

## The Book of Revelation

### Lesson 4 – Chapter 1

1. **Key Verse** is Revelation 17:14 - **“These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they [also shall overcome] that are with him, called and chosen and faithful.”**
2. Synopsis –
  - 2.1. It differs from the other NT writings, not in doctrine but in literary genre and subject matter. It is a book of prophecy that involves both warning and consolation. In communicating its message, the Lord uses symbol and vision.
  - 2.2. Why did the Lord use a method that seemingly makes his message so obscure?
    - 2.2.1. The language and imagery were not so strange to first-century readers as they are to us today. They were very familiar with Daniel and Ezekiel--- apocalyptic literature.
    - 2.2.2. The subject matter, with its glimpses into the future and even into heaven itself, required the kind of language John used. Only through symbolism and imagery can we gain some understanding of the things the Lord was unveiling.
  - 2.3. The more generally accepted date is around 96 AD.
    - 2.3.1. The date given by early (185 AD) church fathers.
    - 2.3.2. The book ties closely with historical events from the close of the Domitian’s reign (81-96 AD).
    - 2.3.3. Recall the situation in AD 96---
      - 2.3.3.1. The Roman Empire had sought a means for unifying its far-flung territories and diverse peoples.
      - 2.3.3.2. Military power could conquer without winning their loyalty, so the emperors were faced with the task of creating a sense of oneness among them.
      - 2.3.3.3. Some of many attempts involved the use of religion.
      - 2.3.3.4. The Pantheon was built in Rome to house all the major gods of the empire.
      - 2.3.3.5. The pragmatic motivation for temple (Pantheon) was to turn the hearts of the devout to the Imperial City.
        - 2.3.3.5.1. The emperors of Rome were routinely elevated to the status of deity.
        - 2.3.3.5.2. This emperor cult posed a serious threat to the existence of the church.
        - 2.3.3.5.3. Domitian led an empire-wide persecution of the church.
        - 2.3.3.5.4. He proclaimed himself ‘dominus et deus’ – ‘Lord and God’, and required worship from his subjects.
      - 2.3.3.6. One’s unwillingness was regarded as both irreverent and treasonous.
    - 2.3.4. This view appeals to the book’s witness to persecution because of refusal to comply with emperor worship.
  - 2.4. The book is meant to encourage the Christians of the first century as well as every century.

3. Rev. 1:1
  - 3.1. Jesus is revealing these truths to John
  - 3.2. Revelation means "to uncover, unveil); This book was meant to clear up things for those to who it was written
    - 3.2.1. It is obviously used metaphorically by John to speak of the undisclosed secrets, both of present and future events that were uncovered or laid bare to him by the Lord. These were truths, like those of the gospel in its entirety, which men cannot perceive through their innate wisdom or physical senses (**1 Cor. 2:7-10**).
  - 3.3. This book is Jesus' Revelation in the sense that it belongs to Him, He is the one doing the revealing.
  - 3.4. It is also Jesus' Revelation in the sense that He is the object revealed; Jesus is the person revealed by the book.
  - 3.5. His Servants
    - 3.5.1. Christians
  - 3.6. "Shortly come to pass"
    - 3.6.1. John is saying that the beginning of the things revealed to him will "shortly come to pass" and are "at hand" (**Rev. 1:3**).
    - 3.6.2. The comment of Burton Coffman on "shortly come to pass" says it well: "The meaning of it is the same as when Jesus said, 'The kingdom of God is at hand,' meaning that the beginning of it was near at hand."
4. Rev. 1:2
  - 4.1. John affirms that he is giving true report of those things which were revealed to him
  - 4.2. Christ "sent and signified" this message to John by his angel (**Rev. 1:1**)
5. Rev. 1:3
  - 5.1. There are seven beatitudes (pronouncements of blessings) in the Book of Revelation, the first of which occurs in **Rev. 1:3**.
    - 5.1.1. Revelation 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, and 22:14
  - 5.2. A blessing is pronounced upon the one who reads **AND** keeps the things in this book.
    - 5.2.1. **James 1:25 - But he that looketh into the perfect law, the [law] of liberty, and [so] continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.**
6. Rev. 1:4
  - 6.1. Seven
    - 6.1.1. Seven (hepta) is used 88 times in the New Testament, 56 of those are in Revelation.
    - 6.1.2. Seven is utilized to suggest completeness, fullness, and inclusiveness.
  - 6.2. Seven churches
    - 6.2.1. This was the Roman province of Asia, which is the western part of modern day Turkey. (slide 11)
      - 6.2.1.1. There were other churches in this area – Colossee and Troas).
      - 6.2.1.2. Addressed to the church in its completeness and through all time.
      - 6.2.1.3. These seven represented the church in its state at the end of the first century and, I believe, the state of the church in every generation.

- 6.2.2. Revelation is addresses to the 7 churches as a cross-section
  - 6.2.2.1. And thus to the church as a whole!
- 6.3. "Grace to you and peace"
  - 6.3.1. Grace – the greatness of the undeserved gifts of given to man
  - 6.3.2. Peace – harmony which is restored between God and man through Jesus Christ.
- 6.4. "him who is and who was and who is to come,"
  - 6.4.1. This is at once a declaration of the undeniable and eternal nature of God.
- 6.5. from the "seven Spirits" before the throne of God.
  - 6.5.1. There is only one Holy Spirit, but here the symbolic number is used to represent the perfection of his person, his attributes and his work.
- 7. Rev. 1:5
  - 7.1. Jesus Christ
    - 7.1.1. Faithful witness
      - 7.1.1.1. He accomplished the work which God gave him to do (**John 17:4**), hence, he is the "faithful witness" who gave testimony of God and his word.
    - 7.1.2. He is the "firstborn of the dead."
      - 7.1.2.1. Others had been raised from the dead, but none like Christ. He is the first to be brought forth:
        - 7.1.2.1.1. "through the glory of the Father" (no human agent in this resurrection, **Rom. 6:4**); and,
        - 7.1.2.1.2. Never to die again.
    - 7.1.3. Christ is the one who "loveth us" (present tense -- his love continues ever). Moreover, because he loves us, he "loosed us from our sins" (aorist tense -- an act accomplished in the past).
      - 7.1.3.1. The means by which Christ "loosed" (released) us from our sins is "by his blood." His love, demonstrated in his sacrificial death, procured our redemption
      - 7.1.3.2. To speak of being loosed or released from sin projects the figure of ransom or redemption from slavery. Peter and Paul both use this same figure (**1 Pet. 1:18-19**; **1 Tim. 2:6**), even as the Lord himself did (**Matt. 20:28**). Paul says that the whole church was thus ransomed (**Acts 20:28**). This ransom and its resulting freedom from sin occur when one obeys "from the heart" the gospel plan of salvation (**Rom. 6:17-18**; **Rom. 6:3, 4**).
- 8. Rev. 1:6
  - 8.1. "Made us to be a kingdom"
    - 8.1.1. John is not speaking of what Christ will do in some remote time in the future, but of what he has done for all who have been redeemed from sin by his blood. As the Colossians had been translated into the kingdom of Christ (**Col. 1:13**) and the Hebrew saints had received a kingdom (**Heb. 12:28**), so the redeemed were at that time a kingdom and a priesthood and John was in that kingdom with them (**Rev. 1:9**).

- 8.1.2. As a kingdom we are subject to law and we are to serve our King (**John 12:48; Heb. 5:9, etc.**). As priests we are to offer appropriate sacrifices unto our God (**Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 13:15, etc.**).
- 8.2. Upon listing these remarkable and glorious attributes and accomplishments of our Lord, John could no longer contain himself. He bursts forth in a stanza of honor and praise: "to him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."
- 9. Rev. 1:7
  - 9.1. "Behold."
    - 9.1.1. The works of Christ yet to be done include his coming, the resurrection of good and evil and the final Judgment, all of which are either stated or implied in this verse.
    - 9.1.2. Pictured returning in the same manner as when he left
  - 9.2. "every eye shall see him"
    - 9.2.1. His coming will be open and visible to all of mankind
  - 9.3. "they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him"
    - 9.3.1. Those who are not obedient to the will of God will mourn Christ's coming as it will mean judgment and punishment
- 10. Rev. 1:8
  - 10.1. "I am the Alpha and the Omega"
    - 10.1.1. Absolute completeness
  - 10.2. "who is and who was and who is to come"
    - 10.2.1. the eternal one
  - 10.3. "the Almighty"
    - 10.3.1.** Dominion over all-especially death.
- 11. Rev. 1:9
  - 11.1. John identifies himself for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time
  - 11.2. This section opens with John's explanation of his personal circumstances when he received the Revelation.
    - 11.2.1. He identifies himself as a "brother" to his addressees, a simple reference to his spiritual kinship to them in the family of God. He is not only their brother, but he is a partaker with them in the tribulation and persecution they are suffering for Christ's sake.
      - 11.2.1.1. Tribulation - persecution
      - 11.2.1.2. Christ warned that persecutions and tribulations would come
        - 11.2.1.2.1. **Matt. 13:21** - Read
      - 11.2.1.3. Just as they were not alone, we are not alone.
        - 11.2.1.3.1. **1 Kings 19:18** - Read
    - 11.2.2. He tells us in **Rev. 1:9** that he was on the barren isle of Patmos "for the Word of God," undoubtedly meaning, because of his preaching of the Word of God.
  - 11.3. John was not only a partaker of the tribulation with his brethren, but also in the "**kingdom and patience which are in Jesus.**"
    - 11.3.1. Since Christ has "**made us to be a kingdom**" (**Rev. 1:6**) we are in his kingdom.

- 11.3.2. John and the brethren in the first century were not yearning for a kingdom yet to come; they understood fully that by being Christians, by being in the church, they were in the kingdom.
- 11.4. "Patience" consistently has the meaning of "steadfastness" in the older versions and is so footnoted in the ASV.
- 11.4.1. This tells us that John and many other brethren were bearing up under the great pressures pagan Rome was putting on them.
- 11.5. To Pergamum the Lord wrote: "**thou boldest fast my name and didst not deny my faith**"(**Rev. 2:13**). Undoubtedly, the faithfulness of the aged and beloved apostle gave others courage to hold on.
- 12.Rev. 1:10
- 12.1. John was under the control of the Holy Spirit on the Lord's Day
- 12.1.1. The word translated "Lord's" (koo-ree-ak-os) appears only one other time in the New Testament in 1 Cor. 11:20 where it speaks of the Lord's Supper.
- 12.1.2. Only time this expression (on the Lord's Day) is used in the New Testament.
- 12.1.3. The voice was commanding, sounding like a great trumpet.
- 12.1.3.1. **Hebrew 4:12 - For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.**
- 12.1.3.2. The voice demanded great attention.
- 12.1.3.3. This implies the strength and clarity of the voice. However, it is not merely an indistinguishable musical tone, but a voice with a clear command.
- 13.Rev 1:11
- 13.1. John is commanded to write what he sees and send it to the seven churches in Asia.
- 13.2. In the KJV, the word "seest" is present tense which designates continuous action. He is to record what he sees and will continue to see.
- 13.3. The specific churches are mentioned.
- 14.Rev. 1:12
- 14.1. This designates the first vision
- 14.1.1. When John turned to see the source of the great voice behind him he mentions first, not a person, but seven golden candlesticks (more properly, lampstands).
- 14.1.1.1. The seven-branched lampstand from one stem is a familiar part of the Old Testament tabernacle and temple (**Exo. 25:31-37; 1 Kings 7:49; etc.**).
- 14.1.1.2. However, John apparently saw seven individual stems and stands, for the person he saw was "in the midst" of them. The significance of the lampstands will be revealed to John in **Rev. 1:20**.
- 14.1.2. It presents an awe-inspiring picture of the one who delivered the Revelation and commissioned John to record it and send it to the seven

churches. It was so wondrous to John that he fell at the feet of this one he saw and heard "as one dead" (**Rev. 1:17**).

#### 15. **Rev. 1:13**

15.1. The person who spoke and whom John saw among the candlesticks was "like unto a son of man." Who is this? Christ.

15.1.1. The risen saviour

15.2. The background of this terminology, like so much of the revelation, is from the Old Testament. **Dan. 7:13** says: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man."

15.2.1. "Daniel's "son of man" is a prophetic description of the Son of God in his humanity. "Son of man" was the Lord's favorite self-description (he used it of himself approximately 50 times).

15.2.2. The significance of this inspired description of Christ throughout scripture seems to be that of emphasizing that although he is indeed Godhead and deity, he is also man and is able to partake in our trials and sufferings (**Heb. 4:15**). In spite of the vision of Christ's glorified appearance, which John is soon to describe, he is first identified as "son of man."

15.2.3. This reminder to the oppressed saints of the seven churches of the humanity of Christ must have helped them understand once more that he could suffer with them even as he had suffered for them. It should likewise encourage us.

15.3. The "son of man" John saw was strikingly clothed. His garment reached to his feet and it was bound at the breasts with a belt of gold. Many commentators see in this attire the description of the priestly robe or king.

#### 16. **Rev. 1:14**

16.1. His head and his hair as "white as snow" symbolizes the purity and holiness of God and Christ.

16.2. His "eyes as flames of fire" symbolizes his ability in penetrating and searching even the heart of every man.

16.2.1. Do we believe we can have secret sin?

#### 17. **Rev. 1:15**

17.1. Brass was the strongest known metal in John's day.

17.1.1. The feet like burnished brass indicate strength, power of judgment and execution in the judgment.

17.2. His voice of many waters

17.2.1. The voice was strong and commanding, such as the roar of the ocean or waterfalls.

17.2.2. **Ezek.43:2**

17.2.3. Expressing His voice in this fashion shows divine majesty and power.

#### 18. **Rev. 1:16**

18.1. His right hand held seven stars, which he will explain in **Rev. 1:20**.

18.2. Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp, double-edged sword. This is the same word used to describe certain attributes of the Word of God in **Heb. 4:12**.

18.2.1. Since it is proceeding from the Lord's mouth in this vision, it surely stands for the word of the Lord. The avenging and judging work of the Lord

through his word must be the intended application of the symbol, even as it is in **Rev. 19:15**.

- 18.3. The countenance of the Lord was comparable to the brilliance of the sun at its apex.
  - 18.3.1. This surely stirred John's memory of the transfigured Christ in the mountain (**Matt. 17:1-2**).
  - 18.3.2. The Lord's appearance to Saul of Tarsus is described in like terms (**Acts 26:13**).
  - 18.3.3. This is a strong symbol of Christ as the glorified Son of God, and as that glorified Son, the one in whom the Father has vested all authority (**John 17:1-2**).

## 19. **Rev. 1:17-18**

- 19.1. The vision of the authoritative, glorified Christ is overwhelming to John and he falls faint at his feet (**Ezek. 1:28; 43:3; Dan. 8:18, 27; 10:7-9,17; etc.**).
- 19.2. Christ's gentle right hand (but also strong, for so "right hand" would indicate) comforts and perhaps lifts John up. The Lord's voice encourages him not to be afraid, but to trust in him for three reasons:
  - 19.2.1. First, "I am the first and the last." This has exactly the same meaning as the "Alpha" and the "Omega" of **Rev. 1:8**.
    - 19.2.1.1. It is a declaration of the ever-living, self-existent, eternal nature of Christ.
    - 19.2.1.2. He did not have a beginning; he is the beginning and was alive when "the beginning" began (**John 1:1-3, 14**)!
    - 19.2.1.3. Neither will he be defeated, destroyed or brought to an end.
    - 19.2.1.4. This is a statement of assurance not only for the fearful John, but for his persecuted brethren.
    - 19.2.1.5. It should be likewise for saints of all the ages.
  - 19.2.2. Second, Jesus said, "I am ... the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore ..." He mentions his present, past and future life-states.
    - 19.2.2.1. This unmistakably identifies the one addressing John as the crucified Christ, if nothing before had. This refers not to his life and existence as it pertains to his Godhood but only to his humanhood.
    - 19.2.2.2. He indeed delivered himself up to the death of the cross (**Phil. 2:5-8**), but the Father raised him up (**Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 15:20**).
    - 19.2.2.3. Christ is alive to die no more, thus he is perfectly able to secure the final victory for his downtrodden saints.
  - 19.2.3. Third, Jesus said, "... I have the keys of death and of Hades."
    - 19.2.3.1. The keys are a symbol of power and authority.
      - 19.2.3.1.1. Christ has the power and authority over death and Hades.
    - 19.2.3.2. Death is the consequence of sin (**Rom. 5:12; 6:23**) and it is the great power Satan yet wields over men.
      - 19.2.3.2.1. Hades (not "hell," as in KJV) is the unseen realm of departed spirits.
      - 19.2.3.2.2. Thus death, which populates the grave by destroying our bodies, and Hades, the depository of spirits when they depart the

dead bodies, will both eventually be "unlocked" by Christ. This will occur when the Lord "cometh with the clouds" (**Rev. 1:7**).

19.2.3.2.3. Christ will reign on his heavenly throne over his earthly kingdom (the church) until death, the last enemy, is abolished (**1 Cor. 15:24-25**).

19.2.3.2.4. Death itself will be destroyed when Christ returns and empties both the grave and Hades by the glorious universal resurrection! Ironically, it was through his own death that Christ was able to "... bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil" (**Heb. 2:14**).

19.3. In this opening vision of Christ in his power and glory we see depicted one who, throughout the remainder of the visions, would have power sufficient to purge the dross from his churches, bear up his faithful ones and eventually pour out his awful wrath against his (and their) enemies.

## 20. **Rev 1:19**

20.1. Repeated call to write the letter.

## 21. **Rev. 1:20**

21.1. Mystery of the seven stars

21.1.1. Seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, but what do angels mean?

21.1.2. God does not need to send a message to angels as they are with him in heaven

21.1.3. The seven stars represent the spiritual lives of each congregation.

21.2. The candlesticks

21.2.1. The clue is found in **Rev.2:5**

21.2.2. When you fall away from Christ, he will no longer recognize you as his church

21.2.3. Thus, the candlestick is the outward manifestation of the church

21.3. The inward man must change before it is seen on the outside, the same is true of churches.

## 22. Notice how the book ties together

22.1. Verses 14-18

22.1.1. 2:1

22.1.2. 2:8

22.1.3. 2:12

22.1.4. 2:18

22.1.5. 3:1

22.1.6. 3:7