



I AM

JOHN'S VISION OF THE RISEN LORD

Revelation 1

The Daily Word from Laura Martin

God gave the Apostle John a revelation to testify about Jesus Christ. The Book of Revelation shares the vision the Lord entrusted to John. All who read, hear, and keep the words in the Book of Revelation will be blessed because the time is near.

You may think the book of Revelation doesn't apply to you. Or you may assume it's over your head. You may even feel a sense of fear when you begin to think about the Book of Revelation. However, John encouraged his readers by saying those who heed Revelation's words will be blessed because the time is near. John followed this by powerfully describing Jesus. Today, as you read John's descriptions of Christ, ask the Lord to expand your heart to this revelation entrusted to John— *Jesus is the One who is, who was, and who is coming. Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the rulers of the kings of the earth. Jesus loves you and set you free from sins. He made you a kingdom and a priest to His God and Father. Jesus is coming on the clouds. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Almighty. Jesus is the Living One, alive forever, and He holds the keys of death and Hades.* Praise the mighty name of Jesus! Fall before the Lord as you enter into His presence in worship.

"The one who reads this is blessed, and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it are blessed, because the time is near!"

— Revelation 1:3

FURTHER SCRIPTURE

- *Matthew 5:6* — "Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed, for they will be filled."
- *Revelation 1:4–6* — "John: to the seven churches in Asia. Grace and peace to you from the One who is, who was, and who is coming; from the seven spirits before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first born from the dead and the rulers of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has set us free from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—the glory and dominion are His forever and ever. Amen!"
- *Revelation 1:17–18* — "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. He laid His right hand on me and said, 'Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look – I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades.'"



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Teaching Notes

INTRO

We've spent almost two years moving through the Bible in our quest to see the Messiah in every book. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, *"Don't assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."* We've seen Jesus in every book of the Bible as He came to fulfill each. As we move into the book of Revelation, we have the chance to see everything we've already studied connect together. Our phrase for the Messiah in the book of Revelation is *I AM*. Revelation 1:8 says, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the One who is, who was, and who is coming, the Almighty."* Jesus tied Himself to the Lord (Exodus 3:14).

The title of the book is Revelation, not Revelations. It's one continual revelation of Christ. MacArthur defines revelation as "an uncovering,' 'an unveiling,' or 'a disclosure.'"¹ The unveiling in Revelation is Christ. I am convinced that the reason we don't understand the book of Revelation is because we don't understand the other 65 books of the Bible in context. MacArthur explains the unveilings that are found in Revelation as "the unveiling of spiritual truth, the revealing of the sons of God, Christ's Incarnation, and His glorious appearing at His Second Coming."² He continues: "In each of its uses, revelation refers to something or someone, once hidden, becoming visible. What this book reveals or unveils is Jesus Christ in glory."³ Jesus was hidden from the Jews, but He will be revealed to them in His second coming.

The author is the apostle John, who also wrote the Gospel of John and 1, 2, and 3 John. John identified himself as the author, and the early church fathers Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian also support John's authorship.⁴ "Many of the book's original readers were still alive during the lifetimes of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus—both of who held to apostolic authorship." While there are some differences in John's style of writing between his Gospel and the book of Revelation, there are similarities as well. Both books refer to Jesus as "the Word," and both books "translate Zechariah 12:10 differently from the Septuagint, but in agreement with each other."⁵

Scholars are not in agreement as to when the book was written. MacArthur suggests it was written between A.D. 94–96, around the end of Emperor Domitian's rule (A.D. 81–96). Because of spiritual decline experienced by the seven churches (Revelation 2–3), the book probably couldn't have been written earlier than that. During the 60s, the churches were strong. MacArthur explains, "The brief time between Paul's ministry there and the end of Nero's reign was too short for such a dramatic decline to have occurred. The longer time gap also explains the rise of the heretical sect known as the Nicolaitans, who are not mentioned in Paul's letters, not even to one or more of these same churches."⁶

John was the only apostle still alive in the beginning of the book. John was old at this time and had been exiled to the island of Patmos for his faithful preaching of Christ. While there, John received a series of revelations that presented the history of the world to come. At the time he was arrested, John was still ministering in Ephesus. This background helps explain John's vision of the coming persecution of the church and the hope that the I AM would return.⁷

The book of Revelation is intimidating because the language is prophetic. Themes include theological information about angels and the end times, as well as "the final political setup of the world; the last battle of human history; the career and ultimate defeat of Antichrist; Christ's 1,000-year earthly kingdom; the glories of heaven and the eternal state; and the final state of the wicked and the righteous."⁸

MacArthur outlines four approaches to interpreting Revelation: (1) the **preterist** approach looks at Revelation as a description of the historical events of time without looking to the future; (2) the **historicist** approach sees Revelation as a picture of the history of the church through symbolism; (3) the **idealist** approach sees Revelation as the cosmic battle between good and evil; and (4) the **futurist** approach understands chapters 6–22 as being about the future and symbolically explain what is to come.⁹ MacArthur points out that only the fourth view "does justice to Revelation's claim to be prophecy and interprets the book by the same grammatical-historical method as chapters 1–3 and the rest of Scripture."¹⁰

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), p. 1989.

² MacArthur, p. 1989.

³ MacArthur, p. 1989.

⁴ MacArthur, p. 1989.

⁵ MacArthur, p. 1989.

⁶ MacArthur, p. 1989-1990.

⁷ MacArthur, p. 1990.

⁸ MacArthur, p. 1990-1991.

⁹ MacArthur, p. 1991.

¹⁰ MacArthur, p. 1991.



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Revelation 1:1-8: “Revelation reveals [Christ] in His exaltation: (1) in blazing glory (vv. 7–20); (2) over His church, as its Lord (chs. 2, 3); (3) in His Second Coming, as He takes back the earth from the usurper, Satan, and establishes His kingdom (chs. 4–20); and (4) as He lights up the eternal state (chs. 21, 22).”¹¹ John was told to testify about what he saw, as God gave the revelation to Jesus, and then Jesus shared it with John, through an angel (vv. 1–2). There are seven “beatitudes” in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14) to prepare us for the end times. Wiersbe points out, “God promised a special blessing to the one who would read the book and obey its message.”¹² (v. 3)

The book was addressed to the seven churches in Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (v. 4). The phrase “seven spirits” could be referencing Isaiah 11:2 and the “sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit,” or the seven lampstands in Zechariah 4:1–10.¹³ Christ is God’s firstborn who has risen from the dead (v. 5), and the glory and dominion are His forever (v. 6). Verse 7 refers to Jesus’ Second Coming on a cloud of glory (the Shekinah glory from the Old Testament), not to the rapture because everyone will see it. Those who pierced Him (the Jews) will see this. God is the supreme, eternal God (v. 8).

Revelation 1:9–20: These verses portray an incredibly beautiful picture of Christ through John’s vision. John was in the presence of the Spirit of the Lord and heard a voice like a trumpet. He was told to write the visions down and send them to the churches in Asia. The seven lampstands (v. 12) probably refer to the church, and Christ is dressed as the High Priest in a robe with a gold sash (v. 13). His hair was white (Daniel 7), and His eyes were like a fiery flame for a penetrating look into the church (v. 14). The voice changed to the sound of cascading waters (v. 15). Judgment is portrayed in verse 15, and Christ was seen holding seven stars in His hand (v. 16). John responded by falling at Jesus’ feet like a dead man (v. 17). Jesus identified Himself as *I AM*, the First and the Last, the Living One who was dead but now lives forever (v. 18). There will be nothing to fear because God will send His angel messengers (the seven stars) to the seven churches (the seven lampstands) (vv. 19–20).

CLOSING

This sets the stage for the rest of the book of Revelation.

¹¹ MacArthur, p. 1992.

¹² Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2007), p.567.

¹³ MacArthur, p. 1993.



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Reading Guide Questions

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1. This book is the Revelation of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1). What do you think we should be looking for to be revealed on every page? Note that in Revelation 1:19, John was instructed to write about what he had seen, what was, and what will happen.
 2. In Revelation 1:3b; Scripture says, “the time is near.” How much closer is this time now if it was “near” then? Do you agree that time is growing short before the return of the Lord? How does it make you feel to think Jesus could come back tomorrow? Are you ready? Why or why not?
 3. How do you think Revelation 1:7 will happen? Do you think it will be possible for “every eye” to see or does it mean just those close by? Why do you think that?
 4. What is the significance of a sharp two-edged sword in Revelation 1:16? Where else in Scripture is this sword referenced? (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12)
 5. At what point did Jesus get the keys to Hades/Hell as He says in Revelation 1:18? (Ephesians 4:8–9; 1 Peter 3:19–20; Revelation 20:1–2)
 6. What did the Holy Spirit highlight to you in Revelation 1 through the reading or the teaching?



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