

## Revelation “The Unveiling of Jesus”

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#### I. Intro

Over the centuries since John wrote this book of the things, which he heard, saw and did, it has come under much scrutiny. Some have noted the different style of writing when compared to his gospel and three letters. This is easily understandable when we consider that when John wrote his gospel and letters, he most likely had a scribe but since he wrote Revelation on the Island of Patmos (1:9) he would not have had one. Also, the prophetic nature of Revelation would account for a vastly different writing style. The other controversial aspect of this book centers around the differing ways people interpret what John heard saw and did. There are four main views that have come forth on how the reader ought to interpret this book:

1. **Preterits**: The word comes from the Latin word for “*bygone or former*” thus what is written is “*past tense*”. This view sees all the events described in John’s writing as happening in the time frame of John himself and as such are “*former*” events as far as we are concerned. Those who hold this position believe that Revelation deals only with the church in John's day and is non-predictive, Revelation was only for then and not for now.
2. **Historicist**: Here the view is that all events described by John must fit within the scope of history from the first century to the last. History is the standard by which the events are to be interpreted. Those that hold this position believe that Revelation is a sweeping, un-ordered panorama of all church history Revelation just provides symbols describing now.
3. **Futurist**: Here the idea is to look at the events John describes as pertaining to the future especially from chapter four on. Those that hold this position believe that Revelation deals only with the end times, the period directly preceding Christ's return and as such has merit only for those living in the end times.
4. **Idealist**: This position sees the whole book as being written to inspire persecuted and suffering believers. Thus, they look at it as being poetical or allegorical and isn't to be taken as literal or historic but just as encouraging.

Which of these views is the correct one? John himself gives us the right way of interpreting what he heard saw and did in the first three verses. It is important to keep in mind that this book like

no others deals exclusively with Jesus Christ; after all it is even called the “**Revelation of Jesus Christ**”. John wrote in his gospel (17:24) Jesus’ prayer to the Father for us when Jesus said, “*Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*” **This book is the closest we will come to the answer of that prayer this side of eternity.**

Twenty-eight times Jesus is called the Lamb of God in this book compared to only four times in the entire N.T. **What this shows us is that in heaven we will forever be reminded of the cost of our heavenly home.**

## II. Vs. 1-3 Purpose, origin, keys, and benefits of the book

Vs. 1 Here John gives us the purpose and origin of what he has heard seen and did.

- A. **Purpose:** “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*” literally the “*shedding of light*” or the unveiling of something or someone one that has been hidden. So that which is to have light shed upon it or unveiled is **Jesus**. Paul wrote in Eph. 3: 8-9 that he was called to proclaim among the Gentiles “*The unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what the fellowship of the mystery is, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ*”. The proper interpretation on this book starts and ends with Jesus being unveiled and not with just “**former things**”, “**historical things**”, “**future things**” or “**encouraging things**”. Although each of these points of view hold part of how He is unveiled.
- B. **Origin:** “*Which God gave Him to show His servants*”. **This unveiling has come from God the Father to God the Son (Jesus) for our benefit.** The unveiling was done in Glory for the specific purpose to show his servants. The word used here is “*dolos*” in the Greek and means servants by choice! Furthermore, we are told that this disclosure of Jesus was dealing with, “**things which must shortly take place.**” The unveiling of Jesus by the father through the Son to us is events related to Him that will swiftly come. At the very end of the book (22:20) John will proclaim “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*” Like other disclosures by God to mankind it was divinely sent by heavenly messenger and it was brought to John who will be told by Jesus in 1:19 to write the things which he had seen, the things which are and the things which will take place after this.

Vs. 2 Next, we are given the key to interpreting the book:

- A. **Key to interpretation:** “*Who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.*” John gives us the key to this unveiling of Jesus interpretation.
- It is not looking at the events in the time frame that John wrote

- It is not to in our understanding of history
- Or how the things written are symbolic of things now
- It is not in our ability to comprehend future events
- We are not going to understand this unveiling of Jesus by ascribing it as an allegory

Instead, John gives us the answer; all the things, which he heard, saw and did concerning the unveiling of Jesus is to be found in the “**Word of God**”. **We need to understand the unveiling of Jesus by letting scripture interpret scripture.** We have no need to look outside of God Word, which is the testimony of Jesus Christ for our understanding.

- What did John see? Well, he tells us in 1:12, 19 the “glorified Jesus”.
- What is the “***things that are***”? John tells us in 1:11, 20 “the seven churches”.
- What are the “things which must take place after this”? John will tell us in chapter 4 as he describes the 70<sup>th</sup> week spoken of in Daniel.

Vs. 3 Finally John has a word to say about the benefits of reading this book:

- B. **Benefits:** “*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*” **The blessing is “joy” in difficult and confusing times.** How will these words be a blessing that causes spiritual joy? **They will remind us as we read, hear, and keep these words concerning the glorified Jesus that He has won and with Him we have as well!**

### III. Vs. 4-8 Destination, dedication, and theme of the book

Next John reveals this book’s, “**destination, dedication and theme**” for all who read it.

- A. Vs. 4 **Destination:** “*To the seven churches that are in Asia:*” John tells us that he is merely the pen. **In fact, 12 times in this book, he is instructed to write.** The letter is to be read and studied by “**the seven churches which were in western Asia**” in the area now known as Turkey. Why these Churches and not others that we know existed in that region? The truth is only two out of these seven are even mentioned outside of this book (Ephesus and Laodicea) although Thyatira is mentioned in Acts 16:14 as the place where Lydia was from. It is interesting that the Church that “*left its first love*” (2:4) and the church that is “*lukewarm*” (3:16) are the only two that we even know of outside this book. It is safe to assume that Revelation was to be a circular letter that would be read first at Ephesus and then passed to each church. I find it interesting that there are seven churches listed and seven is the number of perfections in scripture. **It is my opinion that this is meant to show that these churches represent not only their time frame but all of church history as well.** Though **these words had specific significance to these churches at that time they also represent church periods throughout history as well as Christians today:**

1. **Ephesus:** 1<sup>st</sup> century church, A.D. 30 to 100.
2. **Smyrna:** 2<sup>nd</sup> century church, 100 A.D. to 300 A.D. a time of great suffering as more Christians were killed during this time than any other.
3. **Pergamos:** This time began with the Roman emperor Constantine’s profession of faith in which he integrated pagan rituals with the Church. This made the church a state religion and as such no longer cared about the things of God.

4. **Thyatira:** This was the beginning of the Catholic church in 606 A.D. and is often called the church of idolatry and it will continue through the great tribulation.
5. **Sardis:** The protestant church, which began in 1520 at the reformation and will continue through the tribulation as well. It is often called the dead church.
6. **Philadelphia:** The evangelical church, which began in 1750 and will continue until the rapture. Though this church only has a little strength it none the less keeps His Word and does not deny His name as it looks for His return.
7. **Laodicea:** This is the liberal church which began in the 1900's and sees itself as rich but is neither hot nor cold.

**There are elements of each of these churches in our own lives as believers.** In reading about these churches, we ought to examine our own hearts and apply that which Jesus suggests for each church.

Notice the greeting, that John address to each of these seven churches, “*Grace to you and peace*”. Seventeen times this greeting is used in the N.T. and it is God’s desire for all His children. What an encouragement this is no matter what circumstance, time frame or personal failure we might have God wants us and we must have abundant provisions of His grace and peace. These two words capture His attitude towards his church.

- **Grace:** Reveals His hearts attitude towards us. If it was anything other than His unmerited favor, then we would be doomed.
- **Peace:** Reveals our standing based upon His attitude. We only have peace with Him because He has chosen to act in grace towards us. As such my peace with Him is not conditional on me to maintain!

How much of our failures would be overcome if we lived in those two truths? Do not miss this, what is the source of grace and peace? If you are not presently experiencing grace and peace, where can you find it? John attributes grace and peace only source as being found exclusively in the:

- **Father:** “**From Him who is and who was and who is to come**”: The source is from God the Father who alone is self-existent. His grace and peace are **available in the present**, He **is** the One who is. Furthermore, they were just as available in **the past** as it is He who **was**. Finally, they will be **available in the future**, as He is **who is to come**. **God has the corner market on all grace and peace that we need.**
- **Holy Spirit:** “**from the seven Spirits who are before His throne**”: **The Holy Spirit is described in His perfection and completion as Seven Spirits.** This is a quote from (Isaiah 11:2) where we are told concerning Jesus that; “The **Spirit of the Lord** shall rest upon Him, the **Spirit of wisdom** and **understanding**, the **Spirit of counsel** and **might**, the **Spirit of knowledge** and **fear of the Lord**”. **The whole focus of the Holy Spirit is to elevate to us the person and work of Jesus thus His work is to make sure that we can grasp the instrument of grace and peace.**

- **Son** vs. 5a “*from Jesus Christ*” : And John expounds further upon **the instrument of grace and peace** by describing Him in **His threefold office**:
  - a. **Prophet** “*The faithful witness*”: Jesus said that if you had seen Him, you had seen the Father. Furthermore, in John 8:28 He said, “*that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.*”
  - b. **Priest** “*The firstborn from the dead*”: The author of Hebrews speaks of this in 7:27 as he shows the superiority of Jesus over that of the High Priest in as much as the; “high priests, offered up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He (Jesus) offered up Himself.”
  - c. **King** “*The ruler over the kings of the earth*”: Not just a prince but a ruler he is the King of Kings. 1 Tim 6:15-16 tells us that at the “*Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.*”

Vs. 5b-6 More than this John describes a **threefold work of distributing this grace and peace to us**:

- a. **Justification**: “*To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood*”. In our salvation Jesus has distributed his grace and peace towards us while we were yet sinners.
- b. **Sanctification**: “*Has made us kings and priests*” Furthermore after we have been saved, He continues to distribute His grace and peace towards us as He sees us as kings and priests.
- c. **Glorification**: “*To His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*” Finally, His grace and peace are ours for eternity into our glorified state.

Vs. 7-8 Finally we are given the **theme of this book**:

- A. **To see Jesus**: John describes the reality is that all will see His as he is at His second coming. We know this is the second coming because “*every eye will see Him*” those who are Jews as well as the gentiles and they will mourn because of Him. In 1 Thess. 4: 16-17 we are told of the rapture (being caught up); “*the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.*” **The clear difference is that at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming every eye will see Him and it won't cause joy or comfort.**
- B. Vs. 8 And who is Jesus? Well, we are told here in this verse, He is God! Yeh but is this the Father or the Son speaking? It matters not as we shall see in chapter 22:13-16 that it will be Jesus who speaks these same words. Almighty is literally “the one who has his hand on everything” the word is used ten times in the New Testament, and nine of the ten occurrences are found in Revelation.