

REVELATION SURVEY – Chapters 1-3

INTRODUCTION

First → The Past, ...

I. “the things which you have seen” Chapter 1

- A. **1:1-3** Introduction
- B. **1:4-8** Salutation
- C. **1:9-18** Exaltation (Christ in His glory)
- D. **1:19-20** Instruction (to write)

A. Introduction 1:1-3

1:2 – “**bore witness**” – from the original Greek word μαρτυρέω – this word is used 23 times in the rest of the New Testament ... and 44 times in Revelation!

1:3 – “**Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it;**”

This is the only book of the 66 books of the Bible that comes with a blessing for reading and hearing and heeding

- There are 7 Beatitudes in Revelation:
1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14

“**Blessed is he (singular) who reads and those (plural) who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed ...**”

“**for the time is near.**” The Greek word καιρός – refers more to an epic or a season; not χρόνος – which means more specific time like the hour → **Imminence**

B. Salutation 1:4-8

1:4a – “**John to the seven churches that are in Asia (Asia Minor – this would be modern Turkey): **Grace to you and****

peace,”

→ “from Him who is and who was and who is to come”

→ pointing to the **Father**

→ “and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne”

→ the seven-fold manifestation of the **Holy Spirit**

Isa 11:2 – “the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.”

→ **1:5a** – “and from Jesus Christ”

→ the **Son**

1:6 – “**He has made us to be a kingdom, priests**”

- the veil rent asunder/ripped apart → **Rev 5:10; 20:6**

1:7 – “**Behold**” – is used 27 times in Revelation

- almost every time it heralds a Divine intrusion
- 1:7, 18; 2:10, 22; 3:8-9, 20; 4:1-2; 5:5; 6:2, 5, 8; 7:9; 9:12; 11:14; 12:3; 14:1, 14; 16:15; 19:11; 21:3, 5; 22:7, 12

“**He is coming with the clouds**”

Dan 7:13a – “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming,”

Matt 24:30 – “and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.”

1:8 – “**I am the Alpha and the Omega**”

- first and last letters of the Greek alphabet
- seen again in **Rev 21:6; 22:13**

See 1:7-8 → 21:5-6 → 22:12-13

C. Exaltation (of Christ) 1:9-18

1:10 – “I was in the Spirit”

John is not referring to some kind of spiritual/emotional ecstasy. He’s not referring to the ordinary sense in which every believer is led, comforted, and helped by the indwelling Spirit.

John is in the Spirit in the sense that the Spirit of inspiration and illumination and revelation has come into his life and upon his soul in a special way. He is in the spirit of prophecy.

“on the Lord’s day” – Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2 → not the “Lord’s morning,” not the “Lord’s hour and half” ☺

1:11 – “Write in a book what you see”

- John gets the vision, we get the book

1:12 – “seven golden lampstands” → what are we to make of this?? ... well ... **1:20** – the seven churches ☺

- Revelation is a book of symbols and complexity behind that
- We approach this Scripture the way we do all Scripture, with a literal, historical approach
- He is writing to literal churches in a literal span of time
- He (Christ, the Son of Man) is among the lampstands, trimming the wicks, carving the wax, breathing life-giving oxygen on your flickering flame

1:13 – “and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man”

It isn’t the churches/candlesticks that holds his attention, it is his sight of the glorious Son of Man.

It is the vision of the glorified Savior that grips the apostle and holds him fascinated.

This great book is concerned with the foretelling of future events. But this book is first and foremost a revelation, and a revelation of the glory of the Lamb.

Christ is the glory in the midst of the church.

“one like a son of man” – this brings out the humanness of the exalted Savior. One author put it this way “The dust of the earth is on the throne of the majesty of high.”

“clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest”

- **Exod 28:1f** – talks about the High Priest
- **Exod 39:41** – “the woven garments for ministering in the holy place and the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests.”

vv. 14-16 – **“head ... hair ... eyes ... feet ... voice ... face”**

- very reminiscent of the following verse from the Old Testament: **Dan 7:9** – “I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, its wheels *were* a burning fire.”

We have a Lord who will Shepherd, a Christ who will save, a Prophet who will teach, a Priest who will plead for, and a King who will lead.

1:13 – **“His voice was like the sound of many waters.”**

John is writing this on the small Island of Patmos (6x10 mi.) John can hear the roar of the ocean, but this voice drowns the sound of the crashing waves. It is as the noise of many waters.

Ezek 43:2 – “behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.”

1:16 – “**seven stars**” → seven ~~angels~~ (translated as angels in NASB) /literally means messengers (**1:20**)

1:17a – “**And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man.**”

- In Scripture, when people see Christ, they fall on their face
- **Isai 6:5** – “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”
- **Ezek 1:28** – “As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.”

1:17b – “**I am the first and the last**”

Isa 41:4 – “Who has performed and accomplished *it*, calling forth the generations from the beginning? ‘I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He.’”

1:18 – “**I have the keys of death and of Hades**” – neither death, nor Hades, nor Hell, nor Satan ... nobody and no thing can keep you in the grave when Jesus has the keys.

D. Instruction

1:19-20

1:19 – Outline

1:20 – Explanation

Second → The Present, ...

II. “**and the things which are**”

Chapters 2-3

7 Churches in Asia Minor (**1:11**)

- 4 of these churches are a mixture of good and bad (marked by “**I know ... But**”)

- 2 of these churches are all good, and 1 church is all bad

Christ divides the good from the bad.
And He certainly tells it like it is.

A. Ephesus

2:1-7

It is a persevering church with discernment, but → it is distracted with a diverted love. This is a mixture church.

2:4 – “**But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.**”

2:7 – “**To him who overcomes,**”

- be victorious, win, defeat, conquer
- νικάω → “Nike” comes from this → another favorite word of John – used 3 times in the Septuagint, Luke uses it once, Paul 3 times, John 24 times, and it is used 17 times in Revelation → 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 5:5; 6:2; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7

→ God gives this promise, this invitation, this command to all 7 churches, to every church!

3:5 – “He who overcomes ... I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.”

21:7 – “He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

2:7 – “**I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.**” → full circle back to **Gen 3:24!**

The other 6 churches probably were born out of the church in Ephesus.

B. Smyrna

2:8-11

This church is faithful, their persecution becomes their purification. This is a good church.

2:9 – “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)”

- Not material riches but eternal riches

Illustration – I remember in Jadon’s Bible Class at school, there were a series of questions to be answered on scale of +10 (completely agree) to -10 (completely disagree). They came to this question: “Does God want you to trust Him to keep you safe from physical harm?” The entire class said “+10” with one “+7”. Jadon was last ... “-11!” 😊

The key is in the preposition. God has not promised to keep us safe from physical harm on this side of glory. But He certainly has promised to keep us safe through physical harm until we reach glory.

→ Remember, this is the church God likes!

Illustration – **Polycarp** was a pastor of a church in Smyrna some 5 or 6 decades later (~ A.D. 150). He was burned at the stake for his faith. He told the soldiers in charge of his execution they didn’t need to tie him to the stake ... because he would not try to escape!

→ He prayed this prayer as the flames began to consume him:

“I bless you, Lord, because you have deemed me worthy of this day and hour, to take my part in the number of the martyrs, in the cup of your Christ, for “resurrection to eternal life” of soul and body in the immortality of the Holy Spirit; among whom may I be received in your presence this day as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, just as you have prepared and revealed beforehand and fulfilled.”

C. Pergamum

2:12-17

This church was faithful, but → it tolerates false teaching. So, it is the second mixed church.

2:13 – **Antipas** - martyred

2:14 – **Balaam, Balak** – greedy prophet and King of Moab

2:15 – **Nicolatians** (**Acts 6:5** – Nicolas → also in **Rev 2:6!**)

D. Thyatira

2:18-29

This church has spiritual growth, but → tolerates immorality.
This is the third mixed church.

2:18 – “**The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze**”

- the **eyes** that see all and the **feet** that stamp out judgment
- Turn to: Isa 63:1-6

2:20 – “**you tolerate the woman Jezebel**”

2:26-27 – this is a direct quote from **Psalm 2:8-9**

- Christ will rule in the Millennium and He will rule through us, we will carry out His will, armed with His authority

→ **2:28** – “**and I will give him the morning star.**” → Amazing!!

E. Sardis

3:1-6

This is the fifth church, the fourth mixed church.

3:1 – “**you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead**”

Illustration– My beloved loved candles. I learned you aren’t supposed to blow candles out, you are to use a candle snuffer. When you snuff out a candle, the wick glows orange for a little while ...

Application – In the same way, the flame of the church in **Sardis** is almost out, there is barely a burning ember.

F. Philadelphia

3:7-13

This church is the second all-good church. It is characterized by their name.

“**Philadelphia**” → literally this word means “brotherly love”

Heb 13:1 – “Let love of the brethren (φιλαδελφία) continue”

→ **3:10** – “**you have kept the word of My perseverance**”

“**He who is holy, who is true**” – Rev 4:8; 6:10

“**key of David**” – symbol of divine authority

Isa 22:22 – “I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, when he opens no one will shut, when he shuts no one will open.”

7 Promises to this church that “overcomes”:

3:7 – Guaranteed Authority (of the One making the Promises)

3:8 – Guaranteed Entrance

3:9 – Guaranteed Victory

3:10 – Guaranteed Deliverance

- “**I also will keep you from the hour of testing**”
- Greek word - *ek* – out of or from, not *dia* – through
- “**testing**” – temptation of Jesus in Luke 4

“**those who dwell upon the earth**”

- 8 or 9 times in the New Testament → reference to unbelievers

3:11 – Guaranteed Reward – “quickly” – Imminence!

3:3 – coming quickly in **judgment**

3:11 – coming quickly in **deliverance**

3:12a – Guaranteed Perseverance

3:12b – Guaranteed Identity

“**My God**” – said 4 times to emphasize the relationship!

“**new Jerusalem**” – first of 2 references (**21:2**)

G. Laodicea

3:14-22

This is the unsaved, apostate church.

3:16 – “because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”

- Literally means ‘vomit’

3:17 – “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked”
Gen 3; Rev 16:15

3:19 – “repent”

- command is given to 5 of the 7 churches
- the Lord doesn’t give the command to repent to **Smyrna or Philadelphia.**

Question – do you think this is because they don’t need to repent? ☺ Or is it because they are already repenting. And they are repenting well? ☺

3:21 – “overcomes” – last of 7 – even to the unsaved apostate church → there is always hope!

Now, before anyone asks me after this Sunday School hour
“What church are we?”

I believe San Tan Bible Church is unequivocally a Philadelphia church ... with a small stripe of Ephesus woven in.

None of us individually, and no church has yet attained the goal. I don’t believe the danger for us is the temptation to tolerate false teaching. I don’t think the temptation for us is to tolerate immorality. I don’t think we are on the verge of being declared spiritually dead.

No. I think the danger for us to lose our first love, not totally of course. But to lose that fire, to lose that zeal, to lose that passion!

CONCLUSION

Application – Finally, every single message to each of all 7 churches finish the same way → “**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**”

Heavens do declare the glory of God.
But they say nothing of the cross of Christ.

→ Read! Hear! Heed!