

LESSON II

Revelation Chapter 1

I. PREFACE (1:1-3)

- A. The purpose of the book of Revelation is to illumine the person of Jesus Christ. (vs. 1)
- B. "Which must shortly take place."
 - 1. Revelation was primarily written to the people of his day.
 - 2. The events surrounding this time and immediately following should be studied in order to gain an understanding of the book.
- C. The Revelation was communicated (Greek: signified) by His angel.
 - 1. Revelation was written in signs and symbols.
 - 2. Care must be used in determining the correct meaning of a passage.
 - 3. Sometimes we may have to admit, "We just do not know."
- D. (vs. 3) the first of seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation.
 - 1. The other six are found in (14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14).
 - 2. Many groups of seven occur in the book, apparently by design. (Johannine writing style)
 - 3. 7 represents sacredness and completeness.

II. ADDRESS AND GREETING (1:4-8)

- A. Symbolic meaning of "seven churches" may mean that this message is for the entire church throughout the Christian era.
- B. (vs. 4) "the seven spirits who are before His throne."
- C. (vs. 5) "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness."
- D. (vs. 6) "a kingdom of priests." (I Peter 2:9)
- E. (vs. 7) The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. INTRODUCTORY VISION: CHRIST AMONG THE CHURCHES (1:9-20)

A. (vs. 10) John "in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

B. The vision of Christ. (vss. 12-16)

1. The Son of Man
2. Clothed with a garment down to his foot
3. Golden breast girdle
4. White hair and head
5. Eyes like a flame of fire
6. Feet like burnished bronze
7. Voice like the sound of many waters
8. Seven stars in his right hand
9. The sharp two-edged sword out of his mouth
10. Face like the shining sun in its strength

C. "The keys of death and Hades." (vs. 18)

Why Seven?

7 Miracles of the Gospel of John:

Near the end of his gospel account, John said, “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31).

Miracle 1: Water Into Wine (John 2:1-11)

Miracle 2: Healing the Official’s Son (John 4:43-54)

Miracle 3: The Healing at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9)

Miracle 4: The Feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1-5)

Miracle 5: Walking on the Water (John 6:16-25)

Miracle 6: Healing The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)

Miracle 7: Raising Lazarus From The Dead (John 11:1-44)

The Seven “I Am” Statements of the Gospel of John:

1. **The Bread Of Life...** “Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35)

2. **The Light Of The World...** “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

3. **The Gate...** “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture.” (John 10:9)

4. **The Good Shepherd...** “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11)

5. **The Resurrection And The Life...** “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” (John 11:25-26)

6. **The Way, The Truth, And The Life...** “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

7. **The Vine...** “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Letters written today generally bear certain standard features that conform to cultural norms (e.g., the name and address of the sender and receiver, a greeting formula such as "Dear Sir," and a closing formula such as "Sincerely yours"). New Testament epistles likewise conform to the standard Hellenistic letter form⁸⁵ used in the Roman world of the first century A.D. The elements of this common letter form are listed below, along with examples of each element from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians and his Letter to Philemon:

The name of the sender(s) (see 1 Cor 1:1; Phlm 1a)

The name of the recipient(s) (see 1 Cor 1:2; Phlm 1b-2)

The prescript, which is a greeting formula (see 1 Cor 1:3; Phlm 3)

*The *præm**, which is a word of thanks, praise, or petition to a god (see 1 Cor 1:4-9; Phlm 4-7).

The introductory formula, which serves as the transition into the primary subject matter of the letter (see 1 Cor 1:10; Phlm 8-9).

The main body of the letter (see 1 Cor 1:11-16:18; Phlm 10-22)

Greetings (see 1 Cor 16:19-20; Phlm 23-24)

Benedictory wishes in the sender's own hand (rather than that of a secretary, if used), which serve to personalize the letter (see 1 Cor 16:21-24; Phlm 25)

Revelation bears most of the features of a first century Hellenistic letter, as shown below. This observation is important because it

⁸⁵*Hellen* (Ἑλλην) is the Greek word for "Greek." *Hellenistic* refers to the Greek language and culture that Alexander the Great spread from Greece and Macedonia in the west, to the borders of India in the east, and to Egypt in the south during the fourth century B.C. The Hellenistic letter form represents one example of this Greek cultural influence on what later became the Roman Empire. For further discussion, see Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Library of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986); and William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973).

⁸⁶Why did John write an apocalypse in the form of a letter? Perhaps he was imitating the Apostle Paul, whose influence was so strong in Asia.

explains why certain elements appear in Revelation and why they are arranged as they are. John is simply following the conventions of his culture.⁸⁶

Name of Sender (Rev 1:4a):

John

Name of Recipient(s) (Rev 1:4b):

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Prescript (Rev 1:4c-5a):

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Præm (Rev 1:5b-6): In this part of the letter, a pagan would often call upon the gods to grant good health and prosperity to the addressee(s). John Christianizes this portion of the standard letter form and transforms it into a doxology of praise to God:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Introductory Formula (Rev 1:9):

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Main Body of the Letter (Rev 1:10-22:20)

Greetings are not found in Revelation.

Benedictory Wishes in the Sender's Own Hand (Rev 22:21):

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

B. THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN'S VISION

Within the Hellenistic letter form, John structures Revelation in four main parts, as a careful examination clearly shows. The book begins with a Prologue (1:1-20) in which the author describes how Christ commissioned him to deliver a revelation to the seven churches of Asia. Near the end of this Prologue, in 1:19, the Lord