

The Glory of the Triune God (Revelation 1:1-8)

“The revelation of Jesus Christ”—so begins the final book of the Bible. It ends with Jesus’ promise, “Yes, I am coming soon” (Revelation 22:20). Jesus Christ is coming again! He will return in power and glory. He will return as the conquering King. However, before He returns there are events that must take place, events described in the book of Revelation. As the capstone to revealed truth, Revelation assures God’s people that Jesus will reign forever and ever. Jesus, the Lamb of God, will rule as Lord over all. Therefore, Revelation serves as a promise, a source of hope, and an assurance that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is worthy of our worship. He deserves our unflinching loyalty, obedience, and trust. Revelation 1:1-8 introduces this book by highlighting the glory of the triune God. When we reflect on the magnificent glory of the triune God we’ll recognize Jesus as our worthy Savior and Lord. In these opening verses we see Jesus’ glory in His revelation, redemption, and royalty.

The Glory of Revelation—the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to know His plan for the future (1:1-3).

God has revealed Himself to us through His written Word, including the book of Revelation. The glory of His revealed truth is evident when we discover the pathway of revelation from the Father to the Son to angels to the Apostle John to us! God has revealed His plan for the future and the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to know what lies ahead.

God has revealed the future to His people through His Son Jesus Christ (1:1a).

The last book of the Bible is titled “The revelation of Jesus Christ.” It’s a single, cohesive revelation (not plural revelations). While this revelation is indeed about Jesus Christ, it’s primarily a revelation that comes from Jesus Christ. The word “revelation,” often transliterated “apocalypse,” refers to the uncovering or revealing of that which is hidden. This revelation has its source in God the Father who gave it to God the Son, reminding us that Jesus Christ in His humanity willingly subjected Himself to the Father (John 6:38). The purpose of this revelation is to show the Lord’s servants the things that must take place “soon” or “quickly.” In prophetic terms, the second coming of Jesus Christ will occur soon—there is nothing prohibiting the initiation of events leading to His return. According to verse 3, “The time is near.” It’s imminent. The word “quickly” could also refer to the rapid succession of events that will transpire once the sequence of end time events begins. What we should understand from these opening words of Revelation is that God wants us to be fully aware of what the end will look like, what to expect leading up to the return of Jesus Christ—a sequence of events that could begin at any moment. Therefore, believers should be prepared at all times for that which lies ahead.

Jesus Christ revealed the future to His disciple John through angelic messengers and visions (1:1b-2).

God the Father having “given” the revelation to His Son, the Son further “signified” or “foretold” this revelation, confirming its content by His own authority. The method by which Jesus transmitted this revelation was through His “angel,” probably an angelic messenger rather than a human messenger since John takes on the role of the human messenger. Angelic involvement is evident throughout the book of Revelation. Through Jesus’ angelic messenger He revealed these end time events to John, His “servant.” John, the disciple of Jesus, became the recipient and recorder of this prophetic revelation. While some have suggested that another man named John may have been responsible for writing Revelation, John the disciple and apostle is the most likely author. He had actually “witnessed” in person Jesus Christ in the flesh, the “Word of God” (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1), and therefore was a faithful witness to the “word” of this revelation—the very testimony of Jesus Christ. The content of the book of Revelation (the word of God and the witness of Jesus Christ) was revealed to John through a prophetic vision—he “saw” what Jesus revealed to him. For this reason, much of the book is visually graphic in its description of end time events. Therefore, interpreting the book of Revelation entails certain challenges, but a literal approach to the book best suits these interpretive challenges. Literal interpretation, of course, leaves room for symbolism when such symbolism is evident in the text.

Those who pay attention to and obey the revelation of Jesus Christ receive special divine blessing (1:3).

Unlike any other book of the Bible, Revelation promises a blessing for those who read, hear, and obey its contents. The word “blessed,” used seven times in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14), is reminiscent of Jesus’ declaration of blessings in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). The “one who reads” Revelation is blessed—the term is singular and may refer to the primary reader in a given congregation since copies of the Scriptures would have been rare and out of reach for the average believer. The “ones who hear” the book are blessed—the term is plural, applying to all who pay attention to the message of Revelation. The “ones who keep” or obey the message are blessed—again the term is plural and reveals that it’s not enough to simply hear the message. We must always put God’s truth into practice. God promises to bless those who read, hear, and obey what’s written in Revelation “because the time is near.” As the end approaches, those who pay attention to this revelation from Jesus Christ will take comfort in knowing that He’s coming soon as the victorious King. Therefore, those who listen to the words of this book will be able to stand firm in the face of persecution. The fact that God promises a blessing to those who pay attention to Revelation means that we shouldn’t avoid this book. Instead, we should read it and live by its message of hope and confidence in Jesus Christ.

**The Glory of Redemption—the Lord Jesus Christ
calls us to glorify Him for His redemptive sacrifice (1:4-6).**

Having described the source and method of this glorious revelation, John now turns the reader’s attention to the triune God and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Here the book of Revelation takes on the form of an epistle, a letter to seven first century churches.

The triune God—Father, Spirit, and Son—extends grace and peace to His church (1:4-5a).

In typical ancient fashion the author begins this prophetic epistle by identifying himself—John. So well was he known among the churches addressed that he needed no further introduction. Having identified himself, John now identifies the primary recipients of the book—the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (the western region of Asia Minor, modern Turkey). These churches will each receive a special message in chapters three and four. The fact that there are seven churches addressed in this book implies completion, the number seven often symbolizing perfection or completion. By implication, therefore, the seven ancient churches of Asia Minor, while literal churches of John’s day, stand in for all churches of all time.

To these churches John extends grace and peace, common Christian greetings, blessings that flow from the triune God. John describes God the Father as “the one who is, the one who was, and the one who is to come,” that is, the eternal God who fills the present, the past, and the future.

John next includes in this greeting “the seven spirits.” This phrase, located between descriptions of God the Father and God the Son, most certainly refers to God the Holy Spirit. The “seven” may again refer to fullness or completion, indicating that the Holy Spirit is fully God. It likely carries the idea of “sevenfold.” John repeats this description of the Holy Spirit three more times in Revelation (3:1; 4:5; 5:6). It’s interesting to note that Isaiah 11:2-3 refers to the Holy Spirit in seven aspects—the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of knowledge, and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. Zechariah 4:1-10 describes the power of the Holy Spirit in terms of seven lamps on a lamp stand fed by seven channels of oil, as well as seven eyes that are the observant eyes of the Lord. Truly the Holy Spirit is multifaceted and universally pervasive in His work.

Finally, John refers to the Son of God, Jesus Christ by name and title—Savior and Messiah. Jesus is the “faithful witness,” possibly emphasizing Jesus’ earthly teaching ministry. Jesus faithfully testified to the truth. He is the “firstborn from the dead,” firstborn meaning preeminent in position and emphasizing His bodily resurrection. Jesus is also the “ruler of the kings of the earth,” referring to His future earthly reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). Thus, John describes the source of grace and peace bestowed on the churches as being the triune God—the Father, the Spirit, and the Son in all their glory and power.

The Son—Jesus Christ—deserves eternal glory and power because of His love and redemptive work for His people (1:5b-6).

Because Jesus Christ in His glory is the primary subject of Revelation, John provides a further description of God the Son. Jesus is the one who loves His people. Of course, the Father and the Spirit are equally characterized by love, but only the Son demonstrated that love by taking on the role of redeeming us from our sins through His sacrificial death. He “loosed” us out of our sins, freeing us from sin’s bondage. The word translated “loosed,” according to the majority of Greek manuscripts, is the word “washed” (a single letter alone accounting for the difference). Not only did Jesus free us from our sins, He washed us completely by His blood, making us pure in God’s sight. The blood of Jesus Christ provided the only possible and complete sacrifice for human sin. We are saved by His redemptive death on the cross.

Jesus not only solved the sin issue for us. He went so far as to make us “a kingdom of priests” to God the Father (compare Revelation 5:10 and 20:6). First Peter 2:9 refers to God’s

redeemed people as a “royal priesthood,” a role previously held by the ancient Israelites under God’s covenant blessing (Exodus 19:6) and now held by the church. The concept links the right of rule with the responsibility of intercession. Because of this great redemptive work of Jesus Christ all glory and power belong to Him forever and ever. Jesus eternally deserves the glory of His divine nature and the accompanying power over all creation. To this declaration of praise the author shouts, “Amen!” With that declaration all believers agree, echoing the “amen” to the glory of our redemptive Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Glory of Royalty—the Lord Jesus Christ
invites us to acknowledge Him as our Savior and Lord (1:7-8).**

The revelatory and redemptive work of Jesus Christ point our attention to His royal position as Lord of all. The Lamb is Lord!

Jesus Christ is coming in glory and the whole world will mourn over having been responsible for His sacrificial death (1:7).

As he does on several occasions in Revelation, John arrests the reader’s attention with the exclamation, “Behold!” “Behold, he is coming with the clouds.” Jesus Christ is coming again. This is the point of the book of Revelation. Jesus is coming in the fullness of deity, the clouds referring to His heavenly origin and divine glory (Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Revelation 14:14, 16). At the time of His return “every eye will see him.” His return will be so evident that no one living on earth at the time will be able to miss it. Included among those who will witness His return are those who “pierced” Him. Those responsible for His crucifixion will be represented by the inhabitants of the earth at that time. Zechariah 12:10 describes the future mourning of the Jewish people over having rejected Jesus as their Messiah, a mourning that will take place within the context of “grace and supplication.” Joining these Jewish tribes in mourning over Jesus will be all the peoples of the earth, the Gentile nations. There will be great grief when the world recognizes that it crucified the Son of God. Indeed, believers today mourn their sin-based need for the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus but do so within the context of grace. When Jesus returns, everyone will become aware of the inherent wickedness of sin and mourn the sacrificial death of the Lord. To this truth, the truth of Jesus’ second coming, John appends the double exclamation, “Yes, Amen!” The truth of Jesus’ return and redemptive work are overwhelming to those who recognize His love and grace.

Jesus Christ is the eternal and almighty Lord (1:8)!

Revelation 1:8 poses a difficult interpretive problem. For the first time in this book we read a direct divine statement. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The majority of Greek manuscripts include the additional description, “the beginning and the end” (compare Revelation 21:6; 22:13), emphasizing the eternal nature of God. This declaration is attributed to “the Lord God.” But is this the voice of God the Father or God the Son? In Revelation 1:17, the “first and the last” is clearly a description of God the Son. But Revelation 1:8 adds a further description of the speaker as “the one who is, the one who was, and the one who is coming,” a description used of God the Father in Revelation 1:4. In addition,

the title, “the Almighty,” is attributed to the speaker, which usually refers to the Father (although the base of this term is used of Jesus in verse 6). While there are good reasons to support either view, the fact that John had been describing the return of God the Son in verse 7 and gives no indication of a change of subject in verse 8, it seems best to attribute this statement to God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that He can be described in identical terms as God the Father speaks to their equality within the Trinity, including their equality in their eternal existence and unlimited power.

Revelation 1:1-8 portrays the glory of the triune God, particularly God the Son who has revealed to us the truth about the future, who has redeemed us by His blood, and who reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. When we reflect on the magnificent glory of the triune God we’ll recognize Jesus as our worthy Savior and Lord.