

Journey Through Revelation

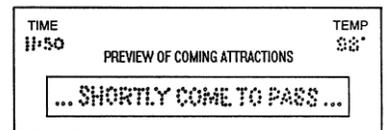
LESSON 1 . . . Getting the Most From This Study (Revelation 1:1-3)

NOTES

The first five words of this book are actually the title—*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (1:1a). The word translated *Revelation* (APOKALYPSIS, uh-pock-uh-lip'-sis) is the word from which we get the English word “apocalypse.” It means “an uncovering” or “to reveal.” The book of Revelation contains events that have been concealed but are now revealed.

This book is a gift God gave Jesus to show *unto his servants* (1:1b). Concerning His second coming, Jesus said no one knows the day or hour except *the Father* (Mk 13:32). The book of Revelation was given to Jesus who, through the Holy Spirit, gave it to John to reveal to *his servants things which must shortly come to pass* (1:1c). The word *shortly* (TACHOS, tac-os´) means when the events begin to take place, they will happen in rapid succession—not that they will take place immediately. These events must be understood from the perspective of heaven rather than earth. Therefore, we must remember what fact in 2 Peter 3:8c?

The events that *must shortly come to pass* will occur in rapid succession within a brief time. They are imminent, but not necessarily immediate. **Getting the most from this study** requires keeping **three** things in mind. First . . .



The Author (1:1d-2)

The Divine Author is Jesus, who originally revealed the events in the book of Revelation by sending *his angel unto his servant John* (1:1d). The name of the angel is not given, but many believe it was Gabriel, who also brought messages to Daniel, Zechariah, and Mary (Dan. 8:16; Lk 1:11-20, 26-31). The human author is the apostle John, a former fisherman, who was the son of Zebedee and brother of James (Mt 4:21). He was part of Jesus’ inner circle of disciples. Who were the other two (Mt 17:1; Mk 5:37, 9:2, 14:33; Lk 9:28)?

John probably wrote *Revelation* around A.D. 93 from the island of Patmos, a rocky island off the coast of present-day Turkey (see map on page 10).

Threatened by John’s powerful leadership and ministry, Domitian, the cruel Roman Emperor who reigned A.D. 81-96, banished John to Patmos. Domitian was leading a horrific persecution against the church. He was the first Roman emperor to enforce worship of the Roman emperor. Once a year, every Roman citizen was required to confess “Caesar is Lord.” However, Christians refused, confessing what a person can only sincerely say through the Holy Spirit. What is that, according to 1 Corinthians 12:3c?

That is the first Christian confession of faith, and it says it all. Sincerely making that confession is essential to salvation (Rom. 10:9).

During John’s time on Patmos, the Lord Jesus gives him the visions we now call the book of Revelation. After Domitian’s death, John returns to Ephesus—a church Paul established on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). Tradition tells us John died in his nineties of natural causes around A.D. 100. He was the only one of the twelve disciples to escape a violent death. According to Acts 12:2, what does Herod Agrippa do to John’s younger brother, James?

This book was given to offer hope to believers enduring horrific persecution. John wrote in graphic terms and symbols about the ultimate victory of Christ over Satan. He also included the rewards to be given to God’s tried and faithful servants. It was originally written to seven churches in present-day Turkey, which we will later discuss, beginning in Lesson 4.



John’s role in this book is to *bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw* (1:2). John declares this book is *the word of God* in written form. The book of Revelation concerns all John *saw* and heard in visions given to him by Jesus Christ. To get the most from this study, remember **the author** and . . .

The Application (1:3)

John writes: *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein* (1:3a-b). This is the first of seven “beatitudes” in this book (14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, and 22:14). If you *do his commandments* (specifically the ones about being saved), what does the last “beatitude” promise (22:14)?

Revelation is the only book in the Bible that promises a special blessing to *he that readeth . . . they that hear. . . and keep those things which are written* in it. The participles (verbs used as adjectives) *readeth*, *hear*, and *keep* are present tense. This means reading, hearing, and obeying the commands and principles found in this book are to be a way of life. It is not enough just to read or *hear*. We must *keep* God’s Word. Why, according to Jesus in John 8:51c?

The phrase *for the time is at hand* (1:3c) reiterates that the events described in this book are imminent. The word translated *time* (KAIROS, kair-os´) means season, era, or epoch. Another Greek word (CHRONOS, kron-os´) is the word from which we get the English words “chronograph” or “chronology” and refers to time on a watch or calendar. KAIROS refers to the final era of God’s plan for the redemption of the world. It describes a **period** of time, rather than a **point** in time.

The purpose of this book is not for us to mark a calendar with a date or year the Lord will return. Jesus said it is not for us *to know the times or the seasons* that only the Father has the *power* to set (Acts 1:7). *Revelation* was written to motivate us to live a holy life in a very unholy world. We shouldn’t try to set a date for these events to begin. Instead, what does Jesus command in Matthew 24:42?

As we apply what we learn in this book, we will be motivated to remain unspotted by the world (2 Pet. 3:14). To get the most from this study, remember **the author**, **the application**, and . . .

The Approach

There are **four** basic approaches to interpreting *Revelation*:

1. The preteristic approach (pret´-er-ist, from Latin, meaning “the thing that is past”). This view teaches the events in this book have all been fulfilled in the distant past.

2. The allegorical approach (symbolic or idealistic). This view regards all the visions as an allegory of the age-old conflict between good and evil. It teaches neither historical nor future events are specifically portrayed.

3. The historical approach. This approach teaches that the predictions cover the entire period between John's day and the return of Christ. This view sees the visions as symbols of the rise of the papacy, the corruption of the church, and various wars throughout history.

4. The futuristic approach. This view interprets all the events from chapter four on as future happenings. This is a more literal approach, interpreting the judgments described in chapters 6, 8, 9, and 16, as literal, future events expressed in symbolic terms. No events in history have even come close to these. For example, when the first of four trumpets is blown, *hail and fire mingled with blood* are thrown down on the earth (8:7a-b). As a result, what happens (8:7d-f)?



Those who object to the futuristic approach charge that the book of Revelation would not have been a comfort to its original readers if it is largely futuristic. However, immediate application of distant events that reveal the ultimate victory of righteousness has been a source of comfort from the time of Old Testament prophets to believers today. Therefore, in this study we will use the futuristic approach.

Regardless of the approach followed in interpreting this book, all of the visions and symbols cannot be fully explained or understood. In Daniel 12, which also deals with the end of time as we know it, we discover why some of the prophecies cannot be understood now. Why, according to what an angel tells Daniel (12:9c)?

To get the most from this study, remember **the author, the application, and the approach.**

The Seven Churches

