

Revelation
Lesson 4 – The Starting Sevens

Revelation 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

This week, we pick up in Revelation with the fourth verse.

John – Now I waited until this lesson to fully introduce John, because we had enough on our plates at the beginning of our study of Revelation. Many “Johns” have been put forth over the years to identify the John of Revelation. The most prominent and the traditional theory is that this John was none other than John the Apostle. This is the position I take. Charles Erdman (1866–1960) advocated apostolic authorship and wrote that only the Apostle John fits the image of the author derived from the text.

But over the past 200 years, with the rise of Textual Criticism, John has been pulled apart into three other people: John the Apostle, some say is a different person than John the Evangelist, who is a different person than John of Patmos. This theory holds little water.

Hence, the writer of Revelation is John the apostle. He was the son of Zebedee and the brother of fellow apostle James. Before his (or I should say their) call to Follow Christ, he and James were fishermen, working for their father (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20). His mother was Salome (not the daughter of Herodias) according to a reading of Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40. Some attempt to equate her with another woman in John 19:25, making her Jesus' Aunt. But that does not hold water either, because there were many women at the Crucifixion Matt. 27:55. According to Mark 1:21 Zebedee and his family lived in Capernaum on the North shore of the Sea of Galilee. They must've been somewhat wealthy because Zebedee was able to have hired hands to help in the fishing business. (Mark 1:19-20) Also we see that Salome was able to support Jesus' work from her substance (Mark 15:40-41 and Luke 8:30).

After the baptism of Christ, we find in Mark 1:19-20 that James and John were called to follow Him. Before these brothers were called, Andrew and Peter were called. (Mark 1:16-18) Interestingly these 2 sets of brothers may well have worked together (Luke 5:10). The brothers were nicknamed by Christ as The Sons of Thunder or Bonarges (Mark 3:17). This “thundering” attitude came out in Luke 9:51-56 when a Samaritan village would not allow Christ to pass through it, they became upset so much that they asked Jesus to grant them power to call down fire as Elijah did. On another occasion, they had their mother “do their dirty work.” James and John wanted to know if they could sit on Jesus' right and left hands in glory. Once the secret was out that they wanted the positions of honour, the band of disciples turned sour towards them.

John (and brother James) were part of a small band of 3 disciples – the other being Peter – who were part of Jesus' inner circle of disciples. They heard/saw things the others could not. They were present when Jesus raised Jarius' Daughter, they witnessed the Transfiguration, and a small portion of the agony in the Garden (or what we'd call Christ's passion). John and Peter were intrusted by Jesus to prepare everything for the Last Supper (Luke 22;8).

In Acts 12:1-2, John's brother James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I. Once this event happened, John disappeared from the Book of Acts. Paul referenced John in Galatians 2:9, calling him one of the pillars of the Church. This indicates that he was still alive and still being used by God around 49AD. Being so much apart of the Church as it grew, John would become the subject

of legend and tradition. Tertullian (160-220AD) stated that John wound up in Rome where he was plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil, but came through unhurt. Later traditions stated that both James and John were both killed at the same time. Instead of an early death, many Bible scholars state that sometime prior to 67AD, John wound up in Ephesus and became Pastor of the congregation there. Once Domitian began persecuting certain Christian groups, John was banished to Patmos (Rev. 1:9). John would survive and (most scholars agree) would go back to Ephesus and die of natural causes (the only apostle to die so) about the year 100AD.

To the Seven Churches which are in Asia – Thus begins the first of 54 occurrences of the word seven in the Book of Revelation.

There are 19 main groups of seven and several implied groupings:

Explicit Groups:

- a. Churches (1:4, 11, 20)
- b. Spirits (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)
- c. Candlesticks (1:12, 13, 20: 2:1)
- d. Stars (1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1)
- e. Lamps (4:5)
- f. Seals (5:1; 5:5)
- g. Horns (5:6)
- h. Eyes (5:6)
- i. Angels who stand before God (8:2, 6)
- j. Trumpets (8:2, 6)
- k. Thunders (10:3, 4)
- l. Thousand (seven thousand people killed) (11:13)
- m. Heads (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9)
- n. Crowns (12:3)
- o. Angels (15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9)
- p. Plagues (15:1, 6, 8; 21:9)
- q. Vials (15:7; 17:1; 21:9)
- r. Mountains (17:9)
- s. Kings (17:10, 11)

Implied Groups:

- a. Beatitudes (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14)
- b. Antichrist's contract (11:3; 12:6, 14; 13:5)
- c. "I am's" of Christ (1:8, 11, 18; 21:6; 22:13, 16)
- d. Doxologies in heaven (4:9-11; 5:8-13; 7:9-12; 11:16-18; 14:2, 3; 15:2-4; 19:1-6)
- e. Every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:5)
- f. The Lord God Almighty (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22)
- g. The One who sits on the throne (5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:15; 21:5)
- h. The Alpha and the Omega (1:8, 17; 21:6; 22:13)
- i. Prophecy (1:3; 11:6; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19)

The obvious question is this: what is the significance of the number seven in the book of Revelation. First, clearly, the number seven is a structural indicator in the Revelation. Seven seals, trumpets and vials set forth a sequential structure to the book. Second, "the frequent repetition of the numbers underscore the notion that nothing is random or coincidental." Given the past, present, and a future reality, to which the number seven refers, God has sovereignly

overseen the complete process. Third, seven is the number of completion "as we gather from countless passages of the Old Testament." (Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, cxxxvi) Sevens mark the life of a Jewish person. The Sabbath, the feasts, the Sabbath year, days of the week, the days of creation and days to cleanse oneself and much more marked the Jewish way of life.

Here in the fourth verse, John writes to the "seven churches." Weren't there other churches in Asia? We know there were churches at Colosse, Miletus, Hierapolis, Troas, Pontus and at many other places. But why seven Churches? As an Apostle, John had an authority that regular Pastors today do not possess. Apostles could oversee more than one church it seems as the Apostle Paul took special notice and care of the Churches he helped plant in his 3 missionary journeys.

The churches that received the letter were: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. (More on these when we get to Chapters 2 and 3.

Furthermore, another reason as to why John wrote to these seven churches is because most importantly, HE wasn't the one doing the TALKING to them. Jesus wanted to speak directly to these seven particular churches for a reason. The reason? It seems that John was directed to write to only seven certain churches because one Jesus had a distinct message for them and He was giving the complete history of the church and they were representative churches, as we shall see.

Now before we move on, the word ASIA needs to be addressed: "Asia" refers to the provinces which include Lydia, Mysia, Caria, and parts of Phrygia. It does not mean the continent of Asia nor does it include all of Asia Minor (Asia Minor is a term which was not used until the fourth century A.D.), but it covers a great area of Asia Minor, especially along the coast. This area is about the size of Pennsylvania (see map).

Grace *be* unto you, and peace, - The word *grace* is *charis*, the Greek form of greeting, and *peace* is *shalom*, the Hebrew form of greeting. Peace flows from grace, and grace is the source of all our blessings today. Grace is getting what we don't deserve; mercy is not getting what we deserve. The Grace of God brought Salvation to us (Hebrews 2:9) and while we didn't and don't deserve it Grace allows us to experience God's mercy in that He won't send us to Hell which we all deserve to go to and split it wide open!! Yes, the Book of Revelation reveals the grace of God and also peace (and mercy!). We don't need to be frightened as we study this book; we can have the peace of God in our hearts.

from him – True Grace and Peace come from HIM – that is God the Father. Recall: John 14:27-28 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

which is, and which was, and which is to come; - One cannot deny the Trinity is Scripture. The Declarations of the Thrice Holy God (Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8) the emphatic declaration at Jesus' Baptism (Matthew 3:15-17 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.) the Triune is seen in 1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Here we see the ONENESS of the Trinity in that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are timeless. They operate in all sections of our time. (Since time is relegated to Earth Gen. 1:14-19).

and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; - The Father was seen (as was the oneness of the Trinity in the 3 fold statement earlier) and now the Spirit is seen (the Son will be seen in verse 5).

Now many come to this and scratch their heads and wonder I thought there was only ONE Holy Ghost, but now there's SEVEN? (Note: 2nd Seven in Revelation.)

No not seven spirits. This is a cry back to the MINISTRIES OF THE Holy Ghost.

The "seven Spirits" refer to the Holy Spirit and probably have reference to the seven branches of the lampstand, as we shall see later on.

Turn to Isaiah 11:2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

1. "The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him." The Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity went forth in the power of the Spirit. When He comes again, He is going to rule in the power of the Spirit.
2. "The spirit of wisdom." He has been made unto us wisdom ([1Co 1:30](#)). He is the only One who can lead and guide you and me through this life. We are no match for the world today. The Lord Jesus Christ could say "... for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" ([Joh 14:30](#)). Satan cannot find anything in Christ, but he can always find something in us. We need the Spirit of wisdom, and the Lord Jesus Christ is that Spirit of wisdom.
3. The spirit of "And understanding," which means spiritual discernment. It is distressing to find that so few Christians have any discernment at all. I am amazed the way some people will follow a certain man purely on a human basis. They like his looks or the sound of his voice, and they never really comprehend what he is saying or if what he is saying is true to the Word of God. Christians need the Spirit of understanding. That is one thing for which I have always prayed, and I seem to need it more today than ever before. We need to be aware of who is for the Lord and who isn't. Recall John 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (And) John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.
4. "The spirit of counsel." All of us need counsel. Did you ever notice that the Lord Jesus Christ never asked anyone for advice? He never asked for counsel; He *gave* it.
5. The spirit of "Might"—that is, power. Oh, how we need power. Paul says, "That I may know him, and the *power* of his resurrection ..." ([Php 3:10](#), italics mine). We need that today.
6. "The spirit of knowledge" I think this comes through a reading and absorption of the Word.
7. The spirit "of the fear of the LORD." The fear of the Lord relates to respect of Him. I think this comes through a study of the Word of God and then an obedience to it.

