

Revelation - Study 1

Introduction to the “Revelation of Jesus Christ”

Teacher Guide

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I. INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

A. Author (1:1,2,4,9)

1. John identifies himself as the presiding bishop (or Apostle) of the **EPHESUS** region.
 - a. According to tradition he was boiled in oil, survived, and imprisoned on Patmos.
 - b. John stood up for Jesus and the testimony that threatens the world system.

2. John shared with his readers the **TRIBULATION** and the **KINGDOM**.
 - a. **θλίψις**, *thlipsis*, a pressing, **PRESSURE**; metaphorically, oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, **TROUBLE**.
 - (1) Comp. John 16:33; Matt. 24:21, 29
 - (a) **θλίψις μεγάλη**, *thlipsis megale*, “big trouble, great tribulation.”
 - b. **βασιλεία**, *basileia*, royal power, kingship, **DOMINION**, rule.
 - (1) The royal power of Jesus as the triumphant Messiah.
 - (2) The royal power and dignity conferred on Christians in the Messiah’s kingdom.
 - c. “These are the two main concerns of the book: the **TRIBULATIONS** which the church was to experience and the coming of the **KINGDOM**.” (George Eldon Ladd)

3. The historical context of Revelation is that of the church advancing, but experiencing persecution.
 - a. “John, tell the church that although the entry of my kingdom will not be without warfare—tell them that I am going to win; that triumph is certain!”

B. The Blessing (1:3)

1. **μακάριος**, *makarios*, “refers overwhelmingly to the distinctive religious joy which accrues to man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God.” (Gerhard Kittel)

C. The Salutation

1. The all encompassing, eternal nature of God (1:4, also 11 and 17)
 - a. God is **UNAFFECTED** by the flow of human history.
 - (1) Whatever it looks like to us, God has never changed, and things will turn out the way he said they would.
 - b. The “seven spirits” represent the **COMPLETE** (seven-fold) nature of the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) Isaiah 11:1-2 unlocks the mystery of the “seven spirits.”

2. Three revelations of Jesus (1:5a)
 - a. **FAITHFUL** witness.
 - (1) John 1:18—“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.”
 - b. **FIRSTBORN** from the dead (πρωτότοκος τῶν νέκρῶν)
 - (1) πρωτότοκος, *prototokos*, birthright, pertaining to the inheritance rights of the firstborn.
 - (a) “Refers not merely to priority in time but more particularly to the rank of firstborn which accrues to Jesus with His resurrection.” (Kittel)
 - c. **FOREMOST** (ἀρχων, *archon*, ruler) of the kings on earth.
 - (1) βασιλεύς, *basileus*, realm of authority.

3. Three revelations of the redeemed (1:5b-6)
 - a. The **LOVED**—all mankind (John 3:16).
 - b. The **WASHED**—those who receive his love.
 - (1) ἁμαρτία, *hamartia*, to **MISS** the **MARK**.
 - c. The **QUALIFIED**.
 - (1) καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ (“and he made us kingdom, priests to God”)
 - (2) The authority Jesus has given us as **KINGS** is based on our worshipfulness as **PRIESTS**.

II. THE REVELATION OF CHRIST'S PERSON, AUTHORITY, AND PRESENCE

A. The Vision of the Son of Man

1. The Lord's Day (1:10)
 - a. ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ ("I became in the spirit in the Lordly (or Lordy) day")
 - (1) κυριακῇ, is an adjective.
 - b. Domitian demanded universal worship of himself, on pain of death.
 - (1) Once a year incense had to be thrown on an altar fire before a bust of Domitian with an acclamation: "Caesar is Lord."
 - (2) The appointed day on which this had to be done was designated τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ ("the Lordy day").
 - c. For those who refused to say anything but "Jesus is Lord," it would be a matter of life and death.
 - (1) The church was facing its fiercest test so far: How many would remain loyal under such pressure?
 - d. Revelation is a "manual for MARTYRDOM."
2. "A loud voice like a trumpet."
 - a. Exodus 19—a sound *like that of a trumpet* that called the Israelites into the presence of God to hear the words of their covenant God speaking to them.
 - (1) In the New Testament unveiling of the New Covenant that John is arrested by a voice that sounds *like a trumpet* calling him.
 - b. This is a call to the whole covenant people of the New Testament.
3. Ten revelations of Christ
 - a. Presence: 1:12,13a,20; Matthew 18:20; 28:20; John 14:18.
 - b. Position: 1:13
 - c. Probity: 1:13; Ephesians 6:14.
 - d. Prudence: 1:14; Daniel 7:9; 1 Corinthians 1:30.
 - e. Perception: 1:14.
 - f. Predominance: 1:15; Ephesians 1:21-23.

- g. Prevailing: 1:15, 10
 - h. Possession: 1:16; 20; 2:1; Matthew 16:18 (comp. Rev. 2-3).
 - i. Penetration: 1:16; Hebrews 4:22; Isaiah 55:11.
 - j. Power: 1:16; Malachi 4:2.
4. John's response (1:17)
- a. He fell at Jesus' feet as one dead.
 - b. There is a great difference between the Jesus who walked among us in the flesh and the Jesus who is Ascended King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
 - (1) When John was with the Jesus who walked with us in the flesh, he laid his head on His shoulder and whispered in His ear—such intimacy!
 - (2) After He was ascended, *he fell at His feet as dead*, for there he saw the Fullness of Deity expressed in glorified manhood!
5. Jesus as the key to **HISTORY**
- a. Jesus describes Himself: ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος (“I am the First and I am the Last”).
 - b. The “I Am” sayings of Jesus
 - (1) Ἐγὼ εἰμι (*ego eimi*), “I Am.”
 - (a) Seven passages in the Fourth Gospel in which “I Am” has a predicate.
 - i) The Bread of Life
 - ii) The Light of the World
 - iii) The Good Shepherd...etc
 - (2) “Because the symbols resonate so fully to human need, the I-am...sayings have long captured the imagination of readers, who often have found, or seek to find, in Jesus the answer to their deepest needs and most profound questions.” (Dwight M. Smith)
 - c. The eighth Johannine “I Am” saying with a predicate.
 - (1) πρῶτος, *protos*, first in **TIME** and **PLACE**; first in rank, influence, and honor.

- (2) ἔσχατος, *eschatos*, last in time or in place; last in a temporal succession; the uttermost part, the END.
- (a) *I am before all history!*
- i) When you have added up all the 'Firsts' of earth, then put Me first.
 - ii) *I am the First before all firsts!*
 - iii) All beginnings are because He is the Unbeginning Beginning!
 - iv) All 'first' things on earth are because He is the Unbegun First!
- (b) *I am the Last.*
- i) Therefore, everything of the future finds its consummation in Him.
- (3) I AM is UNBEGINNING and UNENDING
- (a) All began because He is the First, and the only meaning and purpose of all that *is*, is to find its consummation in Jesus Christ.
- d. There is no meaning to history unless Jesus Christ is the key.

B. The Structure of Revelation (1:19)

1. What you have seen (1)
2. What is now (2-3)
 - a. Present: Things must be put right now.
3. What will take place later (4-22)
 - a. Future
 - (1) *Bad news*: things will get much worse before they get better (4-18)
 - (2) *Good news*: things will get much better after they get worse (19-22).