

Notes on Revelation 1

Intro: The statements of chapter one provide a backdrop and frame of reference for the remainder of the book. Its description of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are stirring and comforting.

The superscription--v. 1-3

The revelation (apocalypsis) of Jesus Christ--Here is the unfolding of what has heretofore been unknown.

Which God gave him to show...--The restoration of the kingdom to Israel involved "times and epochs" which only the Father knew. But now they have been revealed to Christ by the Father (Ac. 1:7). Jesus indicates this He described the destruction of Jerusalem. Cf. Mt. 24:36 (Mk. 13:32).

To his bond-servants--Christians

The things which must shortly take place (Cf. notes on introduction).

The means of sending and communicating this message is by means of an angel. Is this the angel of the Lord that so often stands in the place of God and represents God to man? Though God has often appeared to man, it has been in the form of an angel who represents him! (Jn. 1:18). Does this suggest that Christ himself was not personally present, but present in his angel?

By His servant John--the apostle

Who bore witness (the word of God/testimony of Jesus).

To all he saw (a full disclosure).

Benediction: Blessed is he who:

Reads--the messenger (angel) of the church will do this.

Hears and heeds--God's bond-servants will do this.

Why? The blessing is conditioned upon the nearness of the events described.

The salutation and theme--v. 4-8

Salutation from John

Recipients: the seven churches

Salutation from the Godhead

Father--His description places him in contrast to the beast of chapter 13, "who was, is not, who is to come". This description emphasizes the eternal existence of God.

Holy Spirit?--Seven spirits. The Holy Spirit in his totality. In the fulness and power of truth He gathers men to God in contrast to the "uncleans spirits" that come from the mouths of God's enemies (Cf. 16:13-14) and who gather men against God and his force.

Jesus Christ

The faithful witness--He bore witness of salvation, giving his life for it. His word is trustworthy.

The first-born of the dead. Though killed for his testimony, he came to life, never to die again.

The Ruler of the Kings of the earth. As resurrected Saviour, all authority has been given to him. He rules all, even the great earthly governments that fight against Him and his people!

Praise to Christ

Loves us and released us from our sins by His blood. We are his people by his sacrifice.

He made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God & Father. We are the true kingdom of God, the true Israel of God and the true priesthood of God, in contrast to the earthly kingdom of Israel and its Levitical priests. This may anticipate the message of judgment against the physical nation.

He is coming with the clouds (Cf. Mt. 24:30, etc.). These are words of encouragement to the redeemed (Cf. Lk. 21:27-28). Jesus' coming would be one of judgment of God's enemies and the salvation of His elect (Lk. 21:23-28; Mt. 24:29-31).

Commentators typically see the "mourning" as the sorrow resulting from the judgment and punishment of the wicked. This is possible, but there is another explanation that preserves the original sense of the language as found in Zech. 12.

John builds his message on the prophesy of Zech. 12-14 concerning the coming Messianic kingdom. Zechariah saw the Jewish rejection of their Christ. He foresaw God giving them into the hands of their enemies, the Romans (Zech. 14:2). But He also saw their salvation. A "spirit of grace and supplication would be poured upon them". They would "look upon the one they had pierced and mourn for him" (Zech. 12:10) in penitence. It is a mourning comparable to that of a parent for an only son (Zech. 12:11-14). The judgment of Jerusalem would purify and redeem Israel (Zech 13:8-9). As a result, Christ would defeat Israel's enemies (14:3) and establish the "new Jerusalem" under God's blessing and protection (14:8-21). No wonder John longed for this day, "Even so, amen!"

John's use of this prophecy provides some strong evidence that Revelation concerns God's destruction of the nation of Israel by the Romans, their restoration to faith, the subsequent defeat of the Romans and the creation of "a new Jerusalem". Revelation explains the fulfillment of God's mystery concerning the coming kingdom. The defeat of God's enemies would bring in "the new Jerusalem".

An affirmation of the eternal existence and power of God--I am the Alpha and Omega! It seals the predictions of God as certain. He knows all that is to transpire and will be there to secure their fulfillment.

The occasion of revelation, the appearance of the angel of the Lord--v. 9-20

I was on Patmos

Your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance in Jesus

Because of the word of God and testimony of Jesus (either to receive it, or because of faithfulness to it)

I was in the Spirit

Under the control of the Holy Spirit

On the Lord's day (the first day of the week). There is much evidence for this designation among early church writers.

I heard a loud voice, saying write what you see.

The revelation was to be given in symbolic pictures. Thus John describes them to us and often uses the phrase "and I saw...".

Christ's description

The picture of a priest and judge.

Among the lampstands indicating his fellowship with and knowledge of the churches

Holding the stars in his hand indicating his control over their messengers (angels).

Glorious

Christ's self-designation

The first and the last, the living one, I was dead but now alive forevermore, I have keys of death and of Hades.

He is pictured as having complete power over the realm of death. He is the immortal resurrected Christ.

Christ's charge--Write what you have seen, the things that are, the things that shall take place after these things. Is this a charge to write everything John has, is, and will see? Or does it mean, the past, the present, the future (Cf. 4:1)?

Conclusion: This chapter sets the stage for remainder of the book. It pictures the resurrected Christ in all his glory, in control, cognizant of the future, aware of the needs of his people and able to act for their good.