

Blessed is he who reads  
and those who hear the  
words of this prophecy,  
and keep those things  
which are written in it; for  
the time is near.  
Rev. 1:3

# Verse by Verse Through the Book of Revelation

Seminar by Ellie Green

Created in  
Microsoft Publisher

## Will history end?

This is the theme of the last book in the New Testament. Originally known as the Apocalypse, which means the “unveiling” of things known only to God.

The book pulls the curtain back to reveal the end of the world.

## Author and Setting

Writing in the first person singular, the author of Revelation identifies himself several times as John, a brother and companion of his readers. (Rev. 1:4, 9; 21:2; 22:8).

Early church tradition generally supports the view that this John was the apostle of Jesus and the writer of John’s gospel.

During the reign of the roman emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96), John was exiled for a time on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. It was here that he received the vision recorded in Rev. 1:9.



An important consideration for anyone who reads the book of Revelation is that it is written in a style known as **apocalyptic**.

Apocalyptic literature seeks to reveal divine mysteries that would otherwise remain hidden. Yet in conveying its message, it speaks in figurative rather than literal terms.

If the book is supposed to unveil hidden realities, how is it that it remains difficult to understand?

It is probably due to the author’s attempt to convey heavenly realities in earthly terms.

## Special points of interest

- John was the son of Zebedee
- John was the brother of James
- John was part of Jesus’ inner circle of friends
- James and John’s mother wanted them first in Jesus’ kingdom

## Metaphors, Similes and Symbols

All these are used to express what John has seen, heard and experienced. But these are only approximations; the realities are beyond human words to express.

How then, should we interpret this book? First,

as real and not fantasy. We can trust that Jesus appeared to John just as the writer says. (1:1) Second, we cannot miss the overall outcome in which God triumphs over the

adversary—Satan! History comes to its fulfillment in Christ. His Kingdom is victorious. His eternal reign is established and His people enter a joyful eternity worshipping and working for Him.

## Revelation consists of 4 major divisions

- 1) The seven churches, chs. 1-3
- 2) The seven seals, chs. 4 to 8:1
- 3) The seven trumpets, chs. 8:2 to 11
- 4) The closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan that originated in heaven and will finally end at the second coming of Jesus and the end of this world. Chs. 12-22.

## About the first intended

It is essential to discover the intent and purpose of the inspired writer and the meaning the book conveyed to the readers to whom it was originally addressed. Otherwise, the interpretation of its figures, and thus its message, will just reflect personal opinion.

The first intended readers were Greek-speaking Christians who, whether Jew or Gentile, considered the writings of the Old Testament canon to be the inspired Word of God and who would be disposed to interpret the new revelation in terms of the old..

## In the Revelation all books of the Bible meet and end

The Revelation contains citations from, or allusions to, 28 of the 39 books of the Old Testament. According to one authority there are 505 such citations and allusions, some 325 of which are to the prophetic books of the Old Testament—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel in particular. Of the minor prophets references to Zechariah, Joel, Amos, and Hosea are most common.

A clear understanding of these citations and allusions in their historical setting in the

Old Testament is the first step toward understanding the passages where they occur in the Revelation.

Those familiar with contemporary Roman history will also observe that John's language is often descriptive of the Roman Empire and of the experiences of the church

under its sway. Accordingly, a study of Roman history of the period clarifies some otherwise cryptic passages. .

The amazing thing about the book is that while the messages were written for John's day they are also pertinent to and focus on our day and the closing scenes of earth's history. Many prophecies have both an immediate and future fulfillment.

**I am Alpha and Omega,  
the Beginning and the  
End.  
Revelation 1:8**

## Can the prophecies of Revelation really be understood?

For nearly two thousand years people have been reading them, and yet some have been left shaking their heads, saying, "These prophecies are too strange, too bizarre. No one can possibly understand these things."

Other individuals have come along, focused on just a few verses and then let their imaginations run wild

with self-styled interpretations which miss the Scriptures' intended meaning.

Serious students of the Bible should prayerfully investigate every possible interpretation of the prophecies to ascertain



**Would God give information too hard to grasp?**

their validity in the light of the Scriptures' own testimony.

Remember a blessing is pronounced on those who read!

---

## REVELATION CHAPTER ONE

---

1. **The Revelation** (Greek: Apokalupsis)\_ means an unveiling. The earliest Greek manuscripts entitle this book “The Apocalypse of John.” Apocalypse means “revelation.”

**Of Jesus Christ** The book primarily reveals Jesus in His heavenly work after His ascension. The Gospels record Jesus’ ministry on earth; The Book of Revelation reveals His work in the plan of redemption.

**Which God gave unto him** Since the entrance of sin all communication between heaven and earth has been through Christ.

**To show unto his Servants** (Greek: douloi) meaning slaves. Note: early Christians often called themselves “slaves” to Jesus Christ.

**Which must shortly come to pass;** The concept of the imminence of the return of Jesus is both explicit and implicit throughout the book

**He sent and signified it** (Greek: semaino) means to indicate, to announce, to explain.

**By his angel** (Greek: aggelos) means “messenger.”

**Unto his servant John** The apostle John. John identifies himself by name Revelation 1:4.

2. **Who bare record** (Greek: martureo [past tense]) means to testify, to witness. John declares himself a witness, bearing testimony of all that God had revealed to him

**Of the word** (Greek: logos) means utterance, message, oracle, word

**Of God** That is of God or spoken by God

**And of the testimony of Jesus Christ** This refers to the book of Revelation being a message either from Jesus or about Jesus and context favors the former

**And of all things that he saw** Words denoting visual communication and perception occur 73 times in Revelation and words denoting audio communication and perception, 38 times. The Revelation is a factual, eye and ear witness report of what John saw and heard while in vision

---

3. **Blessed is he** (Greek: happy) Some believe that this might be an allusion to Luke 11:28.

**That readeth** A reference to the one appointed by the ancient church to read the sacred scrolls in public. John anticipates the public reading of the epistle he now addresses to the seven churches which are in Asia.

**and they that hear** That is, the members of each church. Note that there is but one reader in each church while there are many who hear what is read.

**the words** Textual evidence may be cited for reading simple “the word.” This would refer to the message of the book as a whole rather than to the individual “words” in which the message was to find expression.

**of this prophecy** Textual evidence favors the reading “the prophecy.” Some suggest that John here specifically claims equality for the Revelation with the prophetic books of the Old Testament which were read in the synagogue each Sabbath.

**and keep those things** The form of the Greek verb implies the habitual keeping or observance of the admonitions of this book.

**which are written therein** Literally “have been written”

**for the time is at hand** (Greek: kairos) Means a time designated in advance for some particular event.

4. **John** John, the apostle. Revelation is the only book where John identifies himself by name.

**To the seven churches** From this point to the close of chapter 3, Revelation is in the form of a series of ancient letters to the seven churches in Asia.

**Which are in Asia.** The Roman province of Asia was 300 miles wide and 260 miles long. Today this area is known as Turkey. Paul spent many months in this area and wrote letters to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. Paul also wrote to Timothy while Timothy was the pastor in Ephesus.

**Grace to you and peace** (See Romans 1:7 and 2 Cor. 1:2) It has been suggested that this greeting came about from a combination of the ordinary Greek salutation (chairein) “greeting” and the Hebrew greeting shalom (eirene) “peace”

**From him who is** (Greek: ho on “the being One”) An expression taken from Ex. 3:14 where it is used to translate the divine name I AM. This expression implies the eternal, timeless self-existence of God.

**And who was** (Psalm s 90:2) God has existed from all eternity.

**And who is to come** Some think this refers to the Second Coming but that does not accord with the context. The context seems to mean “now exists, has always existed and will always exist.”

**and from the seven spirits** Elsewhere in the book these seven Spirits are portrayed as seven lamps of fire (ch. 4:5) and the seven eyes of the Lamb (ch. 5:6). The association here of the “seven spirits” with the Father and with Christ implies that they represent the Holy Spirit.



Patmos: A small rocky island in the Aegean Sea off the southwest coast of Asia Minor. Site of John’s exile under Domitian (A.D. 81-96) and the place where he wrote the book of Revelation. Because of its barren nature, Patmos was used by the Romans to banish criminals.

**Who are before his throne** That is, before the throne of “him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” This position perhaps implies readiness for instant service. (ch. 4:2-5)

5. **And from Jesus Christ** The other members of the Godhead have already been mentioned.

**The faithful witness** Christ is the faithful witness in that He is the perfect representative of God’s character, mind, and will to mankind. He life on earth testified to the Father’s holiness and love.

**The firstborn from the dead** (Greek prototokos) “first born” Though Jesus was not the first to rise from the dead, His power to lay down His life and to take it up again (John 10:18) sets Him apart from all other men ever to come forth from the grave and characterizes Him as the source of all life!

**And the ruler over the kings of the earth.** Christ triumphed over sin and won back the lost heritage of Adam. (Col. 2:15; Rev. 11:15)

**To Him who loved us** Textual evidence favors the reading “that loves us”

**And washed us from our sins** Textual evidence favors “loosed” To be loosed is to be set free!

**In His own blood** By Christ’s death on the cross.

6. **And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father** Christ has called His church a kingdom and its individual members priests. Compare the Royal Priesthood of Peter 2:9) Because every Christian is a priest, he may approach God on his own behalf without the mediation of another human being, and on the behalf of others! (Read Hebrews 4:15, 16)

Note: This is why intercessory prayer is so very important! You and I are priests in the kingdom of God! Awesome!

**To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen** The context is *all* power, *all* glory. *Dominion* acknowledges Him as the rightful ruler of the universe. *Forever and ever* literally means “into the ages of the ages.” With this, John concludes his salutation.

7. **Behold He is coming** The Second Coming of Jesus is the goal toward which all else moves forward. Significantly, he uses the present tense, thereby stressing the certainty of the event.

**with clouds** Bible scholars believe that the “cloud” consists of billions of angels. (See Matt. 24:30; 26:64; and Act. 1:11) Desire of Ages page 831 says that the cloud at Jesus’ ascension into heaven after His death was an angelic host.

**And every eye shall see Him** This dispels the myth of the ‘Secret Rapture’ in spite of the popular novels. The word “rapture” means to be taken up. There will be a rapture, but it won’t be secret—according to my Bible!

**Even they who pierced Him.** (Greek *ekkenteo*)—the same word John uses in his gospel John 19:37) John, alone, records the incident of the piercing of the side of Jesus. This point of similarity between the two books is indirect evidence that the Revelation came from the same hand as the Gospel of John.

This verse clearly states that those responsible for the death of Christ will be raised from the dead to witness His coming (Dan. 12:2 ; Matt. 26:64) Jesus warned the Jewish leaders of His coming.

**And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him** “Wail” Literally “cut them selves” in reference to the ancient custom of gashing or smiting one’s own body as a sign of grief. Here it reflects the remorse of the ungodly (See Jer. 8:20)

8. **I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end says the Lord** The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The phrase means complete or comprehensive.

**Who is and who was and who is to come** Repeats the thoughts in verse 4.

**The almighty** (Greek *pantokrator*) “Ruler of All” The title recurs frequently in Revelation (ch. 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6) This title stresses the omnipotence of God. Omnipotence

9. **I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation** Apparently John was not alone in suffering persecution at this time

**And kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ** Literally “remaining under” The word here implies the exercise of self control to endure a difficult situation when, by a surrender of faith, release might be obtained from the pressure of persecution. In Christ, Christians have the strength to “remain under” in Jesus!

**Was on the island that is called Patmos** This island is 50 miles southwest of Ephesus in the Aegean Sea. It is 10 miles long and 6 miles wide at its widest point. It was a penal colony—which might explain John’s statement about being a “companion in tribulation.” Many Bible scholars believe that John was condemned to the labor of the quarries.

**For** (because of) **the word of God and for** (because of) **the testimony of Jesus** This refers to John’s inspired witness to the gospel for more than half a century. This had been the sole motivating purpose of John’s life. In the bitter days of persecution under Domitian, John’s fearless testimonies became the reason for banishment to the Island of Patmos.

10. **I was in the Spirit** Literally “in spirit” meaning he became oblivious to the things of earth and aware only of the impressions conveyed to him by the Holy Spirit.

**On the Lord’s Day** (Greek *kuriake hemera*) Various attempts have been made to explain this expression which appears only here in Scripture.

The Roman Emperors declared themselves “God” often called everything they owned “lord” (The *Lord’s Treasury* and the *Lord’s Service*,) using the term *kuriake*. When Emperor Constantine changed the Sabbath in 321 AD from Saturday to Sunday it was called the Lord’s Day in honor of Emperor Constantine—not Jesus Christ.

The term “Lord” for the emperors was not in use during John’s time. So if we look at later manuscripts we might be confused about this expression and think that John was calling Sunday “the Lord’s day.”

However, if we interpret “the Lord’s day” in accordance with evidence prior to 321 BC and contemporary with John’s time, it appears that John means the seventh day Sabbath. John was, after all, a Jew.

**And I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet** Comparison with a trumpet indicates the intensity of the voice

11. **Saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,”** In view of vs 17, 18 it is clear that in the present instance these titles apply specifically to Christ.

**What you see** Visual communication and perception dominate the Revelation. John saw visions, panoramic scenes in symbol, which he portrays as fully and accurately as finite human language can.

**Write in a book** (Greek biblion) “a scroll,” the most common type of book in John’s day.

**and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.** This begins the series of sevens in Revelation: Seven Spirits (4) , Seven Candlesticks (12), Seven Stars(16) , Seven Lamps of Fire (4:5), Seven Seals (5:1), Seven Horns and Seven Eyes of the Lamb (5:6), Seven Angels and Seven Trumpets (8:2), Seven Thunders (10:4), Dragon with Sevenheads and Seven crowns (12:3), Beast with Seven Heads (13:1), Seven Angels having Seven Vials containing Seven last plagues (15:1,7), the beast with Seven Heads which are also said to be Seven Mountains and Seven Kings (17:3, 9, 10).

This repeated use of the number seven with so many different symbols implies that it, too, is to be understood in a symbolic sense. Throughout scripture then number seven, when used symbolically is generally understood to indicate completeness, perfection.

There were more than seven churches in Asia (Colossae and Hierapolis Col. 1:2; 4:13) It is reasonable to conclude that the Lord chose the seven churches here named because they were typical of the condition of the church as a whole—both in apostolic times and through out the Christian Era.

John’s messages to the churches had implications for his day but they also have universal implications for the Christian church down through the ages to the end of the world.

12. **And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;** (Greek luchnia meaning lampstands) The candle in its familiar modern form was not in general use in ancient times. Lamps were in the form of a shallow bowl into which oil was poured and a wick inserted. (In verse 20 these lampstands are said to represent the seven churches. The fact that they are of gold indicates how precious the church is in the sight of God.
13. **And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man** The “Son of Man” is used of Christ more than 80 times in the New Testament. We find here that John beholds Christ in vision for the first time. Who is this glorious being? He has the form, not of an angel, but of a man. He is in human form, with dazzling brightness! Christ took the form of man for all eternity! He will identify with us forever!

**Note:**

Christ, most likely, had the form of an angel prior to coming to earth and being born as a baby. Only the names of three angels are mentioned in scripture: Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer. Three scriptures refer to the Archangel Michael: Daniel 10:31; Daniel 12:1 and Jude 9. No doubt this is also the same angel referred to as the *Angel of the Lord* in Genesis 16:7 as well as in many other books and verses of the bible. We believe that this angel was Jesus Christ in angel form. The only member of the Godhead (Trinity) who manifests Himself is the second person: God the Son.

The fact that Christ was in the form of an angel in heaven caused jealousy in Lucifer. Instead of seeing Jesus as a member of the Trinity, he perceived him as one of “us” (angels) and therefore coveted His power and authority and creative ability. Lucifer thought that God the Father unfairly preferred Jesus to him—refusing to acknowledge that Jesus was not just another created angel, but was, in fact, the **creator** of all the angels, including Lucifer.



**Clothed with a garment down to the foot** A long garment was a signal of dignity

**Girt about the paps with a golden girdle** The “paps” is the chest.

14. **His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;** It sounds like John is grasping for words to give an accurate description of what he sees. He says ‘wool’ and then adds ‘snow’ to be even more descriptive. Eyes like the flame of fire indicates the brightness and intensity of His gaze
  15. **And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;** (Greek chalkolibanos, a substance of uncertain identification) It was probably some metal like gold, burnished and radiant. The “brass” of Bible times was actually bronze (see Ex. 25:3). The feet looked like brass that had been subjected to intense heat.
- And his voice as the sound of many waters** In John’s day the roar of the ocean and the crash of thunder were among the loudest and deepest sounds known to man. Their depth and majesty were unsurpassed as symbols for the voice of God.
16. **And he had in his right hand seven stars:** This symbol represents the angels or messengers sent to the seven churches

**And out of his mouth went** “went” The form of the verb in Greek implies continuous action—the power of Christ is constantly at work.

**A sharp two edged sword:** (Greek rhomphaia distomos literally meaning a two mouthed sword. The rhomphaia was a large, heavy, two handed sword. It is the same word used in Genesis for the “sword” God placed at the entrance to Eden (Gen. 3:24) and for the sword of Goliath (1 Sam 17:51). It should be understood here as an instrument of divine punishment and as symbolic of Christ’s authority to judge, and especially of His power to execute judgment. *Today people would rather focus on God’s love and ignore His judgment—but, we are told that God will judge the world and everyone in it.*

**And his countenance** face

**Was as the sun shining in his strength.** The sun was the most brilliant light known to John.

17. **And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead.** The first effect upon those who had a vision of a divine being was to lose all physical strength. (see Eze. 1:28; Dan. 8:17; Acts 9:4; Isa. 1:5) The person so honored was completely overcome.

**And he laid his right hand on me, saying unto me, Fear not;** Following the loss of natural strength, a prophet was supernaturally strengthened, usually by a touch of the hand (see Eze, 2:1,2; Dan. 8:18; Isa. 6:6,7) The Heavenly visitor usually says, “Don’t be afraid!”

**I am the first and the last.** The expression used here is apparently quoted from Isaiah 44:6 and is a direct translation of the Hebrew text and not a quotation from verse 8.

18. **I am he that liveth,** (Greek ho zon “the living one”) The form of the verb here implies continuous, living, abiding life.

**And was dead;** Literally “became dead” a reference to the crucifixion. Here is a clear indication that the one who appeared to John in vision was Jesus Christ.

**And, behold, I am alive for evermore,** (Greek zon eimi meaning “I am living”) In other words Jesus has continuing life, life that does not end, life that is self-perpetuating. This is our assurance of eternal life.

**Amen.** This word was not in the original manuscripts but was added later.

**And have the keys** Keys are a symbol of power and jurisdiction.

**Of hell and of death.** (Greek hades “the abode of the dead” or “the grave”) The word “hell” is not in any ancient manuscripts. It is an English word that was added in the 1500’s when the Bible was translated into English, primarily from the Latin Vulgate.

19. **Write the things which thou hast seen** That is, in the vision so far...

**And the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.** Most Bible scholars believe this phrase is a reference to actual historical events presented symbolically that concerned the church then and concern the church down through the ages.

20. **The mystery** (Greek musterion means “a secret”) In early Christian usage the term “mystery” did not mean something that could not be understood, as it does today, but something that could be understood only by those who were initiated, or had a right to know.

**Of the seven stars** (angels) **which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks** (churches).

**The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.**

---