

THE REVELATION

WHO IS THE KING? – Chapter 1:1-20

Context: With chapter one as the beginning of the “story of the end,” we are introduced to the main character and the protagonist in the plot. This main character, as we dig further into the book, will stay True to the picture that is painted of Him in chapter one. He is the Coming (Returning) and Conquering King, and His name is JESUS... As this chapter introduces him, we will see that this should be a primary text for someone who is seeking to know if the early Christians really believed and taught that Jesus was God the Son. This chapter will also set the stage for the “movie” that we are about to watch through the rest of Revelation.

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 1: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.* Revelation begins by giving its source. We tend to call it “The Revelation of the Apostle John,” but John writes that its source was God the Father, Who gave it to His Son (Jesus), who then signified (testified) to His Father’s Word through an angel to John. John writes that the primary content was “things which must shortly take place.” The Greek phrase is most often in the New Testament translated “quickly,” which makes more sense in the context of the book. (It also makes more sense two thousand years later...)

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 2: *who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.* John “bore witness to the Word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ.” While there is much discussion around what John means here and in verse nine where he repeats the phrase, he is simply rephrasing what he said in verse one. God gave the revelation “by His Word” to His Son, and Jesus testified concerning His Father’s Word to John.

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 3: *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.* Notice the difference between HE who reads and THOSE who hear and keep. In an early Christian context (and even today), someone would read the letter while the audience would listen. A blessing is promised to both. Beyond that, to “keep” the things written in it might seem strange, but listen to the Word Study Dictionary on the word “keep”: 5083. τηρέω *tēréō*; contracted *tērō*, fut. *tērēsō*, from *tērós* (n.f.), a warden, guard. *To keep an eye on, watch, and hence to guard, keep, obey,* trans.: (I) Particularly *to watch, observe attentively, keep the eyes fixed upon,* with the acc. (Rev. 1:3, *keeping for the fulfillment of the prophecy; 22:7, 9*)¹. With that in mind, we can see the connection between this “blessing” and “watching intently” for His return!

CHAPTER 1, VERSES 4-5: *John, to the seven churches which 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 from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.* Here is John’s greeting, and the greeting is two verses! “Grace” and “Peace” are greetings in many of the letters in the New Testament, and while there are wonderful ideas associated with both words, this was simply a way to say “Hi!” to both Greek and Jewish Christians. “Grace” is from the Greek *CHARIS*, and was the common Greek greeting of the day. “Peace” is from the Hebrew *SHALOM*, which many of you may know is still a

¹ Zodhiates, Spiros. *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* 2000 : n. pag. Print.

common Jewish greeting to this day. John sends greetings from the Trinity... A common description of God the Father was the One who is, and who was and who is to come, an expression of His eternal existence. But the greeting is also from Jesus Christ. He is the Faithful Witness (in the past, both in His life on earth and in His testimony/witness to John), He is the firstborn from the dead (presently, the result of His resurrection), and the ruler (KING) over the kings of the earth (in the future, when He conquers all of it and establishes His kingdom here). From the seven Spirits who are before His throne, while debated, is an allusion to Isaiah 11, which gives 7 character traits of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 1, VERSES 5-6: *To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* John gives gratitude to the Coming King by identifying Him as the One who loves us (the vast majority of manuscripts have “love” in the present tense, because He *still* does love us!), died for us and gave us a new (and eternal) identity.

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 7: *Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.* Here John gives us a glimpse of what most of Revelation is about: the return of our King, Jesus Christ. See Zech. 12:10-11

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 8: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”* While you might be tempted to think that in verse 8 God the Father is speaking, in the context, the only clear referent is Jesus, and He gives the *same* description of Himself that the Bible in *many* other places uses as a clear reference to God, and you’ll notice that generally it starts with the present tense, because of the name of God (YHWH, the One Who IS).

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 9: *I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.* John was on the island of Patmos to write Revelation, even though men may have viewed that differently! He also says he is our brother and fellow partaker of “tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” As we experience our eternal life, we face troubles at the same time that we are already citizens in His kingdom, and we are called to persevere (be patient) in those troubles.

CHAPTER 1, VERSES 10-18: *I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”* This passage is the retelling of how John had his vision that brought him to the task of

writing Revelation. He retells his encounter with the Risen Lord (and Returning King). He was “in the spirit in the Lord’s Day,” although he’s not talking about Sunday... Lord’s Day was a technical way to refer to the return of Christ to set up His kingdom and judge His enemies. John is asked to write to the seven churches. WHAT he writes to the seven churches (and therefore to us) is not just chapters two and three, but the entire book of Revelation. John turned to look to see who was speaking to him and gives a detailed description of King Jesus.

He describes Jesus in several parts:

- One like the Son of Man—an Old Testament term referring to the Messiah (Daniel 7:13), and Jesus’ favorite self-designation
- Robe with golden sash around the breast—a robe like this would have been worn by both priests and judges (both true of Jesus), but the sash at breast level would have been worn by a JUDGE
- White head and hair—indicating wisdom and dignity, but also part of Daniel’s description of the Ancient of Days (YHWH) in Daniel 7:9. So here it also points to Jesus’ eternal existence.
- Eyes like flame of fire—point to His judgment and also to His omniscience/insight
- Feet like bronze glowing in a furnace—point to His purity
- Voice like the sound of “many waters”—points to His authority, but also to His divinity, since the Old Testament often refers to God sounding like this
- Stars in His right hand—an official symbol of official honor and sovereign control, here refers to the “angels of the seven churches,” which He keeps protectively
- Out of His mouth, a sharp two-edged sword—the kind of sword used by Romans to kill, therefore pointing to His coming judgment of His enemies
- Face shining like the sun—pointing to His holiness/righteousness. Also remember the transfiguration when you read this...Jesus in His glory!

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 19: *“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”* Here is the *hinge verse* for the remainder of the book. Please see Scofield’s introduction for further discussion, but this basically points to the three divisions of Revelation: John’s retelling of his initial vision (what you have seen), the letters to the seven churches (the things which are), and the tribulation and eternity (things which will take place after these things). Very important verse...

CHAPTER 1, VERSE 20: *“The mystery of the seven stars which 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 which you saw are the seven churches.”* Here John explains the stars and the lampstands, which I don’t need to clarify... They do point, however, to the VALUE that God’s people have to Him!

**Check out the next page for a layout of the structure of chapter 1.*

A Note about the Structure in Chapter 1: If an early Christian were seeking to establish the divine identity of Jesus, one of the ways that he or she might do that would be to employ the number that represents DIVINE PERFECTION, the number THREE. As chapter one seeks to establish the identity of the Coming King, let me show you another way to look at it with GOD in mind...starting with verse 3:

3 Blessed is:

1. He who reads and
2. Those who hear the words of this prophecy, and
3. (those who) keep those things which are written in it

4 Grace to you and peace from:

1. Him
 - a. Who Is and
 - b. Who Was and
 - c. Who is to come
2. And from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,
3. And from Jesus Christ:
 - a. The faithful witness
 - b. The firstborn from the dead, and
 - c. The ruler over the kings of the earth.

4 To Him Who:

1. Loves us and
2. Washed (or freed) us from our sins by His blood, and
3. Has made us a kingdom and priests to His God and Father

8 1. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, (the Beginning and the End)," says the Lord God,

2.
 - a. Who Is and
 - b. Who Was and
 - c. Who is to come,

3. The Almighty.

17-18 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid":

1. I am the First and the Last.
2. I am He who lives, was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And
3. I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

19 Write:

1. The things which you have seen, and
2. The things which are, and
3. The things which will take place ***after these things***.

20 1. The mystery of **7** stars which you saw in My right hand, and the **7** golden lampstands:

2. The **7** stars are the angels of the **7** churches, and
3. The **7** lampstands which you saw are the **7** churches.