

Revelation 1:1-11 - The Things Which Must Soon Take Place

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Introduction - As the last book of the Bible, Revelation concludes many biblical themes and storylines, particularly those started in Genesis. Genesis explains the origin of sin, suffering, and death, and Revelation unveils Jesus' final victory over all of them. Genesis introduces Satan, and Revelation shows how the Seed of the woman crushes his head (Gen 3:15). Human history and civilization start in Genesis, and Revelation presents the end of both and the dawn of the physical presence of God's kingdom. Genesis shows the start of God's grace and judgment towards man while Revelation demonstrates the awesome result of His judgment and triumph of His grace. Mankind loses access to the Tree of Life in Genesis and regains access in Revelation. John received the revelation of Jesus to show Christians the things which must soon take place. We should read and obey Jesus' revelation since He saved us and promised blessings in these last days.

Background - John wrote from the isle of Patmos to the seven churches in Asia (Asia-minor, modern-day Turkey, v4). According to tradition, he was burned in oil before this exile. In 96 AD, the emperor Domitian's reign ends and John is freed, leading to an approximate writing date of 95 AD. Its 404 verses include ~280 citations and 550 allusions to the OT.

v1-3 - A blessing for those who read and heed - Revelation (*apokalupsis*) means an "unveiling." This is the unveiling of Jesus: the disclosure of the last days and how Jesus will return a second time to judge the earth. God gave it to Jesus, and the purpose of the book is to tell Christians what things must take place (Is 41:21-29; Rev 22:6-7). John is a witness of Jesus' earthly ministry and this unveiling of His testimony (Rev 19:10). Those who hear and keep/heed/guard/watch/do it will be blessed for the time is at hand (Rev 22:7; Matt 28:20).

v4-8 - Jesus: the faithful witness and savior - He is, was, and is to come; the eternal one (Mar 12:27; Is 44:6-8; Rev 21:6-8). Verses 4-5 include all members of the Trinity. Is 11:2 describes seven attributes of the Spirit. The seven Spirits before the throne speak of perfection, completeness, and fullness. He is a faithful witness: all that the Father has given Him, He has revealed (John 15:15; 3:31-36). He is the firstborn of the dead, the first to be resurrected and never die again, and the one who has control over death. Jesus has complete rule over all kingdoms on earth (Matt 28:18). He is worthy of praise because of Who He is and also what He has done: loved us (John 3:16), freed us from our sins by His blood (1 Pet 1:18-19), made us a kingdom, and made us priests (1 Pe 2:9-10; Heb 7:22-28). How worthy He is of glory and dominion forever and ever! His return will be unmistakable (Dan 7:13; Zech 12:10-14; John 19:37; Matt 24:30), and we look forward to it (1 Thess 4:13-18, 2 Thes 2:2; Titus 2:13). He is returning to repay each according to his deeds (Mat 16:27). Thus we can say with John, "Even so, amen!" He is the first and the last (Is 41:4).

v9-11 - John's patient endurance and the vision - John humbly identifies himself as a bondservant (v1) and brother. He's a partner in pain: in tribulation, the kingdom, and patient endurance (2 Th 3:5; Lu 22:31-32). He's been imprisoned due to his testimony of Jesus, but he's doing what he's supposed to be doing when he receives this revelation communicated by an angel (Rev 22:6-10). These seven churches are near Patmos and would facilitate a circular letter.

So, what? Now, what? Blessing awaits those who hear the words of this prophecy and put it into action (Rev 1:3; 22:7). God does not intend for it to be mere head knowledge; He intends for it to change the way we live.

- What are the things we are supposed to heed/keep from this chapter? How does it preach the gospel?
- How well do we partner with one another as partners in pain?
- How should Christians live considering that "the time is near"? How can we live up to our "sainthood"?
- Is what I aim to accomplish in life for His glory and dominion, or for my own?
- What did it mean for John to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day? Can we accomplish the same thing? If so, how?



Patmos and the Seven Churches

— Presumed route by which John's letter was circulated among the seven churches

