

# Revelation

## Prologue

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

## Greetings and Doxology

<sup>4</sup>John,  
To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>and among the lampstands was someone “like a son of man,” <sup>14</sup>dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>15</sup>His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. <sup>16</sup>His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. <sup>17</sup>In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun, shining in all its brilliance.

...at his feet as though dead. Then he held out his right hand on me and said: “Do not fear. I am the first and the last, and I am the living one. Blessings on those who do not give up their lives for the idols of the nations. I am the Spirit and the Bride, and I am calling. Whoever hears and comes, let him take the water of life without cost.”

in your favor: You hate the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. <sup>7</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

*To the Church in Smyrna*  
<sup>8</sup>“To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

These are the words of the First and the Last, who came to life again. <sup>9</sup>I know your afflictions and your poverty—rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, a synagogue of Satan. I am not afraid of what you are afraid of. <sup>10</sup>I tell you, the devil will put you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. But you will overcome. I will give you the crown of life.

<sup>11</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be harmed by the second death.

## Study Guide for Tower View Baptist Church May 2023 - ???

# INTRODUCTION

Many people consider the book of Revelation intimidating. But God meant it to be profitable for us (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Many people either fear the Book of Revelation or have an unhealthy interest in it. But God designed this book for a very different purpose. Revelation is meant to produce in you comfort, courage, hope, and praise.

Do you believe that?

Look at the very beginning of Revelation. Rev. 1:3 says:

“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”

God knew that many people would feel timid about this book—that many would say to themselves, “I can’t understand it.” So, he gave you special encouragement to read it. Make a point of reading it once or more during the time of our study.

In Rev. 1:3, we already receive a hint about the contents of Revelation. God tells us to “keep what is written in it.”

Revelation does not give us information just to tickle our fancy. We are meant to “keep” it and to take things to heart. We ought to be transformed by what we read, to become more faithful servants of Christ. The Book of Revelation is a very practical book.

Note also what it says in 1:1: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.” To whom is the Book of Revelation written? Not to PhDs, to experts, to prophecy fans, or to a narrow inner circle of specialists. God writes it to “his servants”—the servants of Jesus Christ. You. Me. All Christians everywhere.

If you are a follower of Christ, this book is for you. You can understand it, because God knows how to communicate to you.

In addition, let me say the obvious: The Book of Revelation is a revelation—“the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1). “Revelation” means an unveiling, a disclosure, or a display of who God is and what he promises to do. The Book is not a hidden password, concealment, a puzzle, or a riddle as some people think. It is not a puzzle book but a picture book. Its message is so clear that a child can grasp it and be encouraged.

**1. In what way is it accessible to ordinary readers?**

**2. How might reading it be an encouragement?**

## THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION

One Word: Nike (not the shoe company – the Greek word for **VICTORY**)

The message of Revelation: God rules history, and he will bring it to its consummation in Christ.

The heart of this message is expressed in Revelation 4 & 5. John is given a vision of God seated on his throne (4:2). Here is

the king of the universe. He is no idle ruler. His will and his orders created the universe long ago (4:11). His will now is that the whole universe should join in praise of the Lamb (5:11–14). From his throne, he issues the orders for governing history up to its climax—the time when Christ appears.

At that time, we will say, “Hallelujah! For our Lord God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come” (19:6–7).

God shows us in Revelation how he is in control, how powerful he is, and what the future must bring. We come to know that God’s promises are trustworthy and that his power is invincible. Hence, we can begin to praise God even now, and to sing “Hallelujah!” over his reign. Do you begin to see how encouraging the Book of Revelation can be?

Look, again, at Revelation 1:1. God shows “to his servants the things that must soon take place.” What is the word “must” doing there? Things “must” take place only because God rules over history and makes sure that they do take place. In the very first verse of Revelation, God already hints at the theme that will develop in the course of this book.

As we move further into chapter 1, God is introduced as “him who is and who was and who is to come” (1:4). God is. He is self-sustaining, all-sufficient. God was. He always has been from eternity. He is the creator and owner of all things. God “is to come.”

The future that must come is the future defined by God. God will come himself! God will appear and usher in the final course of history.

Revelation is, above all, a God-centered book. This book is designed to stir your imagination. It sets before you amazing pictures of truth that we most need to take to heart: God is the King! All the nations are as nothing before him (Isa. 40:17). “He does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’” (Dan. 4:35). His goodness, his splendor, his beauty, and his bounty are the source of all blessing (Rev. 22:1, 4:2).

The climax of history comes when “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, who will wage war against God’s enemies until all are subdued to him (Rev. 19:16; 1 Cor. 15:24–25). We find our fulfillment as we serve and praise this marvelous King (Rev. 19:1–10).

1. What is the message of Revelation in a nutshell?
2. How does the message of Revelation have a practical thrust?
3. How do you react to the message of God’s rule over history?

## HOW TO READ REVELATION

- **Read it prayerfully.** Jesus Christ is the source of this Book (Rev. 1:1). He alone can give you spiritual eyes and hearts to understand it. Pray to the Lord that he would interpret this book to your heart.
- **Focus on the central theme.** Read Revelation to see what it says about God ruling history and bringing it to finality in Christ. Read for the big picture. Don’t be discouraged when you do not understand some detail. Most people who get into difficulty fail right here. They want to understand the details and to predict future historical pinpricks before they have even begun to absorb the central message. They are doing things the wrong way around. Nobody can properly understand the details of a book without first understanding the main points.

- **Be God-centered.** Otherwise, you will be like someone who takes holds of a knife by the blade instead of the handle. Or, you will be like someone who tries to understand a beautiful painting by looking in a magnifying glass at each blob of paint on the canvas.
- **Focus on the hope for the coming of Christ.** Watch how the whole book points forward to Christ's return.
- **Let the images "soak into you."** Get involved in the book. Don't try to puzzle it out. Enjoy it. Sing about it. Cheer for the saints. Detest the beast. Rejoice in God's power and glory. Praise the Lamb.
- **Pay attention to Old Testament themes and images that are used in a fresh way.** The book of Revelation has many allusions to Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the breadth of the Old Testament. Becoming familiar with the Old Testament will help you deepen your appreciation of Revelation, even though the basic message of Revelation comes through to all the servants of Christ.
- **Recognize that the central part of the book is a prophetic vision given by God to John.** Prophetic visions are full of symbols. They are symbolic representations of spiritual truth, not photographic copies of events.
- **Use this book in times of distress, persecution, and death.** Christians of all ages testify that it speaks powerfully to people in deep trouble.

1. **What are some guiding principles in reading Revelation?**

2. **How do these principles help to keep readers on track with the message?**

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION: Overview and Chapter 1

**TITLE:** The title comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis* (1:1) which means "revelation, disclosure, unveiling"<sup>1</sup>

† The visions contained in this book serve to remove the veil and disclose God's promised plan to destroy evil through His Son.

**AUTHOR:** The Apostle John "the beloved disciple" who also authored the Gospel of John and 1, 2, 3 John

† **Internal Evidence:** Author identifies himself (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8); Familiar language "word, witness, life, judgment"

† **External Evidence:** Testimony of Early Church Fathers (Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus of Lyons)

**AUDIENCE:** Seven 1<sup>st</sup> Century Gentile Churches in the Roman province of Asia (1:4; ch.2-3)

† The seven local churches received the letter to encourage faithfulness, rebuke sin, and prepare them for Christ's return.

† These churches should also be seen a representation of all types churches throughout history (2:23).

† Roman Empire was an oppressive system characterized by political idolatry and economic exploitation.

† Revelation's message had direct meaning for the 1<sup>st</sup> century church; "soon...time is near" this is important to remember.

**PURPOSE:** Revelation *informs* the church of God's plan to fully and finally overthrow the kingdom of Satan and *prepares* her to be devoted to Christ by rejecting false teaching, enduring persecution, and resisting compromise as she awaits the return of Christ.

**DATE:** A major discussion exists regarding whether Revelation was written before or after Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD.

† **Before 70AD:** This view proposes the letter was written during Nero's reign (54-68AD)

† **After 70AD:** This view proposes the letter was written during Domitian's reign (81-96AD)

† **Conclusions:** the issues facing the churches in Rev. 2-3 seem to indicate the later date is more likely.

**GENRE OF LITERATURE:** The book of Revelation consists of three types of literary genres.

1. **Apocalyptic:** contains visions and symbols that disclose and unveil God's consummate judgment
2. **Prophetic:** foretells events that will take place in the future (1:3, 19; 22:7-19)
3. **Epistle:** the book instructs its readers about who God is and what He requires

**OT BACKGROUND:** Of 404 verses in the book, at least 278 allude to OT passages, despite no direct quotations.

† **Key:** Gen 1-3, 49; Ex 7-12, 15; Ps 2; Isa 6, 11, 44, 48, 65-66; Jer 51; Ezek 27, 40-48; Dan 7, 9; Zech 12

**KEY TERMS / IDEAS:** These terms are repeated in Revelation and are helpful to understanding the book.

- "see" (x52) cf. 1:2, 11 – the visions given to John are given to us to "see" with our ears; it is a "sound-film" (Hendrickson, 50)
- "throne" (x47) place of authority from which a sovereign reigns (x4 more refer to 24 elders)
- "Lamb" (x29) Jesus is the Lamb of God who was slain and has been raised to forever reign
- "Satan" (x8) Satan is the adversary of God and His people who rules the spiritual Babylon God opposes
- "like" (x63) John is shown images, symbols, pictures that have real referents in history [vs Hal Lindsay]
- "blessed" (x12) a state having happiness, joy, favor, and goodness from God (x3 more refer to God: worship)
- **7 Beatitudes:** God promises blessing on those who 1) read, hear, keep what is written (1:3); 2) die in the Lord (14:13); 3) remain pure in expectation of Jesus' return (16:15); 4) are invited to Lamb's wedding feast (19:9), 5) have been killed for their faith (20:4-6); 6) share in the tree of life in the city of God (22:14); 7) keeps these words of the prophecy of this book (22:7)

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis E. Johnson's *Triumph of the Lamb* and William Hendriksen's *More Than Conquerors* are helpful resources for studying Revelation.

### **SIX COMMON INTERPRETATIONS OF REVELATION**

1. **Idealist:** symbols are not tied to specific events, but reflect the *spiritual* battle between Christ and Satan
2. **Preterist:** the visions, in large part, were fulfilled in the *past* during the fall of Jer. (70AD) or Rome (5<sup>th</sup> cen.)
3. **Historical:** the visions are *currently* being fulfilled in a chronologically throughout church history

4. **Futurist**: the visions in the apocalypse are future events that are yet to be fulfilled (dispensational)
5. **Progressive Dispensational**: the visions reflect both *past and future* fulfillment with idealist themes
6. **Seven Parallel Visions**: Seven repeating and intensifying visions of God's victory over evil

Name	Period of Time	Manner of Fulfillment	Strengths	Weakness
<b>Preterism</b>	past	The events in the book were all fulfilled in the first century. Describes the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 or the fall of Rome in A.D. 476.	Takes seriously the original audience and explains the many passages that emphasize the urgency for the readers to respond quickly, because it would happen in their lifetime.	Can devalue the application of the book because everything has already happened and does not apply to believers living today. Can miss out on the potential benefits of prophecy, and denies the future application of prophecy.
<b>Historicism</b>	present	Describes major events of Christian history spanning from John's time to the Second Coming of Christ. A chronological outline of the course of church history from the first century to the present.	It attempts to apply the message of the seven churches to history.	Can make the entire book irrelevant and deny the historical situation. This view has very few contemporary proponents and artificially forces a grid on all history, leads to endless speculation and subjectivity in its interpretation and is very difficult to arrive at a consensus.
<b>Futurism</b>	future	Describes a future period prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Some would limit the scope to the seven year period of the "Great Tribulation".	Takes seriously the prophetic voice of the OT. Focuses on the critical importance of the second coming, attempts to interpret the scripture literally, and is actively looking for contemporary events that characterize the end.	Can ignore the historical setting, devalue practical application to believers for the last 2000 years, become a cryptic code understood by the elite, make the book unnecessarily difficult for unbelievers and place too much emphasis on current events.
<b>Idealism</b>	timeless	Describes big picture truths and focuses on major themes and principles. Good will eventually prevail over evil. Readers are encouraged to understand a repeated pattern that makes a difference in their current trials, because God wins in the end and perseverance will be rewarded.	Provides practical encouragement and application to believers for every generation, provides practical strategies to defeat our real enemy and offers hope in the midst of very difficult circumstances.	Can place too much emphasis on symbolism, oversimplify complicated concepts and deny the future fulfillment of prophecy.
<b>Eclectic or Hybrid</b>	mixed	This view combines the strengths of Preterism, Futurism and Idealism by anchoring the meaning to the historical situation of the first century, by looking for future fulfillment, and by looking for timeless principles and applying them to our situation.	Takes serious the prophetic voice of the OT, values the historical context of the original audience, appreciates the apocalyptic genre including symbols, focuses on the second coming, provides practical application to believers of all ages and offers hope.	Can be difficult to employ consistent principles of interpretation.

### **THREE VIEWS OF THE MILLENNIUM**

- † In Revelation 20:4-5, a 1,000 year reign of Christ is described. The Latin word for 1,000 is *mille*.
- 1. **Pre-millennial**: Jesus will return *before* the millennium to establish a time of unprecedented peace
- † Some suggest this is essential for God to remain faithful to His OT promises. This view common among Futurists.
- 2. **Post-millennial**: Jesus will return *after* the millennium and usher in the eternal state.
- † Jesus will bring about world-wide repentance through the spread of the Gospel. This view is held by Preterists.
- 3. **A-millennial**: the current age is the millennium during which Jesus reigns as our King from heaven
- † Satan was bound at the cross, saints now reign with King Jesus Christ while enduring tribulation until He returns.

### **Principles for Interpretation**

1. **God finally defeats evil**. This is the main point. Keep the big picture in mind, it helps keep things clear in unclear portions.
2. **Revelation is to be seen**. apocalyptic literature communicates messages through vivid images which portray spiritual realities (Lampstand = Church; Dragon = Satan). Complicated at times because some referents are

represented by multiple symbols (Jesus

= Lion and Lamb; Church = 144K from 12 tribes of Israel and Innumerable host from every tribe).

- Literal meaning of symbolic language is what the symbol represents (Ez. 40-48 vision of rebuilt temple = living stones 1 Pt 2:5).
- 3. **Revelation fulfills all prophecy.** There is an almost continual allusion to and interpretation of the OT through out the book.
- The New Testament interprets the Old Testament. Symbols from OT prophets are modified at times in light of Christ's work.
- 4. **Numbers Count.** They are often used symbols in Revelation (7, 10, 12). "7" (x55) symbolizes perfection and completeness<sup>2</sup>, "10" often used to describe vastness<sup>3</sup>, "12" number of the people of God (12 tribes, 7:4-8, 12:12; apostles (21:14)
- 5. **Comfort and encourage the persecuted church.** This book must be read with the mindset of those who are under various forms of attack. Satan and his helpers are always assaulting the church by bringing *persecution* leading to martyrdom and / or *seduction* leading to defilement. Revelation is meant to embolden the church to persevere in faith and faithfulness to Jesus.
- 6. **Worship.** The goal of this book is to inspire worship of the God who has faithful kept His promises to His people. The pages of this revelation are filled with images of heaven's songs to the risen Lamb. Ask God to move you to worship as you study.

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<sup>2</sup> 7 churches (ch.1-3), 7 golden lamp-stands, 7 stars, 7 spirits, 7 torches of fire, 7 seals, 7 horns, 7 eyes, 7 angels, 7 trumpets, 7 thunders (10:3-4), 7,000 people killed, 7 heads, 7 diadems, 7 plagues, 7 bowls, 7 mountains, 7 kings, 7 plagues

<sup>3</sup> dragon and beast (12:3, 13:1, 17:12); 10 cubed = 1,000 to describe a vast number of years (20:2-7), 10 cubed and multiplied by 12 = 12,000 to portray vast dimensions in all directions (length, breadth, height) of New Jerusalem; cubed and multiplied by 12 squared to symbolize full registered number of God's people (7:4-8; 14:1-5); myriads of myriads (100 millions) symbolizes countless heavenly worshipers (5:11-12).

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## **OUTLINE OF REVELATION: THE CONSUMATION OF GOD'S PLAN IN CHRIST JESUS**

- **3 Major Sections:** Beginning (Prologue) **ch.1:1-8**; Middle (Body) **ch.1:9-22:5**; End (Epilogue) **ch.22:6-21**
- **The Body:** is arranged in 7 parallel descriptions of the "Gospel Age" that span from Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> coming to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. These *intensifying visions* highlight different aspects of God's redemptive work.
- **#1 – The Struggle on Earth (ch. 1-11)**
  - The church is persecuted by the world, but the church is avenged, protected and victorious.
- **#2 – The Struggle in the Spiritual Realm (ch. 12-22)**
  - Jesus and His church are persecuted by the Satan (the dragon) and his helpers, but they remain victorious.

**(1:1-8) The Introduction – Author, Audience, and the Almighty One**

**(1:9-3:22) Cycle #1 – The King and His Bride – Christ and The 7 Churches**

**(4:1-7:17) Cycle #2 – 7 Seals – Darkness Hates The Light And Persecutes The Church**

**(8:1-11:19) Cycle #3 – 7 Trumpets – Christ Avenges The Saints' Blood**

**(12:1-14:20) Cycle #4 – The Cosmic Conflict Between Christ And Satan**

**(15:1-16:21) Cycle #5 – 7 Bowls Of Plagues – Wrath Is Fully Poured Out**

**(17:1-19:21) Cycle #6 – The Triumph Over Babylon**

**(20:1-22:5) Cycle #7 – The Eternal Reign Of The Glorious King**

**(22:6-21) The Conclusion – Behold! I Am Coming Soon**

**(1:1-8) The Introduction – Author, Audience, and the Almighty One**

**(1:9-3:22) CYCLE #1 – THE KING AND HIS BRIDE – CHRIST AND THE 7 CHURCHES**

1:9-20 – The Christ in Glory: Jesus Walks Among His Churches

2:1-7 – The Church of Ephesus: The Church with Everything but the Greatest Thing

2:8-11 – The Church of Smyrna: The Church in the Midst of the Fire

2:12-17 – The Church of Pergamum: The Assembly of Assimilation

2:18-29 – The Church of Thyatira: The Congregation of Compromise

3:1-6 – The Church of Sardis: The Church of the Living Dead

3:7-13 – The Church of Philadelphia: The Church of the Open Door

3:14-22 – The Church of Laodicea: The Church that Thought They Needed Nothing

**(4:1-7:17) CYCLE #2 – 7 SEALS – DARKNESS HATES THE LIGHT AND PERSECUTES THE CHURCH**

4:1-5:14 – From the Throne: The Lamb Receives the Scroll of Judgment

6:1-17 – The Opening of the Seals 1-6: God's Wrath Opened Up

7:1-8 – The Sealing of the Saints: True Israel Gathered In

7:9-17 – A Heavenly Host of Worshipers

**(8:1-11:19) CYCLE #3 – THE SEVEN TRUMPETS –**

**CHRIST AVENGES THE SAINTS' BLOOD**

8:1-5 – The Opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal: The Loudest Silence in History

8:6-13 – The Blowing of the 1<sup>st</sup> Four Trumpets: 1/3 of All Creation Destroyed 9:1-

12 – The Blowing of the Fifth Trumpet: The 1<sup>st</sup> Woe

9:13-21 – The Blowing of the Sixth Trumpet: The 2<sup>nd</sup> Woe

10:1-11 – Interlude 4 (Earthly): The Angel and Little Scroll

11:1-14 – Interlude 5 (Earthly): The Two Witnesses at the Temple

11:15-19 – The Blowing of the Seventh Trumpet (3<sup>rd</sup> Woe): The Ark of the Covenant Unveiled

**(12:1-14:20) CYCLE #4 – THE COSMIC CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRIST AND SATAN**

12:1-6 – A Savior is Born: The Christ is Given and Pursued by Satan



12:7-17 – Satan’s Throw Down: The Evil One is Cast from Heaven and Pursues the People of God

13:1-10 – The Beast from the Sea

13:11-18 – The Beast from the Earth

14:1-5 – The Lamb and His Sealed Servants: A Firstfruit of Redeemed Worshipers

14:6-13 – Angelic Announcements: An Eternal Gospel, The Fall of Babylon, and A Promise for the Faithful

14:14-20 – Time for the Harvest: The Angels Call for the Sickle of Judgment Upon the Earth

### **(15:1-16:21) CYCLE #5 – THE SEVEN BOWLS OF PLAGUES**

15:1-8 – The Entrance of the Seven Angels: Preparation for Pouring Out God’s Final Wrath

16:1-21 – The Pouring Out of the Plagues: God’s Wrath Results in Unrepentance Displayed

### **(17:1-19:21) CYCLE #6 – THE TRIUMPH OVER BABYLON**

17:1-18 – The Whore of Babylon: Immorality, Perversion, and Blasphemy Conquered by Christ

18:1-24 – Fallen, Fallen is Babylon: The Great Godless Power Has Been Destroyed in an Instant

19:1-10 – The Heavenly Response: Rejoicing in the Coming Marriage Supper of the Lamb

19:11-21 – The Return of Christ: The King Comes to Reclaim His Kingdom

### **(20:1-22:21) CYCLE #7 – THE ETERNAL REIGN OF THE GLORIOUS KING**

20:1-10 – The Reign of the King: Jesus Displays His Authority Upon the Earth

20:11-15 – The Great White Throne Judgment: Evil is Fully and Finally Executed

21:1-22:5 – Behold! I Make All Things New: The New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem

### **(22:6-21) THE CONCLUSION – BEHOLD! I AM COMING SOON**

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## **Revelation 1 Study Questions**

*Chapter 1 is important. It has a prologue in 1:1–3 that explains the origin of the book and sets the tone for the whole of the book of Revelation. It introduces the human author (John) and Christ in his glory (1:12–20), who will give messages to the seven churches (Rev. 2–3) and is the key to the book (Rev. 5:5).*

### **The Origin of Revelation (Rev. 1:1–3)**

*Revelation 1:1–8 shows that the book of Revelation is of divine origin and is therefore a source of divine blessing for those who hear and obey it.*

- Revelation 1:1–3 provides a six-part chain of revelation for the book of Revelation, beginning with God and ending with the one who hears and keeps what is written.
  - Can you identify the four links of the chain in between?
  - Why do you think John begins the book with this chain of revelation?
- Notice in Revelation 1:1 that some things “must” soon take place. Why do you think John says they *must* take place?
  - What does this suggest about his view of God?
  - Recalling that Revelation is written to suffering Christians, how would the word “must” encourage them?

- Jesus is the second link in the great chain of revelation. How does this uniquely honor him?
- How does John describe his relationship to Jesus in Revelation 1:1? Recalling that this is most likely John, the son of Zebedee, Jesus' best friend, how is John's self-description surprising?
  - How does it bring glory to Jesus?
  - What does it show us about John?
- Revelation 1:1 says that Jesus "made it known" to John. The Greek word for "make it known" indicates figurative representation, something that is made known by a sign. Moreover, in Revelation 1:2, John is to bear witness to all that he "saw."
  - How does this prepare us to read the rest of Revelation?
  - What does it lead us to expect about this book?

### **John's Greeting to the Seven Churches (Rev. 1:4–8)**

- Revelation 1:4–5a contains a typical ancient letter address, following the normal form: "A to B, grace and peace" (compare Paul's letters). What is striking about this particular letter opening, though, is whom the grace and peace are *from*. Note that the Holy Spirit is pictured in Revelation 1:4 as seven spirits, representing fullness and perfection, since the Holy Spirit is active throughout the entire earth (see Rev. 5:6).
  - In addition to the Holy Spirit, from whom do the grace and peace come?
  - Why is this important? Why is it encouraging to the recipients of Revelation?
- The book of Revelation calls for believers to be faithful witnesses in the face of persecution that may lead even to death (see Rev. 2:13). In light of that, how would the threefold description of Jesus in the first part of Revelation 1:5 encourage these believers?
- How many comings of Jesus are mentioned in Revelation 1:5b–8? Note the two references to the cross. What do these verses tell us about what Jesus accomplished and will accomplish in these comings?

*Having introduced his letter/apocalypse/prophecy (Rev. 1:1–3), and having greeted the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1:4–8), John now reports his initial vision of the resurrected and exalted Christ (Rev. 1:9–20) and records Christ's words to each of the seven churches (Revelation 2–3). This opening section thus demonstrates the centrality of the risen Christ to the entire book, while also rooting the message of Revelation in the specific situations of suffering first-century churches (see also the phrase "for the churches" in Rev. 22:16).*

### **The Son of Man among the Lampstands (Rev. 1:9–20)**

- In Revelation 1:9, John reports that he received his vision of Christ while on Patmos (a small island in the Aegean Sea where Rome exiled political criminals). Why was John on Patmos? In light of this, how can John relate to his readers (see Rev. 1:9)?
- John sees an amazing vision of "one like a son of man" (a title that comes from Daniel 7, in which a figure called the son of man receives universal dominion from God himself). Read the descriptions of God, the son of man, and the heavenly messenger in Daniel 7:9–14 and Daniel 10:5–6.
  - What are the similarities between these Old Testament passages and the description of Jesus in Revelation 1:12–16?
  - Do you find any surprising similarities?
  - In Revelation 1:12–16, what do you think is the significance of the son of man's snow-white hair?
    - His eyes like a flame of fire?
    - His feet like burnished bronze?
    - His two-edged sword?
    - His face shining like the sun?
- In light of how we saw God referred to in Revelation 1:4, 8, what is particularly striking about Jesus' self-description in Revelation 1:17?
- Revelation 1:20 makes clear that "the seven lampstands are the seven churches." So how might John's vision of the son of man "in the midst of the lampstands" (Rev. 1:13) offer comfort to the seven churches of Asia Minor?