

REVELATION

*Seeing, Knowing and Serving Jesus Christ
Today at the Edge of History*

Chapter 1:1-8

Text: Revelation 1:1-8 - Prologue

¹ The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Greetings and Doxology

⁴John,

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the

dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

⁷ Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.

So shall it be! Amen.

⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”



Revelation 22:6-21 - Epilogue

⁶ The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”

⁷ “Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.”

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. ⁹ But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!”

¹⁰ Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. ¹¹ Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.”

¹² “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

¹⁴ “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they

may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”

¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

Read & Reflect - 1:1-8

First Reading/First Impression: Read the prologue section of Revelation and check the box below that best describes your initial reaction to it...

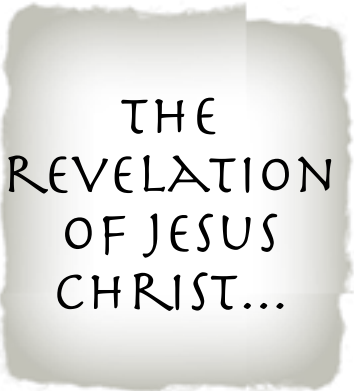
- Sounds challenging & scary.
- Sounds more encouraging than I expected.
- When do we get to the monsters? Seems like the whole thing is about Jesus.
- Other _____

Second Reading/Headline: What headline would you put over this beginning section?

[Hand-drawn rectangular box for writing a headline]

Based on this introduction, what are you most interested in reading about, or what do you most hope to find, in the chapters to come?

[Hand-drawn rectangular box for writing interests]



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST...

Search

Verses 1-2 - In three phrases, each with the word "of" in the middle, John tells us what is most important about his letter. What are the phrases and what do they mean? (Where does the "revelation" come from? About what or Whom? For what purpose?)

A. The _____ of _____

B. ... the _____ of _____

C. ... the _____ of _____

Verse 3 - How will a person find blessing through the Book of Revelation according to the author? Why?

[Hand-drawn rectangular box for writing an answer to Verse 3]

Verse 4-5 - From Whom does the "grace and peace" with which John greets his readers come?

A. "...from him _____" (What person might this be?)

B. "... and from _____ (What person might this be?)

C. "... and from _____

Who is the One to whom all these refer?

Verse 5-8 - With what other words and phrases does John describe Jesus Christ in this prologue section?

[Hand-drawn rectangular box for writing an answer to Verse 5-8]

Verse 7 - Jesus is symbolically located “with the clouds” according to John. What does this mean to you?
 Note also, He isn’t standing still! Where is Jesus going? When?

Prologue & Epilogue - Now read the epilogue to Revelation (22:6-21). compare these two “bookend” section of this prophetic and apocalyptic pastoral letter (see Introduction Issue on this). Note how similar they are. What words and phrases do you find in both?

To what “realities that we don’t always see” do these words and phrases point us?

“I AM THE ALPHA
 AND THE OMEGA
 WHO IS, AND
 WHO WAS, AND
 WHO IS TO COME,
 THE ALMIGHTY.”

Apply - 1:1-8

1. Write the first five words of this Book in this box. *They are the most important five words to keep in mind as you read and think about every word that follows!*

2. As you begin this course, what are some blessings you would like to see through your study in the weeks ahead? (check one or two boxes)

- to get to know God in a more personal way to understand better what I believe as a Christian
- to make Jesus Christ more clearly the “Alpha & Omega” of my life to develop skills in studying the Bible
- to feel more confident about the future to think through my values & priorities in light of God’s will
- Other _____

3. What kind of commitment are you willing to make to realize these blessings (Revelation 1:3)?

- to complete the Bible Study Guide each week to attend Worship each Sunday
- to be a regular participant in my Covenant group, sharing my insights and growth and love
- to pray regularly for God’s help in understanding and applying His Word

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Summary...
"The whole of [John's] vision is bracketed by a prologue and an epilogue..."

The prologue and the epilogue set the larger vision against three great unseen realities of the present...

(1) **'Coming. Jesus is coming** (1:7; 22:7, 12 & 20)... Not 'will come' but 'is coming.' The process is happening at this very moment... He is moving even now... Jesus is pressing in on the world... and that pressing generates great upheaval. that is why John uses the word 'must' (1:1).

(2) **'The time is near'** (1:3 & 22:10)... the same word Jesus uses in His first public proclamation (Mark 1:15). The Kingdom has come near because the King is near. Because the King is always near, the time for the final

in-breaking of the new creation is always near. For the new Testament the end, even if many years away, is always near... although it is still dark, and will be for some hours yet, when you see the "morning star" (22:16) you know the night has ended. 'The time is near.'

(3) **The "I am" sayings** (1:8, 17; 22:6, 22:13)... 'Alpha and Omega,' 'First and Last,' & 'Beginning' (Greek: 'arche' = source,

archetype... for everything!) and 'End' (Greek 'telos' = inherent destiny... of everything!)...

The implications are staggering! Jesus' claim finally explains the anguish of life. We were made to live His way; either we do, or life does not work... but Jesus' claim gives hope, tremendous hope. Jesus is going to have His way. We are going to become like Him. Because everything beings in Him... and ends in Him." (Darrell Johnson, Discipleship on the Edge, p.7-8)

Verse 1 - **"revelation of Jesus Christ"**... can mean "by or from" Jesus or "about" Him, or, most likely, it can mean both.

v.2 - **"Blessed"**... the first of seven "Beatitudes" in Revelation (see also 4:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7 & 22:14).

v.4 - **"John"**... most likely John the Apostle (see Introduction Issue)... **"seven churches"**... seven is the number symbolic of "perfection" or completeness

(probably from the seven days of creation and seven days in the week) so it may be that "all churches" is the intent here... the actual seven (each of which received the whole of the Book but got a letter directed to it in the next two chapters) were churches in leading cities around

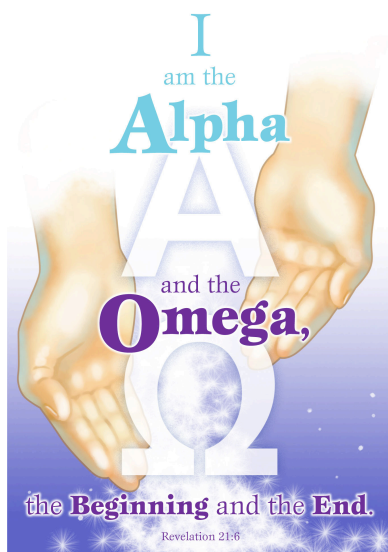
Asia Minor. They will be presented in the order in which mail would have been delivered, each about 50 miles from the previous one... **"seven spirits"**... could mean "sevenfold spirit" which would indicate the Holy Spirit's perfection and completeness.



vv. 5-6 - **"to him be glory..."** a classic Doxology (= "word of glory") to Jesus Christ the Lord

v.7 - **"pierced"**... points to the crucifixion of Jesus (see esp. John 19:34) with words used by the Old Testament Psalmists (Psalm 22:16) and Prophets (Isaiah 53:5 & Zechariah 12:10)

v.8 - **"Alpha and Omega"**... the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet (Α & Ω)... note the progression in the "I am" sayings, how this one is expanded in 1:17 and then in 21:6 and 22:13 (see summary above)...



How do people, in general, go about interpreting Revelation?

1. **Preterists** - Revelation is to be understood almost entirely in terms of first-century history... *The events described have already taken place.*
2. **Historicists** - Revelation describes the whole of history from when John received his vision up to the yet-to-come end of it all... *The events are still unfolding.*
3. **Futurists** - Revelation is mostly about things yet to happen... *The events are yet to come.*
4. **Idealists** - Revelation presents symbolic pictures of timeless truths... *There are no actual events being described, or better still all events throughout history are depicted.*