

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation: 1:7-17a | Session 3 | The Announcement of Christ's Coming

We are studying the book of Revelation from a literal perspective. Our goal is to try and follow sound principles of interpretation and not make things up. One generally accepted rule to follow when studying any passage in the Bible, not only Revelation, is called

The Golden Rule of Interpretation. It states;

*"...Take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic (self-evident) and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."*¹

As difficult as it might be, we also want to avoid interpreting the Bible based only on what we have already been taught but not studied on our own. We may have received correct teaching, and we may find confirmation of that teaching, but approaching each chapter, verse, and word with a fresh, unbiased perspective will help alleviate some of the confusion we may have from so much incorrect teaching that, undoubtedly, we have all had at some time.

In our study through Revelation, we are making various assumptions from the outset (An assumption is a hypothesis that can be tested and, if found to be incorrect, can be changed). A primary assumption we are making from the outset of the study is that the **Body of Christ** (Or the Church today that we are a part of in the dispensation of grace) is not seen in The Revelation, nor is the author John speaking to *us* or about *us* (*See sessions one and two for more on this*).

The assumption I am making through this study is that John is writing to Israel, particularly seven Jewish assemblies that will read this book to gain hope during the Time of Jacob's Trouble or the future *Day of the Lord*². Another assumption is that since the number seven is the number of spiritual *perfection*, these seven assemblies may represent all of Israel living during *the seven-year Tribulation*³.

The Announcement of His Coming.

Verse 7—

John writes the word **behold** 25 times in his book (Greek: *idou*. Also translated as "lo" five times). It is an attention grabber that means "Look!" and is directed here to the seven assemblies (vs. 4) discussed briefly in Session 2. John gives the seven churches an exclamatory warning to *look* at what's coming: **Behold, he cometh with clouds**. This is an Old Testament

Dr. David L. Cooper, the late founder and director of the Biblical Research Society.¹

² See last session on The Day of the Lord and The Time of Jacob's Trouble = The Tribulation.

³ *ibid*.

reference to Messiah, who is coming in glory.⁴ Likewise, His ascension, Jesus Christ, was *taken up in a cloud (Acts 1:9)*. In Acts 1:11, two men in white apparel told the apostles, “*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*”

Daniel saw a vision of the Son of man *coming in the clouds* (Daniel 7:13,14). Jesus foretold of His coming in the clouds with great power and great glory in Matthew 24:30 (see also Matthew 26:64 and Mark 14:62). Everyone, **every eye shall see him⁵, and they also which pierced him**, that is the *house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem* (Zechariah 12:10) **and all the kindreds of the earth** (earth in context here is the Land, not the whole earth). Kindreds refer to those *of the twelve tribes⁶* of Israel; all the Jews of the land will **wail**.

This foreshadowing of the appearance of Messiah varies greatly from His first coming when the *angel of the Lord said to the shepherds, Behold (idou, “Look!”), I bring you good tidings of great joy!* In the second coming, those who “look” will **wail**, grieve, or beat their breasts **because of Him** and will **wail** with great repentance. For the Messiah to return, repentance is necessary on Israel’s part (Luke 13:35). Until the Lord returns, the *house of Israel will be left desolate* they will have no nation with a king from the line of Judah to rule over them. They will exist only in the *Times of the Gentiles*.

This expression *Times of the Gentiles*, is not found in the Old Testament but is a New Testament phrase only used once by the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 21:24). It refers to the period when Jerusalem will be controlled (Literally, trodden down; trample or crush with feet). The Times of the Gentiles began with the Babylonian Captivity by Nebuchadnezzar and when the “glory of the Lord” departed from Jerusalem. The prophet Ezekiel describes the Lord’s departure from the city in B.C. 594 (Ezekiel 11:22,23). The dominion that once was Israel’s because the throne of God was in their midst has been taken away and transferred to the Gentiles, even to this day. God has given over His glory to the glory of man (Jeremiah 27:5-9). God’s glory will not be seen again until the Lord Jesus Christ returns in the glory of his power (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 15:8). The apostle Paul wrote, *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.* Romans 11:25

In the book of Acts, when Peter preached about the future Kingdom to the Jews in Jerusalem, they, too, were *pricked in their heart (Acts 2:37)* at what they had done to their Messiah. They lamented to Peter, “*What shall we do*” to be forgiven for killing our Messiah and for Him to

⁴ This is not the rapture of the church. In the rapture believers are snatched away or, *caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Things that are similar are not the same.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The first time this Greek word is used in the N.T. is in Matthew 19:28, “judging the twelve tribes (*phule*) of Israel. Always means Jews of the Land.

return to set up His kingdom? Peter replied, “*Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.*” (Acts 2:38).

The nation of Israel did not repent. Consequently, God took the offer of the Kingdom off the table and, through a revelation given to the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:2,3), ushered in the dispensation of grace, where now there is no Jew or Gentile; there is one body, the Church (Ephesians 3:6). This new dispensation invites every man, woman, boy, or girl to be Justified (declared righteous) by faith alone and not of repentance, baptism, or works as Peter preached.

In the Tribulation, the dispensation of salvation by grace through faith will be no more. The Church (Body of Christ) will have been caught up with the Lord and in heaven will walk by sight, not *faith* (See 2 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 13:12).

The Rapture of the Church will be a time of comfort, knowing we will always be with the Lord; as Paul wrote, ***comfort one another with these words*** (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

The Alpha and Omega Described.

Verse 8—

The LORD speaks now for the first time in Revelation, and John records it, **I am Alpha and Omega, ⁷the *beginning and the ending.** This Hebrew expression means *the whole of anything from the beginning to the end.* *Beginning = *arche*, ending = *telos*

Although in *red* letters, the phrase **Alpha and Omega** (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) refers here to God the Father. God the Father is announcing the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 7). We should question *red letters* whenever they are used, as in this case, since they indicate Jesus is speaking, but here it is God the Father, not Jesus.⁸ Red letters are ALWAYS an editor’s decision.

The **Lord...Almighty** is used nine times in Revelation. **Almighty** is translated from the Greek word *pantokrator*, which means *having dominion over all*. The King and the Judge, **which is, and which was, and which is to come,**⁹ is again sending His Son to take back His dominion on earth, and all the oppressors of Israel in the Times of the Gentiles will be judged and destroyed (Revelation 19:5).

John, the Companion in Tribulation.

Verse 9—

⁷ All modern versions omit, “The beginning and the ending.”

⁸ The ESV, correctly, does not put this verse in red letters.

⁹ A paraphrase of the name of God as revealed in Exodus 3:14; I Am That I Am. This probably refers to God’s self-existence.

John identifies himself to the seven assemblies, **I John, who also am your brother**, that is, he is a fellow Jew **and a companion in tribulation**. It is doubtful he means The Tribulation since the Greek word John uses here, *thlipsis*, used nine times in the N.T., never refers to the Seven Year Tribulation. It is likely *general tribulation* or suffering he is referring to. John is also their **companion in the kingdom**, God's Kingdom, which is in the future. The **patience of Jesus Christ**, meaning, His return will occur in His timing.

[1, John] **Was in the isle that is called Patmos**, we would say "on" the island. Patmos is located southwest of Ephesus on the Aegean Sea. **For the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ**. It is this phrase that has created an entire backstory for John. The usual thought is that John was banished to Patmos for preaching the word of God. But was he?

The passage does not specifically say, and it could be taken one of two ways.

1) He was on the island for preaching the word of God and for preaching the testimony of Jesus and was thus persecuted for his faith. This is the way most interpret his statement.

2) John was on the island because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ that he **bare record of**. In other words, John might have been on the island, not as a banished prisoner, but as God's man to receive this prophecy of *the word of God, of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all the things he saw*. Could God have placed him on the island to receive the prophecy?

This is what God has often done; He sent Abraham to the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1); He sent Moses to Egypt (Ex. 3:10); He sent Jonah to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-2); He sent Saul/Paul to Arabia (Gal. 1:17,18). Why should He not send John to Patmos?

My point in this discussion is to encourage us not to make things up that are not specified in Scripture. Does it matter? Regardless of how John arrived on Patmos, slave or free, he is on Patmos to receive The Revelation.

The Seven Assemblies Named.

Verse 10—

I was in [the] Spirit. There is no article "the"; therefore, *I was in spirit*. *KJV capitalizes Spirit*, which is a translator's choice. In Greek, there is no article "the"; John was **in spirit**. That is, by the power of the spirit. This could be that John, while physically on Patmos, was transported spiritually (in spirit) to see the Revelation about to unfold, and if so, it shouldn't come as a surprise; the prophet Ezekiel also saw *visions of God* for his prophecy (Ezekiel 1:1; 8:3; 40:2) and, like John, Ezekiel recorded what he saw **On the Lord's Day**. Not Sunday as is so often supposed.

In the New Testament, Sunday is never called *The Lord's Day*. Sunday is referred to as, *The first day of the week*. Over the years, the idea that this refers to Sunday as the Lord's Day was made

up. There is no evidence of the *first day of the week* ever being called *the Lord's Day*. We saw in our last session an extensive list of Old Testament and New Testament names for the Tribulation. This is one of them; John was in spirit, on the Day of the Lord. He is seeing and recording *That Day* (the Tribulation and the subsequent return of Jesus Christ), as we will see clearly throughout our study.

And heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. It was not a trumpet but a voice with the strength of a trumpet. A trumpet is used to sound forth an alarm, even a call to battle or war. The prophet Joel (2:1) wrote: *"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: For the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand."* The LORD proclaimed by the prophet Amos (3:6), *"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?"* The prophet Zephaniah describes the Lord's Day with the trumpet call *"The day of the trumpet and alarm."* (Zephaniah 1:14-16). The apostle Paul describes the trumpet sound as *preparing one for battle* (1 Corinthians 14:8).

Verse 11—

The *trumpet voice* speaks, **Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.** (See verse 8). Modern translations omit this phrase. The reason for the omission is due to the difference between the two primary Greek texts used in translating the New Testament, i.e., the *Textus Receptus* vs. the *Critical Text*. I always default to the Textus Receptus and believe modern translations are from a corrupted text, not a better one.

Notice Jesus expands what He means by saying **the first and the last.**¹⁰ This is a title God used specifically in connection with Israel: Isaiah 41:4; 43:10; 44:6; 48:10. The phrase **first and the last** seems to refer to the Son the Redeemer: Rev. 1:11; 2:8; probably Isaiah 48:11-12.

What thou seest, write in a book; John is to write *all that he sees* in one book, not several books. **Send it unto the seven churches (ekklesia) which are in Asia;** a list of the seven assemblies follows. What are we to make of these seven assemblies?

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum (an excellent Jewish Bible scholar) considers these seven assemblies to be representative of various periods, beginning with the apostolic age (The assembly of Ephesus) up to what he calls "The Church of the Apostasy" (The assembly of Laodicea) which he says, began in "The early 1900s and continues to the present day."¹¹

ARE THE SEVEN CHURCHES SYMBOLIC?

¹⁰ Also, in Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13. See also Rev. 21:6

¹¹ Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*. Rev. ed. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003. Print.

Our approach to Revelation is to take everything in its literal meaning unless shown otherwise. If we take them symbolically, then it would seem that we have to take all other locations mentioned in the book—even Patmos and later Babylon the same. Can we just pick and choose?

I would rather take them to be actual assemblies of Jews that existed in John's Day who would read them as prophecy, keep them in mind, and also preserve them for a time in the future Tribulation, or The Lord's Day after the Body of Christ has been raptured when they will need the instruction and receive a blessing for reading and hearing the book.

Just as we have Paul's Epistles (letters) today to help us, in the body of Christ, live the Christian life, so too, in the Tribulation, Jewish readers will have this letter of Revelation from John with individual epistles addressed to the seven churches that are representative of all Israel to instruct them during the Great Tribulation. I think this approach keeps our interpretation consistent throughout the book (see notes on session 1).

The Son of Man Revealed.

Verse 12-15—

I turned to see the voice (Since you can't see a voice. Literally, "I turned to see him, the Alpha and Omega"). When he turned...**I saw seven golden candlesticks**. The use of candlesticks is very Jewish. John saw candlesticks, and while they symbolize something, which we will see in verse 20, they are also real candlesticks in heaven.

Candlesticks are associated with the Jewish Tabernacle God instructed Moses to build in the desert. Everything in the Tabernacle: each implement, tool, vessel, lampstand, altar...everything in the Tabernacle was a pattern by God and a "shadow of heavenly things" (Exodus 25:8,9; Hebrews 8:5).

Here, the seven **candlesticks** point us to the lampstand in the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:31ff). In the Tabernacle, there was One candlestick (at the construction of the Tabernacle, Israel was one nation); in Revelation, there are seven (although Israel is called a nation, they are not completely in the Land promised to Abraham, and still scattered, and will be until the Day of the Lord and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ).

In the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man. "Son" is capitalized, showing the translator's thinking that it refers to Christ, but the Greek word is typical for "son," a human being. However, in context, we will get a description of this Son of Man who seems anything but a typical human son of man. We will see this is the risen Christ in glory (vs. 18).

The purpose of the book of Revelation, as outlined in the name itself, is to reveal who Jesus Christ is. John now sees a vision of Christ in all of His glory.¹²

He was **clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps (chest) with a golden girdle (belt). Head and hair white like wool, as white as snow. Eyes as a flame of fire; feet like fine brass...His voice as the sound of many waters.**

Verse 16,17a—

The Son of Man **had in his right hand seven stars** (identified in verse 20 in our next session). **Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.** What is the reason for the sword? To bring an end to the wickedness of the earth! (Isaiah 11:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:15,21). He is coming back to Judge.

The appearance of His face, **His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength...** (an indication of His glory)

Seeing this vision, John **fell at His feet as dead...**

And that is where we will leave John until next week.

¹² In our book of Daniel study, we will see this almost identical description of the Son of Man in a vision of Daniel. We will compare the two when we reach that juncture in Daniel 10.