



2. Revelation 1:1-8 – In the Beginning.

Revelation 1:1-8

Revelation is the only Book of the Bible where we are promised a blessing for reading it, **Revelation 1:3 (Amp)** This is the blessing that comes from knowing Jesus more intimately, more personally day by day, neither does the full extent of God's blessing come from just reading the Word in this Book and hearing it, it comes from obedience to it: 'Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book.' **Revelation 22:7**

Revelation is also the only Book in the Bible where there is a dire warning to us as to the effects of corrupting the message of the Book: "And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book". **Revelation 22:18-19**

So what God wants to tell us must be important for us to know and understand. The message itself was given by God the Father to Jesus so that He could make His followers aware of what was, and in most cases is about to happen, **Revelation 1:1**. Jesus wants us to know what is happening. We are joint heirs with Him, co-workers, servants to the extent that we are so committed to working with Him that we will do whatever He asks and not question His direction. He calls us **friends**, and He wants us to be able to identify events as they happen. That is why He spoke to John and asked him to write this Book of Revelation. "You are My friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My Name. ¹⁷ This is My command: Love each other". **John 15:14-17**

We should feel honoured and excited that Jesus should want to be intimately involved with us and for us to be so with Him. This is the most exciting time to be alive. It is the climax of the Ages, the time when all — every part — of the redemption of mankind is coming to its fulfilment, the time just before Jesus' return. Why are you and I alive at this time? Why, out of all the billions of people that have ever lived and who could have lived at this time, is it our turn to be here on earth? God did not make a mistake when He breathed the breath of physical life into us and chose us to be part of this end time generation.

He chose us because He knew what we would be like and that through us He would get His final work on this earth done, the end-time harvest of souls brought into His Kingdom. He knew YOU before you were being created in your mother's womb, **Psalms 139:13-16**. He approved every single part of you, and was amazed at His own handiwork. You are the apple of His eye, **Zechariah 2:8**; perfect in His sight and called

to be His friend, **John 15:15**. Whatever Jesus speaks is always exactly what God the Father has told Him to say. Equally whatever the Holy Spirit says is what God the Father has said. How could it be any other way?

God is One and yet He is Three Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. A useful but fairly simplistic analogy is that water is a single substance and yet it may be present in three forms or states — ice, water and steam. We have no difficulty with this, yet many people find the concept of God as One, yet Three Persons, very difficult and give up because they can't see it. If that is you, ask God to reveal His Trinity unity to you as we go through this Book of Revelation, watch while the Godhead has three different jobs yet equally vital.

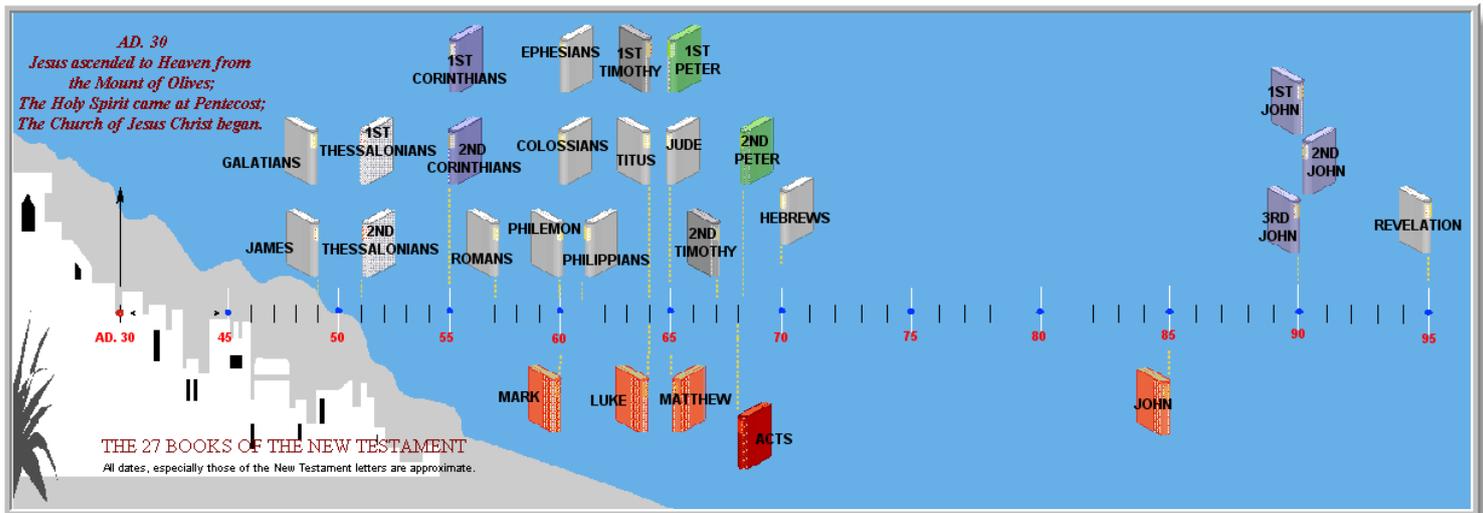
The message that God wants to give us through Jesus via His servant John is a revelation — comes



from the Greek word *'apokalupto'* meaning to uncover or reveal something that had been hidden, to take the lid off – not a re-hash of something we already knew. It speaks of end times, of God's plan for the manifestation of Satan's defeat and demise, and of the Victory that He will win.

The first part of this Book of Revelation is written to seven churches. These churches are in the Province of Asia, and John, (the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee (**Matthew 10:2**)), was well known to them all. John was a Jew and understood scripture. He was able to relate Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection together with what He had taught, to the Law and the Prophets, although by the time he penned the Book of Revelation, all the other Books and Letters of the New Testament had been written. As an Apostle and a Leader of the Church, John may very well have had access to at least some of them.

Revelation was written towards the very end of the 1st Century, and most researchers consider that it was most probably written around 95AD during the latter part of the Emperor Domitian's reign. This was a particularly brutal time when Christians were entering a time of great persecution.

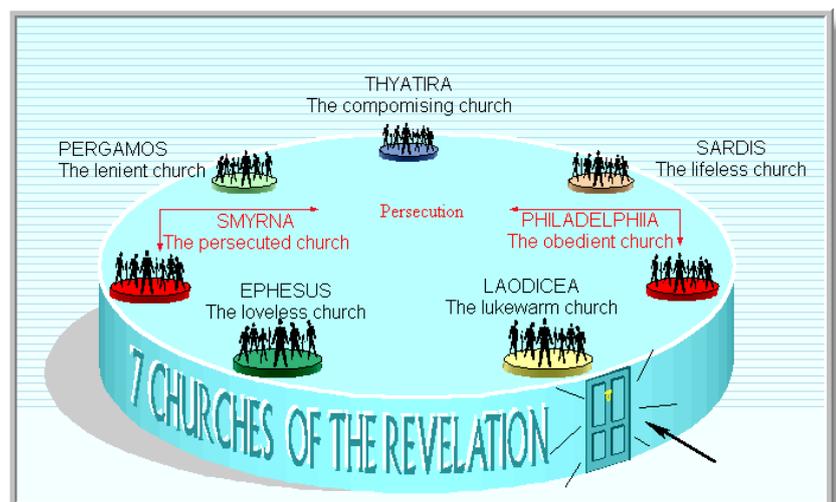


At this time, Emperor Worship was beginning to be enforced by the Roman Authorities, and John was standing firm and encouraging others to adhere to the Christian truth that Jesus is Lord and, being God, was the ONLY one to be worshipped.

Tradition has it that John was sent to the Island of Patmos because of his activities as a Christian Missionary. The Authorities had tried to do away with him by putting him in a vat of boiling oil. When that had no effect, they exiled him to Patmos. It was here that Jesus came and revealed Himself to John.

John wrote to his beloved Churches of Asia at the instruction of Jesus. The entire letter appears to have been sent to all the seven Churches in the Province of Asia, and not just the first part.

We shall now look at what John has to say to the Churches which were so close to his heart, and where he had worked so hard for their freedom and future, **Revelation 1:4-8**.



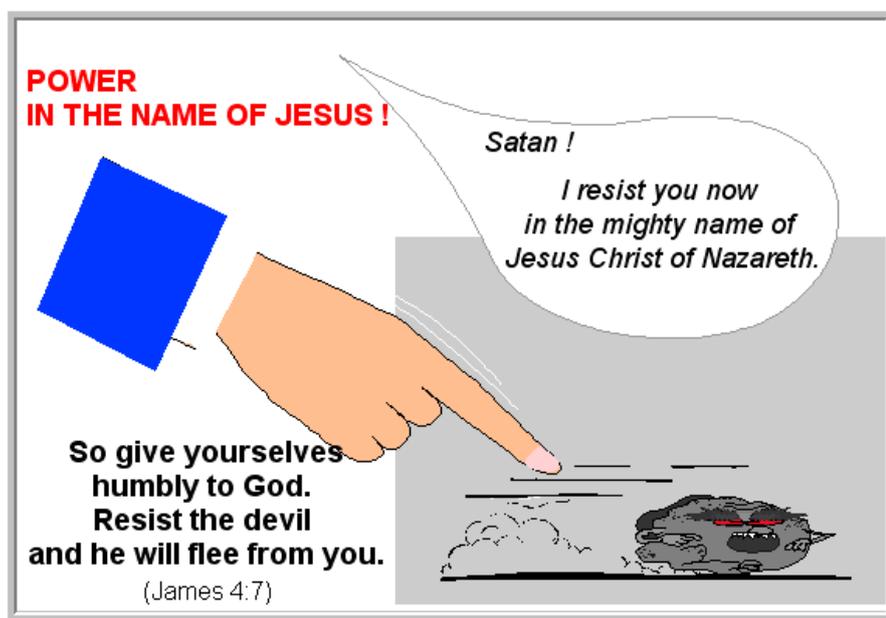
John's greeting to the Churches was heartfelt and warm. His greeting expressed his deep desire for these Churches. Grace and peace from God Himself, the One Who is everlasting, Who was before all things, upholds all things and Who will continue to be the centre of all things until the end of time and for eternity. Also from the Holy Spirit and from the Executive Creator of the Universe, the One Who spoke the worlds into being and in Whom everything holds together, Jesus, **Colossians 1:17**. In other words, where Jesus is not,

all things are **chaos** and fly apart! If we want to make sense of the world and its events, look at them through Jesus! He is the Witness to the Truth, the faithful Witness, the One Who died on the Cross at Calvary, went down to Hell, took the keys of Death and Hell from Satan who had stolen them. No longer does Satan have the power to imprison people against their wishes.

At the Cross, Jesus triumphed over Satan once and for all. He stripped him of his power and 'made an open show' of him – paraded him naked for all to see demonstrating his impotence at the Presence of God. Satan is a defeated foe awaiting final sentence, pretending that he is still in charge. The Bible says: 'Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around **like** a roaring lion looking for someone to devour'. **1 Peter 5:8**

Peter does **NOT** say that Satan **IS** a roaring lion, he says that he is **LIKE** one as he prowls around seeking someone to devour. Your job is to resist him and stand firm in faith, **1 Peter 5:9-10**

Faith is like a muscle; it only develops as it encounters resistance. As Christians, we should welcome the opportunity to oppose Satan as an opportunity to grow stronger and firmer in Jesus. Look for the triumph in the trial!



The Bible does not state 'Resist the devil and he **might** flee from you', on the contrary it states 'Resist the devil and he **will** flee from you.' There is a world of difference between 'might' and 'will'! and if God uses the word 'will' you can be sure that it is what He means!

The strength of Satan is in sin. And in **Revelation 1:5**, John reiterates that it is Jesus Who has freed us from our sins by His blood. That blood was shed on the Cross at Calvary, and it was the shedding of that Blood that released us from our prison of sin, (the sinful nature) the very one in which Satan had locked us up declaring that there was no

way out. Of course Satan is the father of lies. If Satan tells us that something is true, exactly the opposite is really the truth, sometimes he does put in a half truth to get us to take the bait. Speaking of Satan, Jesus describes Satan very clearly, saying there is no truth in him he is the father of lies, **John 8:44 Amp**.

But not only has Jesus set you and me free from our sinful nature, releasing us from the prison of sin, He has bound us together and made us priests to serve God forever. Priests acted as the mediators between God and man, but that role was removed when Jesus died. Now we can approach God directly through Jesus, **Hebrews 4:14**. We need to always remind ourselves that Jesus rose triumphant as all religions have a certain amount of dying to the flesh, but no leaders claim to have experienced resurrection or be alive today.

Our role now is to represent Jesus to a lost and dying world, to people who have no longer heard the Name of Jesus, except as a swear word. Without becoming Christians, they are destined to be separated from God forever, headed for a place where Jesus is not, where chaos reigns and where they only have the time to remember the opportunities they had to give their lives to the only One Who could save them – Jesus. We are Ambassadors living in a country which is not our home, representatives on earth of the King of Kings, and our behaviours should always show this, **2 Corinthians 5:19b-20**.

God is the Creator of the Universe and everything in it. He is the Creator of Mankind and He has chosen to redeem us (buy us back through the death of Jesus in our stead on the Cross at Calvary) from the slavery of sin into which Adam sold us.

.... to Him be the glory and the power and the majesty and the dominion throughout the ages and forever and ever. **Revelation 1:6b**

But God is not just going to leave us on planet Earth to get on with life forever; His plan is that He will return with those who have given their lives to Him. He is the rightful King of Kings and although Satan has attempted to usurp His authority in rebellion to take God's place, he has failed. For all those who put their trust in Jesus, God is their King and their rightful inheritance is the Kingdom of Heaven. The former leader of praise to God in Heaven, none other than Satan himself, together with those angels who chose to follow him 'demons, wicked spirits' as they are now called, have been judged and defeated by what happened at the Cross, **Colossians 2:13-15**

Just as at a Jewish wedding, the bridegroom returns from preparing a home for his bride to marry her, so Jesus will return for His Bride, the Church (those who have become Christians), and finally after the marriage feast, they will return to Earth to rule and reign with Jesus for a thousand years. Literally, every eye, including those of Satan and his minions will see Him as He returns. They will see Him and recognise Him for Who He is – King of Kings and Lord of Lords;

'Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall gaze upon Him and beat their breasts and mourn and lament over Him. Even so [must it be]. Amen (so be it)'. Revelation 1:7

We shall discuss this much more as we go through our study of Revelation, but for now, we shall simply thank God for what He has done for us and for the fact that we as Believers shall see Him return – not in fear like those who refused His grace and goodness, but in excitement because the fulfilment of all that we have waited for has finally happened. He is the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega, and He always will be our Lord and King! How glorious is our expectation! He has the final word!

What an amazing introduction to this Book of Revelation. In just a few verses, we can begin to understand something of the triumph and the glory of the culmination of the Ages. This is the Book in which many of the events of the final time period are described. For us most of these things are in the future, but we shall see as we go through this series of studies that although we have no idea of times and dates, we are expected to know the 'seasons'.

'He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." **Acts 1:7-8**

We may not know precisely when the farmer will go into his field of barley to reap the crop, but we should know from its appearance and colour that the time is getting near. Finally, the crop turns almost white, and within a couple of days, the harvester appears and the grain is gathered into the barns and the straw is discarded to be used for cattle bedding, or to be burned.

"Then He gave them this illustration: "Notice the fig tree, or any other tree. ³⁰ When the leaves come out, you know without being told that summer is near. ³¹ In the same way, when you see the events taking place that I've described you can be just as sure that the Kingdom of God is near." **Luke 21:29-31**

Jesus does not want us to be 'in the dark'. As we have seen, we are no longer slaves, we are free; He calls us friends, and Jeremiah has penned this encouragement to us from God.

'Call to Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, fenced in and hidden, which you do not know (do not distinguish and recognize, have knowledge of and understand)." **Jeremiah 33:3**

2. Revelation 1:1-8 - In the Beginning – Challenge Questions

Please try to answer all the questions as this will help you to participate more fully in the Group Discussions. Also, you might be able to help others who are finding it difficult to answer the questions. Do not be concerned about getting answers 'wrong'. Everyone will learn something from these sessions (whether they own up to it or not!). You should be wise about sharing some of the answers to personal questions although writing the answers down may help you.

Try and read the whole book of Revelation and believe God for the promised blessing. Maybe try the Message Bible version.

1. Read the Notes and the Bible Verses referred to in them. Highlight the points that 'speak' to you and share with your group

Read Revelation 1:9-20

- 2.** Why does John describe himself as a brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus? Why is endurance so important for us to understand? How do you think endurance relates to suffering and to the kingdom?

- 3.** Why does John say that he was in the Spirit, and why is it important for us to notice that it was on the Lord's Day. What day is the Lord's Day and why is it called such?

- 4.** Why should the message of Jesus be written on a scroll? Can you quote any other time that something was written on a scroll?

- 5.** Why did John have to turn around to see the voice that was speaking to him? Whose voice was it, and what do you think it sounds like?

- 6.** What is the importance of Lampstands? Where else in the Bible does it mention the use of light? Why does light play such an importance in the New Testament and in particular in this Book of Revelation?

7. Who was walking amongst the Lampstands? This son of man looked like a High Priest. What was the role of the High Priest in the Old Testament? Why did that carry through to the New Testament and who is our High Priest?

8. Describe in your own words the person John saw. What was John's reaction? Explain Verse 17 in your own words.

9. What is the significance of the 'keys to death and hell'? Why is it important for God to emphasise this to us today?

10. Explain what you understand by a double-edged sword in Biblical terms. Why does God use this simile in explaining the Armour to be used by a Christian in **Ephesians Chapter 6**.

11. Why do you think it is important for us to know what will take place later? Write down three things that you expect to happen in your lifetime.

12. What has impressed you about the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation? Write down two sentences that explain to you what happened in this Chapter so that you will be able to remember its events.