

FREE GRACE BIBLE STUDY

Revelation 1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ



LUCAS KITCHEN

Revelation 1:1-8

How to use this study

Here's a simple path through Revelation 1:

1. **Read the passage.** Begin each part by reading its verses (Revelation 1:1-8 and Revelation 1:9-20). Take your time with it.
2. **Work through the questions.** Short excerpts from the Commentary will guide your thinking, and there's room to write your answers.
3. **Go deeper.** When you want more, turn to the verse-by-verse Commentary at the end of this chapter.

Revelation's Purpose

Jesus is coming, so faithfully live to get the reward that He will give.

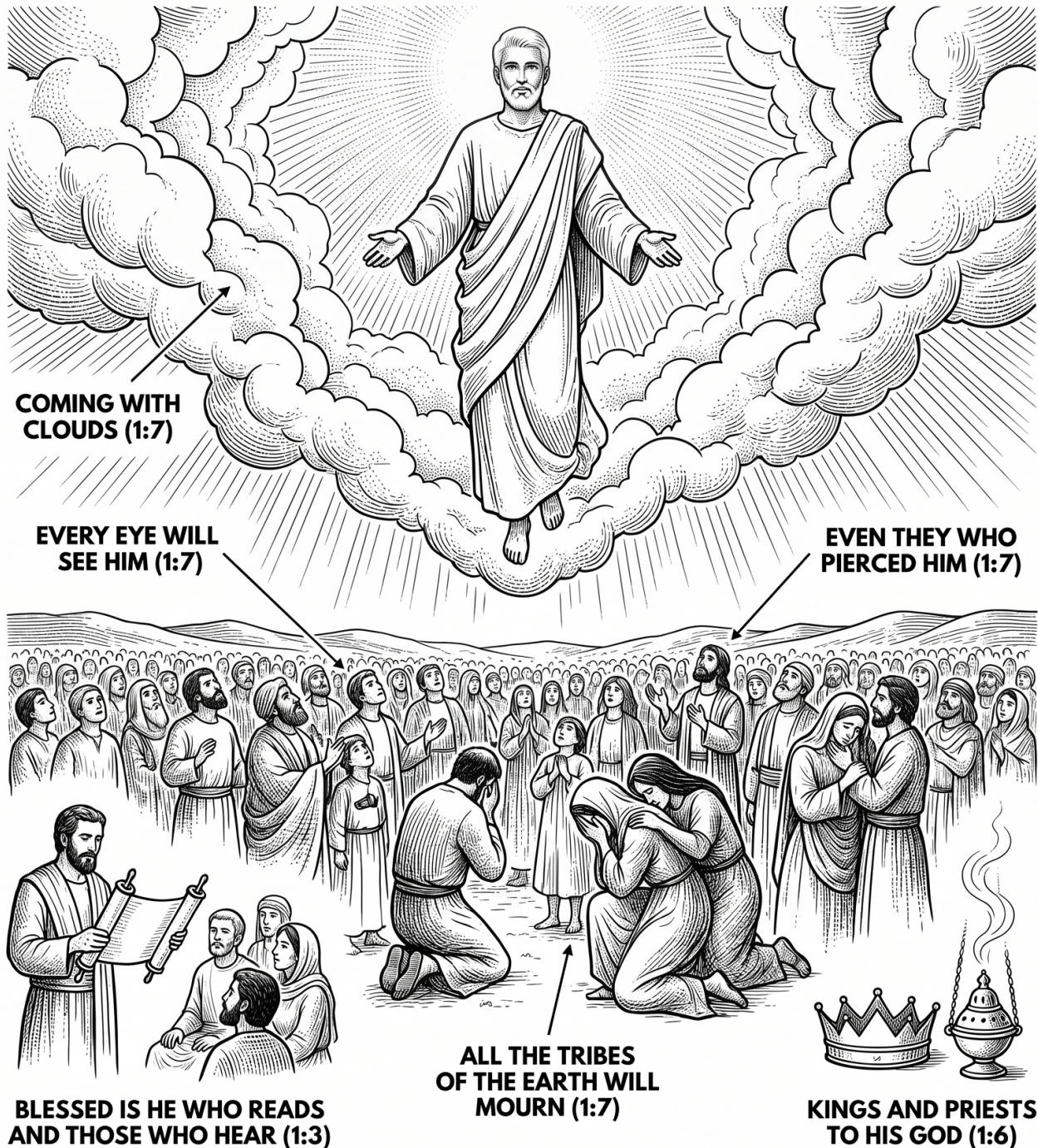
Introduction

My daughter is nine years old, as of the time I'm writing this. She has recently discovered the enjoyment of writing letters. She has a cousin in another city to whom many letters have gone out. One characteristic of the letters my daughter writes is that the address is often hard to decipher. I noticed on one of the letters she received the zip code was incorrect, and yet the post office, in their amazing wisdom was still able to bring that letter to our mailbox. I'm pretty amazed at how well the post office does, considering how often seemingly vital information is left out of the address.

The book of Revelation is a letter, but its address is quite clear. John goes to great lengths to make sure there is not misunderstanding. He is much more clear than my daughter and her cousin are on who the letter is written to. As you read Revelation 1:1-8, notice how carefully John spells out who this letter is from, who it's for, and why it matters.

BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH CLOUDS

REVELATION 1



I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA (1:8)

Bible Study

Read Revelation 1:1-8

Notice that John is called His servant, or bondservant. Even though he was Jesus' closest friend on earth, John is still described as a servant of Christ.

(See the Commentary on 1:1 to go deeper.)

1

Revelation 1:1

John was Jesus' closest earthly friend, yet he introduces himself simply as a "bondservant" or slave to Christ. How does viewing yourself as a slave to Christ, rather than just a friend, change the way you approach your daily decisions and sense of entitlement?

Those who hear and heed the words are blessed. This blessing isn't just for the reader; it's for the hearer too, but only if they also heed what is written.

(See the Commentary on 1:3 to go deeper.)

2

Revelation 1:3

There is a specific blessing promised to those who read, hear, and heed the words of this prophecy, reminding us that Christ's return is imminent. What is one practical way you can "heed" this reality today, living in a state of readiness without falling into panic?

He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father. This reminds us of his promise that if we endure, we will also reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12).

(See the Commentary on 1:6 to go deeper.)

3

Revelation 1:6

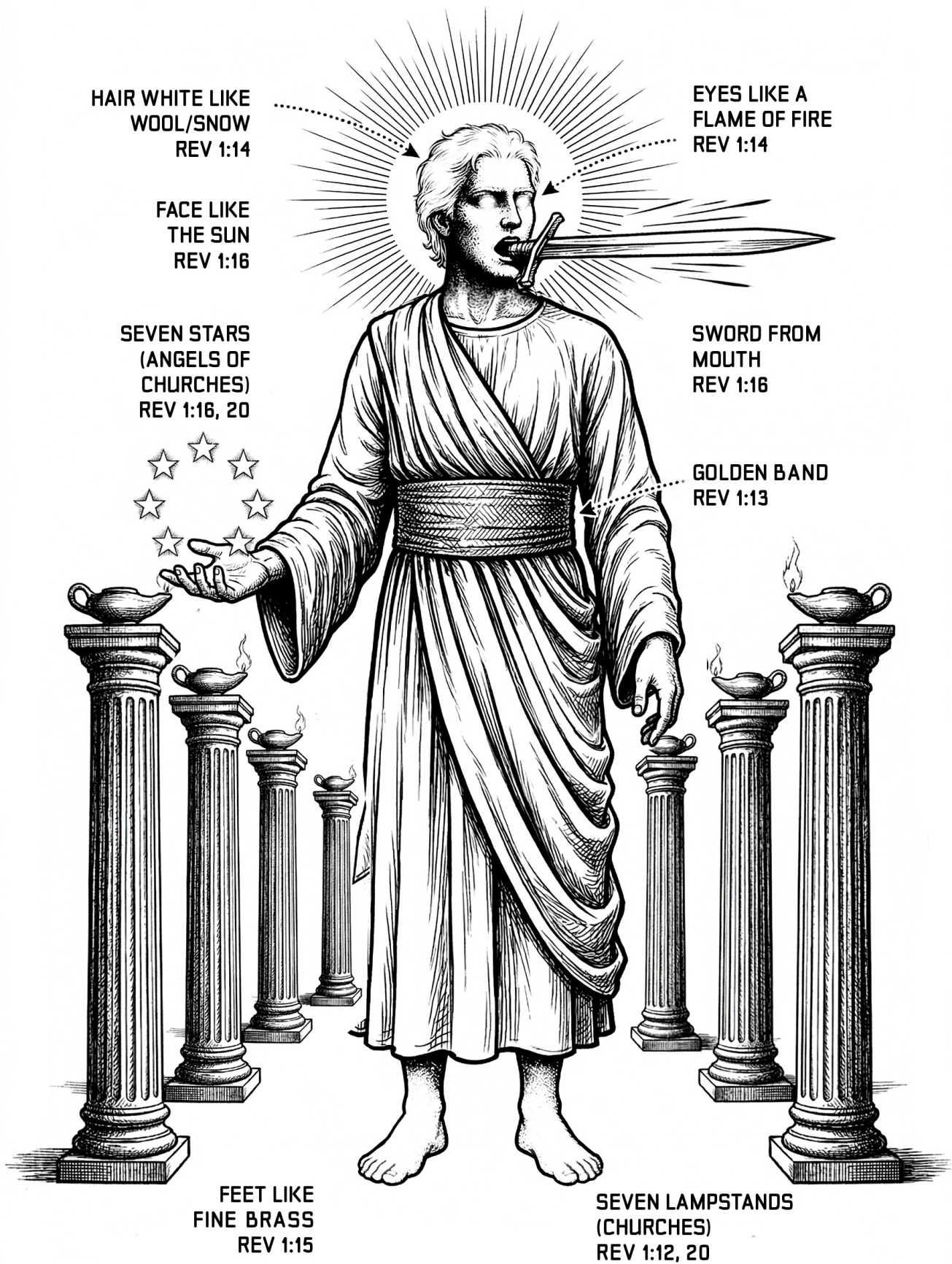
Jesus has made believers “kings and priests” to His God and Father, granting us an incredible responsibility and role in His coming kingdom. How does knowing you are being trained for a royal and priestly vocation change how you view your current, seemingly ordinary tasks?

Revelation 1:9-20

The first day of college I was moving into my dorm room and met a tall dark skinned guy who I would become fast friends with. He grew up in Chad Africa and had come to the United States for his university education. We spent hours and hours together while we were in college.

As you can imagine, after we graduated we didn’t see each other much, since he was from another continent. We lost touch for about fifteen years. Out of the blue, I got a call from him the other day, saying he was in town. I told him to come over, and we had a fun reunion. The years had aged us both, but like a good wine, it had only added a vintage quality to our brotherhood.

John was about to have a reunion of his own. Decades after he last saw Jesus, his closest friend appeared to him again on Patmos, but this time in a glory that put John on his face. As you read Revelation 1:9-20, watch how John describes the One he once knew so well.



HAIR WHITE LIKE
WOOL/SNOW
REV 1:14

FACE LIKE
THE SUN
REV 1:16

SEVEN STARS
(ANGELS OF
CHURCHES)
REV 1:16, 20

EYES LIKE A
FLAME OF FIRE
REV 1:14

SWORD FROM
MOUTH
REV 1:16

GOLDEN BAND
REV 1:13

FEET LIKE
FINE BRASS
REV 1:15

SEVEN LAMPSTANDS
(CHURCHES)
REV 1:12, 20

Bible Study

Read Revelation 1:9-20

Though it was relatively close geographically, John was completely isolated from his community. Patmos wasn't a pleasant place—it was a barren island where exiles were sent.

(See the Commentary on 1:9 to go deeper.)

4

Revelation 1:9

John was exiled to the barren, isolated island of Patmos because he refused to back down from the testimony of Jesus. When have you experienced isolation, rejection, or a “wilderness” season because of your faith, and how can John’s continued work in exile encourage you?

The imagery here might seem intimidating, but Jesus is not appearing this way to frighten John or us, as can be seen later when he tells John not to be afraid. Instead, He is teaching something about Himself. But what?

(See the Commentary on 1:16 to go deeper.)

5

Revelation 1:14-16

The startling imagery of Jesus—with flaming eyes, glowing bronze feet, and a sword coming from His mouth—is a teaching image meant to reveal His divine power and judgment. Which specific aspect of this intimidating description of Jesus challenges your default view of Him the most?

Can you imagine what each of the Apostles' reunions with Christ must have been like? Honestly, we just don't know what any of those moments were like, because we don't have a window into heaven. However, this passage of Scripture gives us one description of a reunion of sorts. With that reunion in mind, consider what happens next.

Jesus reaches out and touches John, much like He would have during His earthly ministry.

(See the Commentary on 1:17 to go deeper.)

6

Revelation 1:17

Upon seeing the glorified Jesus, John collapsed as though dead, but Jesus immediately reached out, touched him with His right hand, and told him not to be afraid. How do you practically balance a terrifying, holy awe of God's power with the intimate, comforting reassurance of His grace?

This imagery also tells us something important—Jesus is among the lampstands, in the midst of the churches. He is actively present and intimately involved.

(See the Commentary on 1:20 to go deeper.)

7

Revelation 1:12-13, 20

The seven lampstands represent the churches, and Jesus is seen standing directly in the middle of them. How does the reality that Jesus is actively present and walking among our local congregations change the way you view your own church's flaws and struggles?

Commentary

Part 1: Revelation 1:1-8

1:1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, (Revelation 1:1)

When something is revealed, that something is a revelation. This is the revelation of Jesus Christ—not the revelation of John. John is the one relaying it to us, but it's Jesus who is revealing it.

John begins his letter by explaining exactly what will be contained within: The Revelation of Jesus Christ, who John knew personally. In fact, John was likely Jesus' best friend on earth during His ministry, since John said he himself was the disciple that Jesus loved in his own writing (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20). Who better to receive such an important Revelation?

Just in case the reader is tempted to think that these things could not happen any time soon he is sure to add that these are things which must shortly take place. While the time scale may seem broad to the reader, we are living in a time when they could happen at any moment.

Notice that John is called His *servant*, or *bondservant*. Even though he was Jesus' closest friend on earth, John is still described as a servant of Christ. This is how we should see ourselves—as servants of Christ. In the Western world, we aren't as comfortable with being called slaves, but that's what the word here means. We are slaves to Christ.

1:2

who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. (Revelation 1:2)

John was no novice when it came to receiving and distributing God's revelation. About himself, he says that he was the one who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Therefore, how better to both identify Jesus on his appearing and to reveal Himself to a trusted friend, and who better was there to handle well, the words he would receive?

John is testifying as an eyewitness. He's going to share with us the vision and the revelation that Jesus gave

him. This is similar to the way in which John claims eyewitness status in his gospel (John 19:35, 21:24).

1:3

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. (Revelation 1:3)

The word *blessed* is translated from the Greek word *makarios*. In modern English, we might translate this as privileged, happy, or to receive a good outcome. Something good happens to the person being described as blessed. In this case, it says that the one who reads the words of this prophecy is blessed.

Some translations say *he who reads aloud*. Personal Bibles are a relatively modern development. For most of history, people didn't have their own copies of the Scriptures. Instead, Scripture was read aloud to groups of believers. These groups could be churches or regional gatherings, and often, the entirety of a text would be read aloud at once. The person who reads the prophecy aloud is blessed—they will receive something good for doing so.

But it doesn't stop there. It also says that those who hear and heed the words are blessed. This blessing isn't just for the reader; it's for the hearer too, but only if they also heed what is written. The blessing doesn't require that the person understand everything in Revelation to get the blessing. In fact, the sections of Revelation that give instructions are actually quite easy to grasp. Maybe the blessing is included precisely because Revelation has difficult-to-understand sections, and many may give up on finishing the book. This blessing offers special motivation for readers, hearers, and heeders, even if understanding some parts is out of reach.

That final phrase reminds us that Christ's return is imminent. It's essential to understand the difference between something being immediate and being imminent.

Imminent means it could happen at any moment. There is no other prophetic event that must take place before the return of Christ begins. Christ's end-times events could begin at any moment.

Immediate, on the other hand, is different. Throughout history, many people have mistakenly believed Christ's return would be immediate. Because of words like *the*

time is near, they assumed He would come back right away. While Christ can return at any moment because His return is imminent, that doesn't mean His delay falsifies the nearness of the events. It is near because His return could be tomorrow, or it could be in a thousand years. It's near because nothing stands in the way—we know of no other prophetic event between now and His return events. It could happen at any time.

1:4

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, (Revelation 1:4)

In the gospel account attributed to John, he does not identify himself by name; however, in this book, the author clearly identifies himself as John multiple times. He also explains that he is writing to the seven churches which are in Asia. These churches are spread across what was then known as Asia Minor, which is located generally in the area of modern-day Türkiye.

He isn't just greeting his readers on his own behalf but also his letter is coming from a familiar triune entity; first from Him who is and who was and who is to come. Owing to the triune structure of the following lines, this most likely refers to God the Father, since next, he will add a greeting from the Spirit and Jesus.

He gives a mysterious statement when he says that it also comes from the seven Spirits who are before His throne. Multiple times he references the seven Spirits of God (Rv 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6). Some Bible teachers think these seven spirits are spiritual and/or angelic beings who minister before the throne but are not part of God's trinity. However, more likely, this is a seven-fold manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Seven is often used to represent completeness. It is likely that he is seeing a manifestation of the full and complete Holy Spirit since the statement about God's Seven Spirits is sandwiched between a mention of God the Father and God the Son. Admittedly, the statement is mysterious, and outside of the book of Revelation, we have very little in scripture to compare it to.

1:5

and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, (Revelation 1:5)

Now, John will complete his greeting from the Trinity as he expresses that his letter is also from Jesus Christ, the

faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. This feels like a reference to the Psalm which says, I will also appoint him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. (Psalm 89:27) With this statement, John announces that the long-awaited day when Jesus takes his rightful ruling place above the world's leaders is poised to take place. He then descends from this lofty concept to the very personal when he reminds us that Jesus is the one who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

1:6

and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:6)

Not only is Jesus King the one who is ready to take charge of the earth, but he also has a role for believers to play in his kingdom plan. He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father. This reminds us of his promise that if we endure, we will also reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). It also echoes the ideas found in Peter's writings where he explains that we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession (1 Peter 2:9). It's an invitation to have incredible responsibility, and undying purpose in the world to come. Christ's coming kingdom will employ His faithful followers, appointing them to positions as king-priests, not for the glory of the individual but to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1:7

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. (Revelation 1:7)

The main point of Revelation is this: Jesus is coming. This truth shapes how we live now, as Revelation will later explore the connection between His return and the rewards for faithfulness. For now, this opening passage reminds us to fix our eyes on the promise of His coming.

He turns toward some dark foreshadowing as he explains that Jesus is coming with clouds, which echoes how Jesus ascended and is promised to return (Acts 1:9-11). Unlike his ascension, his appearance won't be for a small group of disciples to witness, but instead for the whole world to see, since every eye will see Him. It seems that this is not just limited to those who are alive on the earth since even they who pierced Him will see him coming with clouds. Although it will be a happy

day for those who eagerly await His return, it won't be so happy for many as all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

1:8

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8)

Now John pulls a quote from his later conversation with Christ. I am the Alpha and the Omega. This is like saying I am the A to Z, since Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet. He doubles down when he says that He is the Beginning and the End. His existence encompasses all of History, and He is the one who is and who was and who is to come. John's words should be impossible to misunderstand. Jesus is claiming in no uncertain terms that He is the Almighty.

Part 2: Revelation 1:9-20

1:9

I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 1:9)

By the time John was writing this, he was the last of the apostles alive. The other eleven had spread out across the world to preach the gospel and, according to tradition, had all been martyred for their faith. They were often given opportunities to save themselves by renouncing their testimony of Jesus. Yet, they refused. They were willing to die rather than deny the truth of what they had witnessed.

It seems that Jesus wanted at least one of His apostles to remain alive for this purpose—to receive and record the final revelation. That apostle was John. At this point, John had been exiled to the island of Patmos. The Roman Empire, still figuring out its stance on Christianity, was beginning to persecute Christians. Christianity was being cast out of Jewish circles, and the Romans were beginning to recognize it as a separate movement. Unlike Judaism, which enjoyed some legal protections, Christianity was increasingly under scrutiny and oppression.

Patmos is a small island off the coast of what is now Türkiye, not far from Ephesus, where John's home church was located. Though it was relatively close geographically, John was completely isolated from his

community. Patmos wasn't a pleasant place—it was a barren island where exiles were sent.

It is for the testimony of Jesus that John was exiled. Despite the tremendous cost of relaying Jesus' words to the world, John persisted. From his imprisoned island, he continued to share Jesus' words, and oh, how his readers would be shocked to discover he received a new revelation. The contents of that revelation are still being dissected today.

1:10

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, (Revelation 1:10)

This section of Revelation introduces us to one of the most striking and symbolic visions in the book: John's encounter with the glorified Jesus. Unlike the Jesus John knew during His earthly ministry, this vision reveals Jesus in a form that is both awe-inspiring and overwhelming. Every detail of His appearance is rich with meaning, designed to communicate aspects of His divine authority, power, and role as the righteous judge and King. This vision sets the stage for the rest of the book, providing a framework for understanding the messages to the seven churches and the unfolding future events. As we examine John's vivid description, we are invited to see Jesus through a new lens—one that reveals His majesty and His intimate involvement with His people.

Like prophets before him, John received visions and revelations from the Holy Spirit. The experience was unique and identifiable since he says that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. He was neither out of his mind nor unaware of the time. The experience wasn't uncontrollable disconnection from reality, but coherent and reasonable. So much so that He is able to write it down as it is happening.

He heard behind him a loud voice. John would have known Jesus's voice well since he had spent so much time with Him during His earthly ministry. Now his voice sounds different. It sounded like a trumpet. The difference in the tone of voice meant that John didn't recognize who was speaking at first. In the ancient world, a trumpet was one of the loudest man-made sounds. The voice is commanding and impossible to ignore.

1:11

saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book 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." (Revelation 1:11)

Without yet recognizing the speaker he heard the voice identify Himself with the title John had already revealed in the opening of his letter (Vs. 8), the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. Here, John gives a slightly abbreviated form of what was already said, where Jesus also identifies Himself additionally as the Beginning and the End, the one who is and who was and who is to come, and the Almighty.

In the same breath, John gets his orders from the Lord. What he sees he is to write in a book 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." These are churches that he would have great familiarity with since he had been ministering in that region for years. He also would have tremendous influence in these churches since he was one of their primary leaders. Above all, he would have incredible fondness for the believers there, as he was known for calling the believers who read his letters his little children (1 John 2:1, 1 John 2:12, 1 John 2:28)

1:12

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, (Revelation 1:12)

But when John turned to see who was speaking he witnessed a series of mysterious items. He spotted seven golden lampstands. A few verses later, John will explain what these represent (vs. 20), but John did not understand what they represented at first.

A literal lampstand in the ancient world was a pedestal used to hold an oil lamp, which would be the only source of light indoors at night. A lampstand had to be no taller than a person could reach to refill the lamp; thus, the lights that sat atop them were close to eye level. Having lampstands that are golden would be extremely rare, except in places of royalty or religion. When Solomon built the First Temple, he included ten golden lampstands (1 Kings 7:49). Through the vision, it quickly becomes clear that John has left the literal behind. In addition to the seven golden lampstands, there are other images:

1:13-14

and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; (Revelation 1:13-14)

Not yet knowing the meaning of the lampstands, John's eyes scan across the amazing scene to see that in the midst of the seven lampstands, there was One like the Son of Man. This phrase is the way the prophet Daniel described the then-future Messiah (Daniel 7:13-14). It is also how Jesus described himself during His ministry (Mark 8:38, Matthew 8:20).

Jesus is revealing something about Himself through each attribute. Each detail in this vision carries significance, communicating aspects of His character and divine nature. Might his flaming eyes symbolize the fact that He can see into our very thoughts (Luke 5:22) and judges righteously according to what he sees there? What's more, these characteristics will be recalled later when He delivers his praises and warnings to the seven churches in the following chapters.

1:15

His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; (Revelation 1:15)

When heated to a molten state, brass is so bright it is difficult to look at. It is also deadly dangerous to be near. Is it possible that his glowing molten feet could be a reminder that he is the snake slayer (Genesis 3:15), prophesied to crush the serpent's head? What better to crunch a snake's skull than with forged metal feet?

The fact that His voice is like the sound of many waters mirrors the vision of God's glory entering the temple (Ezekiel 43:2). His voice can be like the thunderous roar of a large waterfall. Could this imply that, while the world may try, his voice will not be ignored? Although he has sometimes spoken in a whisper (1 Kings 19:12), he can speak in the voice of the seven thunders, which will shake the earth (Revelation 10:3).

1:16

He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (Revelation 1:16)

John sees that He, Jesus, had in His right hand seven stars. One of the reasons we know that Revelation is full of symbolism that all represent real things is because, in

verse 20, the meaning of the stars and the lampstands will be revealed.

In John's Gospel, he first identified Jesus as the Word (John 1:1). Here he sees how true this concept is since out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, which reminds us that the word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates... it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus' word is powerful, dangerous, and decisive. He will change the world in the events that are to come with the power of His words. Looking at him must have been difficult since His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. He exudes power from his very complexion.

Jesus holds seven stars in His right hand, which He will explain later, and from His mouth comes a sharp, two-edged sword. Might this signify the incredible power in His words, which at first proclaimed, Let there be light (Genesis 1:3), and in the last things, will declare, It is done (Revelation 21:6)?

His face shines as brightly as the sun in its full strength, indicating that the Word described in the first chapter of John's Gospel (John 1:1-14), who became flesh, leaving his radiant glory behind, has now reclaimed his brilliant appearance and glows blindingly bright.

The imagery here might seem intimidating, but Jesus is not appearing this way to frighten John or us, as can be seen later when he tells John not to be afraid. Instead, He is teaching something about Himself. But what?

Each detail in His appearance serves as an object lesson, connecting to something He wants to tell the seven churches. All these visual aspects hold meaning. These elements are not random; they reveal specific truths about who He is, what He knows, and what He can do. As the letters to the seven churches unfold, Jesus will reference these aspects of His appearance to communicate His message to each church (Revelation 2-3).

Some Bible students have expressed discomfort with the idea that this is Jesus' "new look." I can totally relate. I think that probably, Jesus won't look like the description in Revelation forever. After all, a few chapters later, he appears as a slain lamb, then later a child, then later a rider on a white horse. These are what I'd call didactic appearances, teaching images, embodied object lessons. The form he takes in these visions focuses us on what he wants us to learn about Him.

1:17

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. (Revelation 1:17)

It is amazing how similar John's experience is to that of Daniel's of the Old Testament. Daniel beheld a figure whose appearance and apparel were the same as Jesus' here. Daniel's response was to fall down and seemingly pass out. The glorious figure touched Daniel to rouse him (Daniel 10:1-12). Daniel's prophetic vision is one of the most significant in all of scripture, and John's readers would recognize the similarities. The comparison shows the authenticity, and monumental importance of the vision John is receiving.

Here, John likely means that he passed out—he didn't just kneel strategically. It wasn't even a planned attempt at bowing down. He hit the ground with the concussive force of a cadaver. He collapsed, overcome with fear or awe. Then, Jesus placed not his left but His right hand on John.

Now, remember: this is the same hand that holds stars, as described earlier in the vision. Yet, there's something familiar and comforting about this gesture. Jesus reaches out and touches John, much like He would have during His earthly ministry. It's an extraordinary combination—Jesus appearing in this overwhelming, divine form, yet still engaging in the familiar, human act of laying a hand on John to reassure him.

1:17-18

Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. (Revelation 1:17-18)

Notice that Jesus' call to not be afraid, is rooted in Christ's identity. John can be free of fear because Jesus knows the future, dwells in all time equally, runs the control board for death, and is alive forever. He even has the keys of death, meaning He can call anyone up from the grave He pleases. It's maybe for good reason that John just said he'd fallen down before Jesus like a dead man. Even if John had literally died, that wouldn't stop Jesus from having this talk with him, because he's in charge of it all.

The phrase *death and Hades* comes up repeatedly in Revelation and Jesus will certainly support his claim to hold control over them. It's a significant concept that will be explored further as we continue. Not only does

he have authority over Hell, but Death itself. This will remind the reader of John's other work where Jesus often claimed to be able to resurrect and give eternal life to those who believe in Him (John 3:16, 6:47, 11:24-26).

1:19

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. (Revelation 1:19)

This statement can be seen as a general outline for the structure of Revelation. Jesus instructs John to write three things:

First, The things John has seen (past). What has John seen so far? He's seen Jesus in this startling, majestic appearance. That's the first category of what he's to write. Second, The things which are (present). This refers to what is happening in the present time for John, particularly in the churches. Jesus will address these issues in chapters two and three. Third, The things which will take place after these things (future). This refers to future events, beginning in chapter four and continuing through the rest of the book.

Yet again John is being employed as an eyewitness of some amazing things. One can imagine that John scrambled to his quill and ink well. It seems that throughout the narrative of Revelation, John has his pen ready and is taking notes (10:4). Maybe this was a habit he picked up during Jesus' ministry, since it's reasonable to think John wrote his gospel very early from personal notes he had.

1:20

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches. (Revelation 1:20)

The Lord now reveals something important about the Revelation John would receive. First, he tells The mystery of the seven stars in Jesus' right hand (Vs. 16) and the seven golden lampstands (Vs. 12-13). While these were a mystery when John first viewed them, Jesus now reveals that The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands... are the seven churches.

An important lesson is embedded in Jesus' words. First, the literal meaning of these two mysteries, but second, the fact that these two aspects of John's vision represent real things. This is a lesson that we can carry throughout the book of Revelation. When we discover mysteries in the coming pages, we can trust that they represent real things. However, many of Revelation's aspects are not as clearly identified as these are here. Nonetheless, the images in this book represent the actual that is to come, not the ethereal that could mean whatever we want. While we may not always agree on their meaning, we should agree that everything in the book represents something real.

Jesus explained that the seven golden lampstands are the churches. Obviously, he means the seven churches of Asia Minor to whom He was writing (Vs. 11). This is not hard to understand, but there is some measure of disagreement on what He means that the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. *Angels* literally means *messengers*. But who are the messengers to the churches?

The most straightforward interpretation is that each church has an angel, some kind of divine messenger. Another interpretation comes from the fact that the word *angel* means *messenger*. In this sense, the angels could represent people who deliver messages to the church, such as its leaders, elders, or perhaps its pastors. Regardless of the exact meaning, we do know this: the lampstands are the churches, and whoever carries the message to these churches is in Jesus' hands.

This imagery also tells us something important—Jesus is among the lampstands, in the midst of the churches. He is actively present and intimately involved. He speaks to the messengers of the churches and delivers His messages directly, showing His closeness to His people.

In the next section, we'll begin to look at the specific messages Jesus gives to each of the seven churches. As we do, we'll see that each description of Jesus from this initial vision is tied to what He says to the churches. Each aspect of His appearance will serve to demonstrate something about who He is and what He wants to convey to His people.