

**Revelation** Pastor Lou DeVizia

*Revelation 1:1-20* Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

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Introduction: The Book of Revelation is like a great capstone to the entire Bible, and even a capstone to the entire apostolic era. Its message brings to conclusion the great epic of the Messiah and the existence of this world as we know it. It was penned by the last living Apostle. It is a revealing of Jesus Christ in His glory, and it brings to us the future concerning Him. It ties together *as one* great story both Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah's glory and New Testament expectation of the Lord's return. The Bible would seem quite incomplete without it, as it clears up much great mystery. This is ironic, for it is often overlooked in reading and study and preaching because it has a reputation for being difficult to understand. And certainly, it is indeed a bit of work to grasp with specificity all that is alluded to. But even so, even if every specific judgment or nation is difficult to conclusively identify in modern terms, it does indeed clearly show things which must shortly take place (1:1) from the perspective of the world and all of its inhabitants in general. And of course, special attention is given to the church in the first five chapters (seen first on earth, then with the Lord in heaven), to whom the book is addressed (1:4, the seven churches which are in Asia being representative of the entire body of Christ).

Ultimately, the Bible is about *Jesus Christ*. He is the glorified central character in the text. And this great final message is no different. It reveals His final glory which is to come. This initial chapter gives us a truly astonishing view of the glorified Christ. It seems to freeze with awe the reader, just as it did the Apostle John, the book's human scribe (1:1, 9). The Lord is fearsome in His glory! Also clearly depicted in this heavenly glimpse is Christ's headship and closeness with the *church*. Jesus appears to John on the Lord's Day (1:10, almost certainly a reference to the first day of the week, the day of the empty tomb of Christ's resurrection) and addresses His servants (1:1), the church. And so what is a message about the future of the world actually begins by addressing the present and future of the church.

1. Verses 1-8 - The opening address: Jesus Christ, His servant John, the seven churches.

- v.1 - People often wrongly call the book "Revelations" (plural). It is actually singular. It is not primarily the revelations of events, it is the **Revelation** of a person, **Jesus Christ**. Christ is the revelator. God (the Father) **gave** it to **Him** for **His servants**. ...**shortly** 2,000 years is nothing to the Eternal God. ...**signified** to show, make known. **John** is the Apostle, writer of the Gospel and three epistles.

- vv.2-3 - Note the special blessing attached to reading, hearing (receiving and believing) and keeping (walking according to) this prophetic book.

NOTE: Twice in the opening three verses we are told the end is coming soon.

- v.4a - **seven churches which are in Asia...** identified v.11 and in Chapters 2-3. They are actual churches, but representative of the entire, complete church (thus, apparently, the addressing of seven of them).

- vv.4b-6 - Christ and the Holy Spirit are identified. The **seven Spirits** is a reference to the Holy Spirit present with Christ, again the reference to seven a likely reference to the completeness of the Holy Spirit at work in the church. Christ is identified both by name and by many of His great accomplishments.

- v.7 - The overarching theme of the book: **He is coming. ...clouds** refers to clouds of great glory, a visible manifestation of the glory of God that **every eye will see. ...they who pierced Him** compare with Zechariah 12:10 and John 19:31-37. The return of Christ will be a time of extreme judgment, as the majority of this book fleshes out.

- v.8 - A quotation by John of what Jesus Himself said to him, recorded in v.11. **Alpha** and **Omega** are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, thus illustrative of Christ being the Beginning and the End.

2. Verses 9-11 - John's charge, part one: "What you see, write."

- v.9 - John was persecuted via exile to **Patmos**, a Greek island in the Aegean Sea, not far from modern Turkey (ancient Asia).

- v.10 - **...in the Spirit on the Lord's Day** - the Holy Spirit was mightily upon John as the Lord called to him.

- v.11 - Jesus calls to John, commissioning him to **write** to the **seven churches** what he was about to be shown.

3. Verses 12-16 - John's vision: the glorified Lord Jesus Christ.

- v.12a - John turns to look. What saw caused him to fall down as a dead man (v.17).

NOTE: John knew Jesus in person in life. Consider his reaction! How much more will we be blown away!

- vv.12b-16 - **seven golden lampstands** represent the complete church. The **Son of Man** (a name John used for Jesus over a dozen times in his Gospel) is in the midst of the lampstands, signifying Christ's central place in the church. Much of the rest of the description - the **hair**, the **eyes**, the **feet**, the clothes, the **countenance**, etc. - allude to the terrifying power of God. Note the double-edged sword coming out of the mouth - the word of God! The **seven stars** represent the angels, or messengers, of the churches (probably the elders/pastors).

3. Verses 17-20 - John's charge, part two: "Write."

- v.17 - The Lord comforts John, who is terrified at the glorious vision. This is only the beginning!

- v.18 - **Hades** (the equivalent of the OT's *Sheol*) is the realm of the dead. **Death** is, obviously, the state of the dead.

- v.19 - John, having now been comforted, has the Lord reissue His charge: **write**. Some commentators suggest that this verse can be seen as a rough outline for the entire book. This chapter represents **the things** which John has **seen**; Chapters 2-3 **the things which are**; and the rest of the book **the things which will take place after this**.

- v.20 - This verse is an explanation of some of what John saw in his vision (see previous notes). It is also a fitting prelude to Chapters 2-3, which contain individual letters to the **seven churches** and their **angels** (or messengers).