

REVELATION

In the Midst of the Lampstands

Revelation 1:1-3

January 13, 2024

Everyone is curious about the future. Economists, meteorologists, farmers, etc. use information from the past to forecast what will happen in the future so that the best choices can be made in the present.

Christians are also very curious about the future, especially about events surrounding the time of the end.

What is going to happen?

How will I know when it's happening?

How can I be prepared?

It's important that we understand last day events, so that we are protected from the deceptions that are currently circulating and those that are to come, but if you have ever been to a Revelation Seminar, you'll know that, generally speaking, the focus is on Beasts and Dragons, 666, the 144,000 and the 7 Last Plagues. Generally, I would say this approach is not particularly helpful and can create more confusion than clarity, more fear than faith.

Instead of thinking of Revelation in those terms, think of it in terms of Heavens perspective on history, Jesus' sovereign control and ultimate triumph over evil.

Christian hope lies within the promise that evil will not succeed.

- Genesis 3:15 - I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.

Even in the darkest hours of earth's history, when evil appears to be winning on every side, God's people believe that he will win.

As the song says, "We have this hope that burns within our heart, hope in the coming of the Lord." (SDA Hymnal 214)

John's letter begins by telling us what Revelation is all about:

- Revelation 1:1-3 - The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his slaves the things which must take place in a short time, and communicated it by sending it through his angel to his slave John, who testified about the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who hear the words of the prophecy and observe the things written in it, because the time is near!

The word, "Revelation," in Greek (*apokalupsis*) means to uncover, to unveil, to reveal, to disclose the truth.

Revelation, at its core, is about the revealing of Jesus – Jesus is the main subject. The letter begins with him and ends with him (1:1; 22:13).

Old Testament prophets – Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, as well as Peter, Paul and Jesus, himself, in the New Testament, provided glimpses of the future, but Revelation offers a unique portrayal of Jesus and salvation history found nowhere else in the Bible. Its primary purpose is to assure us of Jesus' presence and action on behalf of his people throughout history and earth's final events.

- John 14:29 - I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

After telling his readers what his letter was about, John greeted them formally:

- Revelation 1:4-8 - John, to the seven churches in Asia: grace to you and peace.....

“Grace and Peace” was the common greeting in John’s world – Paul, Peter and John used this greeting all the time (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 and 2 Thes; 1 and 2 Tim; Titus 1:4; Philemon 1:2; 1 and 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 1:3).

Grace refers to God’s gift of unmerited favor. It is the undeserved love and acceptance of God toward us.

Peace indicates the wholeness of body, mind and spirit that result from a restored relationship with God. This kind of peace is something only Jesus can give us (John 14:27).

While this is a typical greeting, John does not give it on behalf of himself, but on behalf of the 3 persons of the Godhead:

..... from the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. ⁷Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even everyone who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. Yes, amen. ⁸I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, the All-Powerful.

Now John sets the scene

- Revelation 1:9-20 - I, John, your brother and co-sharer in the affliction and kingdom and steadfastness in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony about Jesus.

Patmos is a rocky island in the Aegean Sea about 50 miles off the coast of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

According to Jewish tradition John was banished to Patmos during the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96) to work in the quarries. He was later released by Nerva and chose to return to Ephesus. It was during this imprisonment that John wrote Revelation to the 7 Christian Churches located in Asia Minor.

.... I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day,

“The Lord’s Day” *hē kuriakē hēmera* is a phrase used nowhere else in the Bible. There are five main arguments for the possible meaning of the phrase:

- The 1st day of the week = SUNDAY.
- EASTER SUNDAY = a special day rather than a weekly event.
- EMPEROR’S DAY = associated with Emperor worship.
- The 7th day of the week = SABBATH.
- ESCHATOLOGICAL (relating to the end of the world) DAY OF THE LORD

I have provided this information so that you are aware of the various interpretations. However, John is silent as to which day he is referring. For him, the day is not as important as the fact that he had a life altering vision from God.

The Vision

.... and I heard behind me a great sound like a trumpet ¹¹saying, “What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

In the Bible, the trumpet-like sound John hears represents the voice of God and would have been familiar to John.

....And I turned to see the voice which was speaking with me, and *when I* turned, I saw seven gold lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands *one* like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching to the feet and girded around his chest *with* a golden belt, ¹⁴and his head and hair *were* white like wool, white as snow, and his eyes *were* like a fiery flame, ¹⁵and his feet

were like fine bronze when it has been fired in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters, ¹⁶and he had in his right hand seven stars, and a sharp double-edged sword coming out of his mouth, and his face was like the sun shining in its strength.

When John turns to see the One speaking to him, he sees 7 golden lampstands and, in their midst, “One like the Son of Man”.

Daniel 7:9, 13-14 (Aramaic) and 10:5-6 (Hebrew)	Revelation 1:12-16 (Greek)
Ancient of Day / Hair like wool	Hair like white wool
One like a son of man	One like a Son of Man
Clothing white as snow / Clothed in linen	Clothed in a robe reaching to His feet
Girded with a belt of pure gold	Girded with a golden girdle
His eyes like torches of fire	His eyes like a flame of fire
His feet like polished bronze	His feet like burnished bronze
Voice like a roaring multitude	His voice like the sound of many waters
Face like lightening	Face shining like the sun

John used “like” and “as” to suggest a symbolic rather than a literal meaning. I mean what human language can capture the splendor of Who and What God is?

The original readers, especially the Jewish Christians, would have understood this symbolism:

- Hair like white wool = Wisdom and Experience
- “Son of Man” was Jesus favorite title for Himself - (Matt 24:30, 37, 39, 44; 26:46; Mark 14:62; Luke 19:10).
- Eyes like flames of fire = the ability to penetrate the innermost secrets of the human heart
- Feet like burnished bronze = Stability and Strength
- Voice like a trumpet/sound of many waters = the voice of God (Ez. 43:2)
- Shining face = Jesus’ exaltation (Matt. 17:2)
- Two-edged sword coming from Christ’s mouth = full authority of the word of God (Hebrews 4:12)

For the Gentiles, the imagery would have brought to mind the gods of that time, who used similar imagery to describe themselves ---- John was speaking to the understanding of both Jews and Gentiles.

John would have recognized this Spectacular Being as Jesus.

..... ¹⁷And when I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead person, and he placed his right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid!

Daniel 10:9-12 (Hebrew)	Revelation 1:17
No strength – face to the ground	John falls on his face as dead
Hand touches Daniel	Hand laid on John
“Do Not Be Afraid!”	“Do Not Be Afraid!”

..... I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the one who lives, and I was dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and of Hades. ¹⁹Therefore, write *the things* which you saw, and *the things* which are, and *the things* which are about to take place after these *things*. ²⁰As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and the seven gold lampstands—the seven stars are *the* angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are *the* seven churches.

By referring to Himself as the “First and the Last,” Jesus reveals Himself to be the God of the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14; Is 44:6; 48:12).

Jesus is also presented as the Living One who possesses the keys of death and Hades. In John’s day, the goddess Hekate was called “the beginning and the end” and “the key bearer” who held the keys to heaven and Hades.

Christ’s authority surpasses that of Hekate – who has, in truth, no authority at all.

His victory over death has given Him the right to possess the keys of Death and Hades - His followers need not fear death any longer (Isaiah 25:7-8, Hosea 13:14; 2 Cor 15:54-57 and 1 Thes. 4:16-18).

Finally, there is immeasurable significance in the imagery of Jesus walking in the midst of the lampstands.

It is all too easy to look at the state of the church today and wonder where Jesus is.

Revelation tells us that Jesus is intimately aware of His people – His “*Ecclesia*” – His church.

He moves among us helping and guiding His people in every need and circumstance.

Ellen White (2SM 396.2) – The church, enfeebled and defective though it be, is the only object on earth on which Christ bestows his supreme regard.