple text. If this text weren't here, we would picture the Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels, and not so much a God of judgment. Remember that this book is all about Jesus Second Coming. It is not just a "here I am" event. It is about judgment on the world.
    - i) Remember Revelation is designed to be studied and not just read. Almost all of the strange phrases in this book are Old Testament based word-pictures. Learning those pictures gives us a better scope of the bible as well as Jesus Himself.
19. Verse 17: 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. <sup>18</sup>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.
- a) Personally, If I saw this vision, I would "fall as if dead" too. This would scare anyone.
  - b) Notice Jesus didn't say, "Get up you scaredy cat, I've got more to tell you!" ☺ Jesus understands our fears and does not condemn those who love Him during such times.
  - c) Remember that Jesus name is not mentioned in this whole description. The reason we know it is Jesus is because of the reference to "I was dead. And behold I am alive".
  - d) We also have another title of Jesus "The First and the Last". It is similar to the one given earlier when the text says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega".
    - i) The "First and the Last" is also a reference that Isaiah used three times to describe God (Isaiah 41:4, 44:6 and 48:12). If you encounter a cult member who insists that Jesus is not God, show him the three verses in Isaiah and ask that person "Who is Isaiah talking about?" (God) Then show him Revelation 1:17 where it ties the "First and Last" to Jesus Himself. This verse says the "first and last" deity was dead and is now alive. Again, that sounds pretty Jesus-like to me! ☺ It is a subtle proof of the deity of Jesus as God.
  - e) The final title we have of Jesus in this text is " (Jesus) hold(s) the keys of death and Hades.
    - i) Hades is the Greek word for hell. Death is the state one is in when one reaches hell. The two words are synonyms.
    - ii) When the text says, "Jesus holds the key", it is a reference to the fact Jesus decides who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells his

disciples the "Gates of Hell will not prevail against you". (Matthew 16:18). That quote is another reference to the fact that Christians are not sent to hell.

20. Verse 19: "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.  
<sup>20</sup>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.
- a) Verse 19 is actually an outline of the book of Revelation. This outline is given as a command Jesus gives John at this point is to write what you have seen (the vision so far, Chapter 1) and what is now (describing the "seven churches" which is Chapter 2 and 3) and what will take place later (the events of Jesus Second Coming, the rest of the book).
  - b) Verse 20 explains that the stars mentioned in Verse 16 are angels of the seven churches.
  - c) Verse 20 also explains that the lampstands mentioned in Verses 12-13 are those churches. Does this mean each church has its exactly one angel watching over it? Can be, at least that is the text. Reading about angels all over the bible, you do get the idea angels are in ranks like army ranks. I suspect there is one angel in charge of each church. There are probably other angels over them and under them.
  - d) Remember the primary purpose of angels is to be messengers of God. The text may simply be saying that God is using an angel to communicate His message to each church.
  - e) The other idea is "Jesus is in charge". This ties to my title for Chapter 1. The main idea being conveyed in this chapter is Jesus in charge of judgment, Jesus is in charge of all the churches and Jesus has authority over all things including you and me. In other words, the buck stops with Jesus. ☺
21. OK, everyone take a deep breath, we made it through Chapter 1.
- a) For the first timers reading or studying Revelation, take all of this stride. You're eating an elephant. Today you "nibbled on the elephant's ear" and got a flavor for it. Probably the most important thing to learn from this lesson other than "Jesus is in charge" is to understand how to read Revelation: It is the idea that it speaks in word pictures. Those word pictures tie to Old Testament text that helps to explain the meaning of the text.
  - b) Finally, God promises a blessing for those who study this book. If you have no other motivation to hang around for the second lesson, have faith in that blessing!
22. Let's pray: Father, Help us to remember that Jesus is not only Lord of our lives, but is in charge of the world as we know it. There is a judgment day coming for believers as well as unbelievers. Help us to keep that perspective as we go through our daily lives. Help us to remember that we are accountable for our actions in all that we do. Also, help us to understand the Book of Revelation as we through this book. Give us the wisdom to comprehend it and to apply it to our daily lives. You promise a blessing to all who read it and help us to trust in that promise. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.