

Session 03 The Eternal God, The Glorified Jesus and His Church Revelation 1

1:1-3 The source and communication of the message

The unveiling of God's purposes.

- **God (The Father) always takes the initiative**, in Creation, redemption, and re-creation, Deut. 29:29, Dan. 2:28, 29, 45, Amos 3:7.
- **There is a line of communication** – Father, Son, angel, servant (John), servants (church). It was “signified” to John – indicating the pictorial nature of the visions. The Spirit mediated the message (chapters 2-3).
- **“Must shortly take place” – the divine imperative. God is in control, despite appearances.**
- **“Very soon”** – possibly “very quickly” - this is God's perspective, Luke 18:8, Rom. 16:20. Some of the things were imminent, but we must always be ready, c.f. Matt. 24:32-25:30 (“a thief in the night”), 2Peter 3:10 etc.

John bore witness to the word of God (the Gospel 6:9), and to the testimony of Jesus the Messiah, as He communicated that word to John through this series of visions – the things that he saw, e.g. 5:1-7.

The first blessing – for reading, hearing, and keeping this Word. There are seven blessings, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7 & 14 – all resulting from response to the word of God, c.f. Matt. 24:46, Luke 11:28, John 13:17.

1:4-8 The letter was to the seven churches. Each was to receive the whole letter, v11. They formed a rough circle in the western part of Asia Minor. There were other churches but these were a representative group, e.g. 2:11 “He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”.

The Author is God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The first message is “grace and peace” – His blessing and our enjoyment.

- **Father God – “Who is, and was, and is coming”** c.f. Ex. 3:14. **He is coming in the Person of His Son**, v7, as He came by the Holy Spirit, John 14:23. **The Father is always supreme and will determine the outcome.**
- **The Spirit – here described as the “Seven Spirits who are before the throne”**, c.f.4:5. Seven, here, probably signifies the Spirit in the fullness of His operation, Isaiah 11:2, John 3:34. An alternative is “angels”, Luke 9:26, 1Tim 5:21, but less likely. The Spirit is the Agent of the Father and the Son, John 14:15-23, and see Rev. 5:6.
- **Jesus is described in seven ways**
 - **Jesus – His human name**
 - **Messiah – the anointed One, from the Father**
 - **Faithful witness** c.f. John 1:18, Isaiah 55:3-4, **and martyr**, 1Tim. 6:13, Hebrews 12:1-3. He is the ideal martyr/witness whom they must follow, 2:13, 6:9, 11:3, 17:6.
 - **Firstborn from the dead**, Psalm 89:27, Col. 1:18 He is the first fruits, 1Cor. 15:20, the pioneer, Heb. 2:9-10. He trusted in God for vindication, 1Pet. 2:21-23, and was not disappointed, Acts 2:23-24, Phil. 2:5-11. This is a message of encouragement – **He triumphed and so will they.**
 - **Ruler of the kings of the earth**, Psalm 89:27 and see 17:14, 19:16, and 1Cor. 15:24-28.
 - **The One who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood (redemption)**, Col. 1:14.
 - **He has made us kings and priests**, c.f. Exodus 19:5-6, 1Peter 2:5-9, **to His God and Father**, John 20:17.

These seven things call forth praise - “Glory and dominion, (eon x eon)”.

Jesus has been revealed as God’s anointed Prophet, Priest, and King and He shares these roles with His people.

1:7 He is coming, “with the clouds”, c.f. Dan. 7:13, Matt. 24:30, 26:64, Acts 1:9-11, Luke 24:50, Zech. 14:3-4. “Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and they will mourn Him”

- **There is a clear reference to Zechariah 12:10 where the focus is on Jerusalem and its inhabitants.** They will see with faith and repentance, recognizing their Messiah and mourning for their treatment of Him, Zech. 12:9-13:2. The veil will be removed from their faces, Luke 13:35, 2Cor. 3:12-17, Rom. 11: 13-15, 25-27.
- **The mourning described in Rev. 1:7 is different.** It will involve **“the tribes/families/ethnic groups of the earth/land”**. His appearing will be a time of mourning as those who have refused to repent, despite preliminary warnings, experience His coming in judgement, 6:15-17, 9:20-21.

John adds his “Even so, Amen”

1:8 Now God the Father speaks – He has the last word. “I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End”. He repeats and expands the initial declaration about Him in v4. He, the Author of creation will also have the last word in human history.

He is the Almighty – lit. **“Lord, the God, the Ruler of all”**. This phrase is in the Gk. OT in Amos 3:13 and 4:14. The Heb. equivalent would translate **“LORD, God of hosts”**. **He is the God of the heavenly armies, led by His Son, to be described later in Revelation**, e.g. 19:14. This is real hope for persecuted believers and followers.

1:9-20 John sees a vision of the glorified Jesus

Jesus has experienced trouble and borne it patiently in order to establish His kingdom through obedient suffering.

Now it is John’s time to experience the same things and he is aware that the same has come, or will soon come to them. That tends to make other distinctions insignificant. John, the beloved Apostle, sees his first relationship with fellow believers as “brother”.

Trouble, kingdom, and patience, are an inseparable triad, John 16:33. Patience is the bridge.

John was exiled because of his “dangerous” preaching. Patmos is a rocky island 40 miles off the coast of Asia Minor and 16 square miles in area.

He was “in the Spirit”. This indicates a trance-like state, Acts 10:10, 22:17, 2Cor. 12:2-4.

The Lord’s Day. Probably reflects the custom of worship on the first day, celebrating the resurrection, v 18.

- **John hears a voice like a trumpet**, c.f. Exodus 19:16, 19, Heb. 12:19, Matt. 24:31, 1Cor. 15:52, 1Thess. 4:16 – a call to attention.
- **The Speaker identifies Himself in identical words to God the Father – Jesus claims full deity.**
- **He commands John to write what he sees in a book (singular) and send it to seven churches.**

What did John see?

- **First he saw seven golden lamp stands.** This seems strange, given previous statement of identity and also the glorious appearance of Jesus Himself, but John sees Jesus in a particular context, inseparably united with and in the midst of His people.

- **Then He saw Jesus – but what a vision! John had been on intimate terms with Jesus, and considered himself especially loved**, John 13:23. Even John’s presence at the Transfiguration, his experience of the risen Jesus, and being a witness to the ascension had not prepared him for this. **He had known Jesus “after the flesh”, 2Cor.5:16, but this vision is of Jesus as He is, not as He was.**
- **He is dressed like the High Priest**, Exodus 28:4, 29:5, but His sash is made of gold, like **a King** c.f. Exodus 39:29.
- **He appeared as the glorified Son of Man**, c.f. Daniel 7:13. He also shares some features with the Ancient of Days, 7:9.
- **His feet were like fine brass – in contrast to the Roman Empire as portrayed in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream**, Dan. 2:33-34, 40-44.
- **His eyes are like a flame of fire – all seeing and for judgement**, 2:18, 19:11-12, John 5:21-30.
- **His voice, initially like a trumpet, is like the sound of many waters**, Ezek. 43:2, associated with glory.
- **He holds the stars (angels) in His hand**, Heb. 1:1-13.
- **A sword from His mouth – the word of God**, c.f. 2:12, 16, 19:15, 21, Heb. 4:12-13. He is more powerful than Caesar who claims authority for his word and power from the sword.
- **His face shone like the sun in full strength**, Matt, 17:2.

How did John react? - He was totally overwhelmed, c.f. Ezek. 1:28, Dan. 8:17, 10:15, Acts 26:14.

How did Jesus respond?

He put His hand on John and said “Fear not”. He is different but still the same, Matt. 14:27, 17:7. **“I am the First and the Last”**. He is sovereign, c.f. Isaiah 48:12. This is John’s only security.

“I am He who lives and was dead and behold I am alive for evermore” – the same Jesus but indestructible. **“Amen. I have the keys of Hades (the place of departed souls), and of death”**. He controls it all.

What must John do?

Write – what he has seen, the present situation, and the future as revealed to him.

The mystery explained:

- **Seven stars – seven angels, ? messengers, ? church leaders, ? the “essential spirit” of each church, its individual characteristic, ? literal angels.**
- **Seven lamp stands – light bearing, witnessing communities**, 11:3-4, Exodus 24:31-37, Zech. 4:1-6, 11-14.