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**A0514 -- Apr. 03, 2005 – Revelation 1:1-8 – The Prologue**

Revelation was written in 96AD by John the Apostle while he was on the island of Patmos, having been banished there by Emperor Domitian. Its contents are miraculous because the book strings together over 500 quotations from the OT. If everyone here were to bring a 1,000 piece puzzle next Sunday and we were to dump all the pieces out here on the floor then it would be a miracle if we could make one new complete puzzle out of all the pieces from all the different puzzles. That would be a miracle wouldn't it? Well, that's just what we have in the Book of Revelation. The book is a masterpiece of God putting together of words, phrases, and allusions from all over the OT.

**Title, Channels of Communication, Content, Time of Fulfillment, Method of Communication (1:1)**

*Revelation 1:1 Apokalupsis Iesou Christou en edoken auto o theos deixai tois doulois autou a dei genesthai en tachei, kai esemanen aposteilas dia tou aggelou autou to doulo autou Ioanne,*

**Revelation 1:1 Revelation from Jesus Christ which God gave to him to show His slaves things that must take place soon, and He made [it] known by sending through His angel to His slave John,**

The name of the book is given by the first three words in the Greek, *apokalupsis Iesou Christou*, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ". "These words tell the story of the whole book in a nutshell." (Thomas, *Revelation*, 50). The first word, *apokalupsis*, transliterates into 'Apocalypse' or is translated as 'Revelation' and means "to take away a cover". The intent of the book is therefore to reveal what has been hidden. Before 96AD the contents were unknown mysteries but now the cover is being taken away so we can see clearly their significations (Eph 3:5).

The genitive of Jesus Christ could be either **of Jesus Christ** (objective genitive) or **from Jesus Christ** (subjective genitive). The latter is preferred. While one of the major purposes of the book is the revealing **of** Jesus Christ at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent in chapter 19 that is only part of the purpose. The fuller purpose is included by translating it **the Revelation from Jesus Christ** since that purpose fits the entire book. **Jesus Christ** was inspired by **God** to reveal to **His slaves things that must take place**. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, is of course, the climax of these things. The word **to show** signifies in advance that the revelation will come by way of a vision (like watching a movie).

The chain of Jesus Christ's revelation starts with God, apparently the Father, who gave these things to Jesus Christ who made it known to His slaves by way of sending it through His angel to His slave John. So, the chain of communication is: God the Father→Jesus Christ→His Angel→His Slave John→His slaves.

The phrase **things that must take place** signifies the certainty and futurity of **these things**.

The last thing we have to deal with in this verse is the timing. Jesus says, these **things...must take place soon**. What does the word **soon** signify? It has been 1900 years and many of the events described have not begun to be fulfilled (chapters 4-22). Nevertheless, the Greek says these **things must take place soon**. In this context and using comparison word studies we discover that this word is not referring to time from man's perspective but to time from God's perspective. The purpose of the word **soon** is not to set a time limit within which the events must occur, but to show that the events foretold in the book can take place at-any-moment (imminence),

So, verse 1 could be summarized as "a movie from Jesus Christ about things that are now imminent, which God gave to Christ to show his slaves by way of angelic mediation and John the Apostle."

### **The Prophetic Process (1:2)**

*Revelation 1:2 os emarturesen ton logon tou theou kai ten marturian Iesou Christou osa eiden.*

**Revelation 1:2 who testified the word of God even the testimony of Jesus Christ as much as he saw.**

John the apostle was an eye-witness to **the word of God**. The **word of God** is the fullest expression of what John saw. The phrase **and the testimony of Jesus Christ** is explanatory (*kai* exegetical) and limits the testimony to **the testimony of Jesus Christ**. John was not an eye-witness of everything from Genesis to Revelation, which is the entire **word of God** but to **the testimony of Jesus Christ** which refers to everything in the 66<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible which is a subset of the entire **word of God**. After seeing the vision John reported **as much as he saw**. Therefore, we are seeing through words all that John saw through visions. The word **saw** (*eidon*) is very common in this book and it signifies that most of the content was given by way of a prophetic vision.

### **Practical Purpose of the Revelation (1:3)**

*Revelation 1:3 Makarios o anaginoskon kai oi akouontes tous logous tes propheteias kai terountes ta en aute gegrammena, o gar kairos eggus.*

**Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads and the one's who hear the words of the prophecy and keeps the things that are written in it, for the time is near.**

Here we have the first of seven blessings pronounced in Revelation (others found in Rev. 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). This blessing provides a motivation for paying close attention as we study Revelation. The blessing is for those of you **who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it**. So, we need to pay close attention and obey the moral and ethical commands given in the following chapters. Revelation is a gold mine of prophetic details but learning the details is not an end in itself. Learning these details is simply a means to an end. The end is to keep the moral and ethical injunctions of God. So, the key is to **hear the words of the prophecy and to keep them**. But always remember that to keep them requires that we can remember them. For information to be usable it must be accessible (e.g. office, filing cabinet). Interestingly, Revelation contains various clues and memory devices to help us remember the information. And these are included in order to help us recall information about the future so we can live in the present

All people have an eschatology (a view of the future) and that eschatology is linked to how we live in the present. For example, let's take the worldview of Hedonism. Hedonists say we should "*eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die*". That is an eschatology. That statement expresses a belief in materialism and naturalism. The belief about the future is that once you die that's it, there is no further existence. If *tomorrow we die* then it logically follows that *today we should eat drink and be merry*. Do you see the causal relation? Let's be really politically incorrect and look at the worldview of Islam. Islamic theology has a

view of end times, at least for the males. They believe that when the man dies he will be surrounded by 70 virgins who will do whatever he wants. If my death results in 70 virgins then how should I live in the present? Be a suicide bomber. Do you see how one's beliefs about the future affect how they live in the present? Future beliefs are powerful motivators. Now, God is going to give you an eschatology, the real eschatology, and you will hopefully be motivated to live in light of it. If you do you will be **blessed**.

The phrase **the one who reads and the one's who hear the words of the prophecy** refers to the 1<sup>st</sup> century practice of reading the word of God in the church service (cf. Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; 1 Tim 4:13). Paper and writing materials were very expensive in the 1<sup>st</sup> century so copies of letters were scarce and valuable. As a rule, each church had one copy of each inspired book of Scripture. Therefore, a public reading of these books was the only way for Christians to become familiar with their contents. A reader would stand and read aloud so everyone could benefit from the word of God. The listeners had to develop a strong ability to concentrate for long periods of time and a keen memory or else the data was lost. A good memory was not just important for retaining information but for remembering what was read so they could be obedient to it later. David Barr comments that "the various clues and memory aids incorporated into Revelation, points out that the ancients had better-trained memories than twentieth-century generations and could keep the whole of the book in mind in perhaps one or, at the most, very few public readings" (Barr *The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment*, 244; cf Thomas, footnote 26, 60). So, the blessing is not contingent only on hearing but on hearing and keeping. This means that the prophetic information in Revelation must be organized into your mental framework so you can access it later and use it in your life. If you don't organize it then you can't access it and obey it. Ultimately this means you are just wasting your time which is being disobedient to Eph 5:17. If no obedience results from learning these prophetic details then no blessing follows. But for those of you who concentrate and memorize the basic structure of Revelation and keep the commands there is a blessing.

The reason this blessing is pronounced is signaled by the word **for** (*gar*). The reason this blessing is pronounced is because **the time is near**. From the divine perspective the prophecy in this book is near the time of being accomplished. Because of its imminence we should be stimulated to live morally and ethically in the present because we know we could be at the judgment seat of Christ at any moment.

### **Author, Recipients and Praise (1:4-6)**

*Revelation 1:4-6 Ioannes tai septa ekklesiais tais en te Asia: charis umin kai eirene apo o on kai o en kai o erchomenos kai apo ton epta pneumatou a enopion tou thronou autou 5 kai apo Iesou Christou, o martus, o pistos, o protokos ton nekrown kai o archon ton basileon tes ges. To agaponti emas kai lusanti emas ek ton amartion emon en to aimati autou, 6 kai epoiesen emas basileian, iereis to theo kai patri autou, auto e doxa kai to kratos eis tous aionas [ton aionon] amen.*

**Revelation 1:4 John to the seven churches in Asia, grace to you and peace from the One who is and who was and who is coming and from the seven spirits who are before His throne 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful martyr, the firstborn from the deaths and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us and loosed us from our sins by His blood, 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the strength forever and ever. Amen.**

The author is mentioned first as **John**. This is John the Apostle who also wrote the Gospel of John as well as 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> John. The recipients of the letter are **the seven churches in Asia**. These seven churches are named in chapters 2-3 (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea). Why did John choose only these seven churches? Because these seven churches represented the various spiritual conditions of the surrounding churches. We will discuss the possibility of the seven letters to the seven churches representing seven consecutive time periods of church history when we get to chapter 2. As for now all we can say is that these seven churches in Asia best represented the spiritual conditions of the churches in that area.

The greeting **grace to you and peace** was very common among Christians. Both Peter and Paul use this greeting in most of their writings. **Grace** is God's unmerited favor freely bestowed on all Christians. This word has a distinctly Christian tone (unlike the secular Greek greeting *charein*. John uses *charis*). **Peace** was a familiar greeting among the Jews. **Peace** is that which results from God's grace. Inner **peace** is the ultimate thing a person can enjoy. The world can be in shambles, falling apart around you but if you have received the **grace** of God in salvation then you can have inner **peace** in the midst of turmoil. The source of **grace and peace** is three-fold. It is **from the One who is and who was and who is coming and from the seven spirits who are before His throne 5 and from Jesus Christ**. This is a reference to the Trinity of God. Though one is tempted to think that **the One who is and who was and who is coming** is Jesus Christ, this is precluded by the fact that He is mentioned by name in v. 5. Therefore, **the One who is and who was and who is coming** refers to God the Father. God the Father exists continually in the present, was

existing in the past, and is coming in the future signifying His eternal nature and continual existence. Why is this used of the Father rather than the Son since Revelation is about the Son's Second Coming? Though they are two separate persons when the Son returns He will come as the representative of the Father. So, there is a legitimate sense in which it will be the coming of the Father as well.

The **grace and peace** also come from a second source, **the seven spirits who are before His throne**. There are two possible interpretations. Either these are angelic spirits or the Holy Spirit. It is best to see this as the Holy Spirit because the **seven spirits** are sandwiched between the Father and the Son making them equal with the Father and Son. Additionally, created beings cannot be the source of **grace and peace**. The **seven spirits** are also mentioned in 3:1; 4:5; and 5:6 and trace their identity back to John's use of Zechariah 4:1-10, esp 2, 6, and 10. The **seven spirits** here are the **seven lamps** and **seven eyes** of Zechariah and are identified with the Holy Spirit in Zech 4:6.

Lastly, **grace and peace** come from a third source, **Jesus Christ**. Except for Rev 22:21 this is the last time the title **Jesus Christ** is used in Revelation. From here on He is referred to simply as "Jesus" emphasizing His glorified humanity and relation to mankind. **Jesus Christ** is described in three ways as **the faithful martyr, the firstborn from the deaths and the ruler of the kings of the earth.**<sup>i</sup> The **faithful martyr** refers to His faithfulness to the Father in going to the cross. He is **the faithful martyr** for all men. Second, Jesus Christ is also **the firstborn from the dead**. Literally, **the firstborn from the deaths**. Many people died and were buried but Jesus was the first to ever be raised out from among all the **deaths** and given a resurrection body (cf. 1 Cor 15:17, 20, 23ff). Others will follow beginning with the Rapture. Lastly Jesus Christ is described as **the ruler of the kings of the earth**. This is a clear foreshadowing of Christ's future but certain role as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:6). So, these three descriptions refer to Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and kingly reign. All three relate to the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7; Ps 89)

Next John turns to praise Jesus Christ. **Jesus Christ** is **the one who loves us**. His **love** for us is described here as a present participle. This is the only time Christ's love for us is described as a present continual love for us. Normally Christ's love for us is placed in the past in His work on the cross but here it is shown to be ongoing. This is in contrast to the next phrase which clearly points to His past work on the cross where He **loosed us from our sins by His blood**. He loves us presently and He loosed us in the past. What did He loose us from? He loosed us **from our sins**. This means He loosed us from the bondage of sin. We were slaves to sin and now we have been loosed from that bondage and freed to

righteousness. How did He loose us? **by His blood**. This refers to the price of redemption. Salvation is free for us but it is not free at all. The price was **His blood**. We were purchased **by means of His** sacrifice on the cross which fulfilled all the requirements of the OT sacrificial system (Lev 23).

And those He **loves and has loosed by His blood** He has **made...a kingdom, priests to His God and Father**. Corporately believers have been made **a kingdom** and individually we have been made **priests**. Though we are **a kingdom** and are **priests** we have not yet begun to exercise our rights as a **kingdom** and **priests** for this awaits when the King returns to set up the **kingdom** on earth with all the members of the **kingdom** having been loosed by His blood. Though we are a **kingdom and priests** positionally we are not yet experientially. Therefore, we must return with Christ at His second coming so we can experience the full rights of being a kingdom and priesthood. Our priestly activity will be directed to **His God and Father**. The **Father** is often referred to as Christ's **God and Father** as here.

Last we have the close of the praise to Christ, **to Him [Christ] be the glory and the strength forever and ever. Amen**. For all eternity **glory and strength** will be attributed to Jesus Christ. The closing word is **amen**, which means "to approve". When we say **amen** we are saying "I agree with this, this is truth". If you agree that Jesus Christ's person and work are worthy of **glory and strength** forever then you can say with John, **amen**.

### **Theme (1:7-8)**

*Revelation 1:7 **Idou erchetai meta nephelon, kai ophetai auton pas ophthalmos kai oitines auton exekentesan, kai kopsontai ep auton pasai ai phulai tes ges. nai, amen.***

**Revelation 1:7 Look! He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the families of the earth will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.**

Verse 7 is clearly the theme verse for the whole book. John begins with the word **Behold** (*idou*) or better **Look!** indicates the first prophetic announcement. **Look! He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the families of the earth will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.** This is a quotation from Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10.

**Daniel 7:13** And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming,

**Zechariah 12:10** they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

The theme of the Book of Revelation is the Bodily and Universally Visible Coming of Jesus Christ. The title **Son of Man** used in Dan 7:13 always refers to the future bodily coming of the Son related to mankind to rule on the earth. It emphasizes His glorified humanity. Christ will rule on the throne of David on earth in His glorified humanity. **He comes with the clouds** indicates that Christ will come from heaven down to the earth. When Jesus ascended from earth to heaven the angels said to the apostles, “*why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.*” When He **comes with the clouds, every eye will see Him**. The whole human race will witness the return of Christ. Does this refer to all men of all ages or to all men living when He returns? I don't know. However, John goes on to say **even those who pierced Him**. Taken at face value this presents a problem in that how can those who crucified Christ and are now dead visibly see Christ's future bodily return? I don't know, but what I do know is that this is what the word of God teaches. This means that all those responsible for piercing Christ in the 1<sup>st</sup> century will see Christ's return. This certainly refers to the both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel (Zech. 12:10ff; Acts 4:27).

John closes with a grim preview of the terrible judgments coming on the world. **and all the families of the earth will mourn over Him**. Some have said this only refers to the 12 tribes but it is better to see this as worldwide and referring to every ethnic group on earth. **all the families of the earth will mourn over Him**. Why will they **mourn over Him**? Because of the despair caused by the cataclysmic judgments God will send on the earth because of their rejection of His Son. The return of Christ is anything but a comfort to those who continue to rebel against Him. He closes with the words **Yes, amen**, two words when used together strengthen one another. They mean, “truly, this is absolutely fixed.” Christ's coming and every eye seeing Him is a fixed coming that will cause mourning in every family of the earth.

*Revelation 1:8 Ego eimi to alpha kai to o, legei kurios kurios o theos, o on kai o en kai o erchomenos, o pantokrator.*

**Revelation 1:8 I am the alpha and the omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty.**



As if the **Yes, amen**, was not enough, God Himself further verifies the fact. God is speaking here and He says **I am the alpha and the omega...who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty**. Whether this refers to God the Son or God the Father is difficult to determine. The evidence could go either way. Either way these titles aptly fit both the Father and the Son. **alpha and omega** are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They signify that God is the beginning and the end which points to God's eternity and infinity. **who is and who was and who is coming** point to His eternal being, His continual presence and His future coming of judgment. He will fulfill this prophecy. Nothing can thwart the Lord our God. Lastly, God is called **the Almighty**. The title is equivalent to "the one who has authority over all". **The Almighty** therefore refers to His sovereignty with an emphasis on His authority. The sovereign one who has authority over all will certainly fulfill the prophecy of verse 7.

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<sup>i</sup> These three descriptions of Christ may be based in Psalm 89. cf. Robert Thomas, p. 69.

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