

Revelation Class 4 Chapter 1

1:1 The revelation or unveiling or disclosure of Jesus Christ...

What does John mean by 'of'...is it the revelation belonging to Jesus the Anointed One or is it the revelation in which Jesus the Anointed One is the content or the object unveiled? Candidly I think both are true...so I am not too concerned to parse this out too carefully. The revelation, John tells us, was given by God, to Jesus, for us.

The process of transmission has several steps, God gives it to Jesus, who gives it to an angel, who gives it to John...not unlike Zechariah and other non-canonical apocalypses. Revelation is not a newspaper written in advance. The intermediary angel signals that the hearers or readers will know things of the future and eschatology in a different way than we know other stuff of this world. "Must take place quickly" Is a comment driven by Daniel 2:28 Latter days...far off...LXX 'End of days'. See also Rev 22:10 'the time is near'...Heb 1:1 tells us that the 'end times have begun in the 1st century.

V.2 John is to function as a 'witness', this is a legal term just as we use it in judicial cases...it is speaks of one who testifies to what he or she has seen or heard or experienced...the function of the revelation is to call all readers and hearers to be faithful witnesses and again with the perspective that the 'time is near.' The idea of a prophet pronouncing blessing is a common one throughout the OT. Prophets reflect on the future in light of the covenant sanctions as in Lev 26 and Deut 28. Notice Revelation is written to be read aloud, presumably in a worship or synagogue setting. Notice how many blessings are pronounced...wild guess...you got it...7! Not accidental or random.

Vv.4,5 John to the 7 churches in Asia...this communiqué is a letter from Jesus Himself to His churches in what amounts to a presbytery or diocese. This is not unlike Paul's letter to the Ephesians...written not just to the church of Ephesus but the surrounding churches as well...perhaps these same churches received both circular communiqués for they are all in proximity. See the map. The 7 churches form a circuit. Notice how they are addressed in order that a messenger would come to them starting in Ephesus and heading north to Smyrna etc. He then begins his greeting in much the same way as Paul does his letters, Grace to you and peace the typical greeting for Greek letters combined with the typical Hebrew greeting of shalom or peace.

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“from him who is and who was and who is to come” this is a reference to God the first person of the Trinity and is a play on the ineffable name of God YHWH, I am. This is a play on the verb ‘to be’ which is what YHWH is in Hebrew and which forms a prominent theme in John’s Gospel and the book of Revelation...the so-called I am passages. But now John directly moves into a Trinitarian attribution of this blessing, to the 7 spirits who are before his throne, a reference to the Holy Spirit, and to Jesus Christ...in His role as the original ‘faithful witness’. Here the Trinity appears as Father, Spirit and Son/Messiah/King. Grace and Peace comes from the One God who operates in the churches personally, interactively and individually. Jesus, as Faithful Witness, this is now the third use of the term witness in the introduction of the letter...this theme of ‘witness is a key theme. The term for witness is the word from which we get our English word martyr...not accidentally. For witness in Jesus’ case and in the case of all of the Apostles, leaving only John have been martyred and even in these churches some have been martyred as witnesses as Stephen was in Acts 7:60. Here Jesus is offered not only as the object of faith, the One in whom we believe but also as the model of faith, the One whose example we are to follow...this Jesus following, this being made like Christ, is the essence of being a disciple. A disciple seeks not only to learn the teaching of the Rabbi, to adopt his interpretation of Torah but to imitate his character so that he or she might become what the Rabbi is. Jesus does what we cannot do...He make peace with God on our behalf which we cannot from our fallen position but He also does what we must do...endure and persevere by faith and faithfulness based on the words and promises of God.

The language of ‘faithful witness appears in Ps 89:27, a psalm of the Davidic covenant, a Messianic psalm. Turn here and see a psalm in which YHWH rescues as the One who stills the storm in Ps 89:9, who slays the sea monster of chaos in verse 10, who chooses and crowns the king of Israel in v. 19 and who makes the son of David, God’s son in v.26 and makes him the ruler of the kings of the earth in 27, who establishes his line forever in v. 29 and makes the moon a faithful witness in v. 37.

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John then ends this paean of praise and adoration with the phrase, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood." Here John employs Second Exodus and Passover terminology. The most important and defining experience in the history of Israel is the Exodus. Now Jesus comes as the new Moses and believers are the new Israel freed from slavery to sin and freed from the Author of Sin. God is planting His kingdom in the midst of the Nations/Chaos...and has rescued believers to function as priests to mediate his glory to the Nations. We become ministers in the Mission of God which is described in Hab 2:14.

Israel was rescued to be a Kingdom of priests Ex 19 to fulfill God's promise to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3. Priests mediate God's glory but are also the separated ones-set apart unto God...saints or separated or sanctified ones.

V. 7 Coming with the clouds refers to Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10 In the book of Daniel there are sections written in Aramaic and others in Hebrew. Daniel 2:45-7 are in Aramaic because they are a message for the Nations. Gods who claim to create but will perish from Heaven and Earth. Another Chiasm

Dan 2 Kingdom of God triumphs over Pagan Kingdoms

Dan 3 Shadrach, Mesach, and Abednego in fiery furnace as faithful witnesses suffering.

Dan 4 Pagan ruler humbled

Dan 5 Pagan ruler humbled

Dan 6 Daniel in the Lion's den Faithful witness suffering

Dan 7 Kingdom of God triumphs over Pagan Kingdoms

Daniel's message is God's YHWH's Kingdom triumphs through or by means of the suffering of the Faithful Witnesses ...So also Revelation Jesus AND the Church.

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V. 8 Forms a sort of inclusion...John ends this section as he began it in verse 4 referring to YHWH as 'the one who is and who was and who is to come...and to this appellation he adds Alpha and Omega as well as Lord God, and the Almighty. We have already spoken of the play on words involved in the phrase is was and is to come. Alpha and Omega, which appears in our stained glass window in the chapel and in the round window in the western wall of this sanctuary. Lord God is a reference to Gen 2:4b where God is first referred to as Lord God, which a combination of God's covenant name YHWH and the title Elohim translated God in Genesis 1.