

The Glorified Jesus Reveals the Future

A Review of Revelation 1-3

Half of all Christians on earth today believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth in their lifetime. The book of Revelation contains Jesus Christ's last words to the Christian Church about the future. He warns about the terrible events that will fall on the earth during the Tribulation. What will happen to Satan, to the Antichrist and to all who follow false religion. He tells what will happen at the Battle of Armageddon, His Second Coming to earth, His Millennial Kingdom, the Final Judgment and describes what God has planned for His people in Eternity Future.

1. **Who gave us the information that is recorded in Revelation? How did it get written? Who are the "Key Players" in chapter 1?**

Revelation 1:1 - The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.

Jesus is the Divine Author; the Apostle John is the human author.

The Lord Jesus Christ appeared to John on the Island of Patmos 65 years after the Resurrection and revealed the future to him.

John was Jesus' most "personal disciple." John spent 3 years with Jesus. He leaned on Jesus' shoulder at the Last Supper. He was the only disciple who was at the Cross.

Revelation 1:17 – When I [John] saw him [Jesus], I fell at his feet as though dead.

When we get to heaven, it will be no casual thing to see Jesus!

Revelation 1:17 – But he [Jesus] laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not..."

2. **Why does every Christian need to read and study the book of Revelation?**

Because it tells us about events that are going to take place in the future.

Revelation 1:3 – Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

Revelation is the only book in the Bible with this kind of unique promise. This is why it is called "The Blessing Book."

Revelation 1:4-5 – John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

The book of Revelation comes from the Triune God (one God manifested in three Persons— Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

Who is (are) **the seven spirits who are before his throne?** God the Holy Spirit

From him who is and who was and who is to come – God the Father.

And from Jesus Christ – God the Son.

The seven spirits – have to be a part of the Trinity. The number seven is used 54 times in Revelation. It is a number that signifies completeness, perfection, or fullness of power. The

perfection or fullness of power of the Holy Spirit. Cp. Isaiah 11:1-2 – the sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit is described.

3. **How is Jesus described in the opening verses of Revelation? What does this signify?**

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."

Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

The names used of God are revelatory names—they always tell us something about God. God is frequently called the Alpha and Omega in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 44, 48).

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega (cp. Rev. 22:13), signifying that He is God. He is eternal, omnipotent, and sovereign. These truths about Jesus are worked out throughout the rest of the book of Revelation. He is the omnipotent sovereign over the entire Tribulation Period.

Revelation 1:5-6 – To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen.

All Christians are priests that God wants to use to serve and glorify Him while we are still here on the earth.

The eternal God loved us so much that He stepped out of eternity and took upon Himself human nature for the purpose of dying on the cross for us. There is no greater love than that!

This is an affirmation of God's overall purpose for saving humanity—that we might serve and glorify Him.

4. **In Revelation 1:7, how do we know that John is talking about the Second Coming of Christ rather than the Rapture of the Church?**

Revelation 1:7 – Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

When the Rapture takes place, Jesus will not actually come back to the earth.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 – Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...

1 Corinthians 15:52 – ...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...

Revelation 1:7 says **every eye** (on the earth) **will see him**...

The Rapture and the Second Coming are two different events. The unsaved world will not see Jesus at the Rapture, but every eye will see Him at the Second Coming.

There is a seven-year time period (the Tribulation) between these two events.

The Rapture is imminent (it could take place at any moment; there is no prophecy that has to be fulfilled before the Rapture). The Second Coming has seven years worth of signs that precede it and are yet to be fulfilled. Those signs are recorded for us in the book of Revelation.

5. **Why was John on the Island of Patmos and when was he there?**

Revelation 1:9 – I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

John was banished to Patmos by the Roman Emperor, Domitian (reigned A.D. 81 – A.D. 96), in the mid-90's, to remove his influence from the churches. This is firmly established by church history. He was banished for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Revelation was written around A.D. 95. Revelation was written well after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. It was not written during the time of Nero.

6. **What is the purpose of the book of Revelation? Why was it written?**

Revelation 1:19 – Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

The things that you have seen – Past: Jesus is the Lord of history.

(The things) that are – Present: Jesus is the Lord of the Church.

(The things) that are to take place after this – Future: Jesus is the Lord of the future.

This is one of many triplets in the book.

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."

The Lord who is – Present

The Lord who was – Past

The Lord who is to come – Future

1,200 "ands" (*kai*) are used in Revelation (in Greek). This creates anticipation about the exciting things that are coming in the future, and the most exciting "Thing" is Jesus!

7. **Chapter 1 should encourage us in our faith that the Sovereign God is ruling over all; He is in control of what is happening in our world. What else should it do?**

It should give us confidence in what the future holds. Revelation was written to help the persecuted believers in the seven churches. Knowing what is going to happen in the future, that we are "on the winning side," gives us strength to deal with the present.

8. **Who were the seven churches? Why did Jesus address those seven churches?**

Revelation 1:11 – "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

These were seven literal churches that were all connected by a Roman highway in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). They are representative of churches all down through the ages.

Revelation 1:12-13 – Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man...

Jesus was and is the Lord of the churches. He spoke, therefore, with great authority, words both of commendation and condemnation to the churches. The churches needed to continue to do what they were doing right and repent of, change, and correct the things that they were doing wrong.

Ephesus – Probably the Mother Church. Largest city in Asia Minor. This church had been ministered to by Paul, the Apostle John, and Timothy.

Revelation 2:4 – But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Jesus Himself is to be the “first love” of the church.

Smyrna – The Persecuted Church.

Revelation 2:10 – Do not fear what you are about to suffer... Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Pergamum – A Political Church. The Roman army was headquartered here. Temptation to compromise with the government.

Thyatira – A Prosperous Church. Smallest of the seven cities. Received the longest letter because it had the most theological problems. Material prosperity had taken them away from their commitment to Christ.

Sardis – The Powerless Church.

Revelation 3:1 – “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up...”

Philadelphia – The Persevering Church. “I will use you to reach the world.”

Revelation 3:8 – I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

Laodicea – The Putrid Church. “Repent or I will spit you out of my mouth!”

Revelation 3:15-16 – “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”

In the end, Christ is outside of the church, knocking and asking permission to come back in.

Revelation 3:20 – Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in...

Each letter is written to a particular church with its own needs. But each letter ends...

Revelation 3:22 – He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to [all] the churches.

The principles given to these seven churches apply to all churches in all places at all times.

9. **How can we understand the symbolism in the book of Revelation?**

Revelation 1:20 – As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. (Cp. 1:12, 13, 16)

In many cases, the immediate context of the passage in question tells us exactly what the symbols mean.

10. **What is the significance of Jesus standing in the midst of the lampstands / churches?**

He sees everything that is going on, He knows what is in the hearts of the people, and how they serve Him.

Ephesus: Revelation 2:2-3 – “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles

and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

Ephesus was “a super-duper, 5-star, flagship church”!

Revelation 2:4 – But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

They didn't lose it; they deliberately turned away from it; they left it.

The “first love” is their / our love for Jesus Christ. Over time, our love for Jesus Christ can diminish. They were busy working for the Lord. They had all their theology right. “You can be as straight as a gun barrel theologically, but cold as a gun barrel spiritually” (--*Unknown*). They had the right doctrine. They knew the right things. But they had fallen away in their love and passion for Jesus Christ. We must not allow other things to come in and replace our love for Jesus Christ.

11. What is an “overcomer / conqueror”? Is this a special class of Christian or is this every Christian?

Revelation 2:7 – He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

And can we lose our salvation by failing to be an overcomer / conqueror?

1 John 5:4-5 – For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Every believer is an overcomer / conqueror!

All the rewards that are promised to overcomers are true for all Christians.

E.g., **Revelation 2:11 – He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.**

No Christian will experience the **second death** which is eternal death in the Lake of Fire. (Cp. Rev. 20:6, 14-15)

12. What should we learn from the church in Smyrna?

Revelation 2:10 – Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

The Health, Wealth & Prosperity Gospel seems to “go down the drain” with this verse.

Polycarp (A.D. 69-155), John's personal disciple, was burned at the stake in Smyrna for his faith in Christ.

As late as the early 20th century, 20,000 Christians were martyred in Smyrna (Izmir).

Christians are facing persecution today all over the planet.

Matthew 10:32-33 – So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

“If Jesus is worth living for, He's worth dying for.”

13. What should we do, if we are personally guilty of some of the issues that these churches were dealing with?

Ephesus: "I know your deeds" (2:2)
Smyrna: "I know your deeds" (2:9)
Pergamum: "I know where you dwell" (2:13)
Thyatira: "I know your deeds" (2:19)
Sardis: "I know your deeds" (3:1)
Philadelphia: "I know your deeds" (3:8)
Laodicea: "I know your deeds" (3:15)

Jesus knows what's happening in our churches. He is the Lord in the middle of the candlesticks. He knows where we live, what we're doing. We can't fool Him.

We need to emulate and follow the good things that the churches were doing.

We also need to take seriously the things that the Lord condemned in these churches. We need to repent, to turn from those things that are displeasing Him. We need to recognize that these things will bring judgment from the Lord.

Next week we will take a deeper look at these churches.

The John Ankerberg Show, June 16, 2017 (JASHOW.ORG)

Dr. Ed Hindson – Dean, Liberty University School of Religion.

Dr. Mark Hitchcock – Associate Professor of Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary

Dr. Ron Rhodes – President, Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries