

The Revelation of Jesus Christ – Part 1 (c. 95–96)

Revelation 1–3

Foreword

1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must happen very soon. He made it clear by sending his angel to his servant John,
 2 who then testified to everything that he saw concerning the word of God and the testimony about Jesus Christ.
 3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy aloud, and blessed are those who hear and obey the things written in it, because the time is near!

Greeting and Doxology

4 From John, to the seven churches that are in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from “he who is,” and who was, and who is still to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,
 5 and from Jesus Christ—the faithful witness, the firstborn from among the dead, the ruler over the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us and has set us free from our sins at the cost of his own blood
 6 and has appointed us as a kingdom, as priests serving his God and Father—to him be the glory and the power for ever and ever! Amen.

Summary Statement

7 (Look! *He is returning with the clouds*, [cf. [Dan 7:13](#)]
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him,
 and all the tribes on the earth will mourn because of him. [cf. [Zech 12:10](#)]
 This will certainly come to pass! Amen.)

8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God—the one who is, and who was, and who is still to come—the All-Powerful!

John’s Vision of Jesus Christ

9 I, John, your brother and the one who shares with you in the persecution, kingdom, and endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony about Jesus.
 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day when I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,
 11 saying: “Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches—to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.”
 12 I turned to see whose voice was speaking to me, and when I did so, I saw seven golden lampstands,
 13 and in the midst of the lampstands was one *like a son of man*. [cf. [Dan 7:13](#)] He was dressed in a robe extending down to his feet and he wore a wide golden belt around his chest.
 14 His head and hair were as white as wool, even as white as snow, and his eyes were like a fiery flame.
 15 His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.
 16 He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp double-edged sword extended out of his mouth. His face shone like the sun shining at full strength.
 17 When I saw him I fell down at his feet as though I were dead, but he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid! I am the first and the last, [cf. [Isa 41:4; 44:6](#)]
 18 and the one who lives! I was dead, but look, now I am alive—forever and ever—and I hold the keys of death and of Hades!
 19 Therefore write what you saw, what is, and what will be after these things.
 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Jesus’ Message to the Church in Ephesus

2:1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write the following: “This is the solemn pronouncement of the one who has a firm grasp on the seven stars in his right hand—the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands:
 2 ‘I know your works as well as your labor and steadfast endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil. You have even put to the test those who refer to themselves as apostles (but are not), and have discovered that they are false.
 3 I am also aware that you have persisted steadfastly, endured much for the sake of my name, and have not grown weary.
 4 But I have this against you: You have departed from your first love!
 5 Therefore, remember from what high state you have fallen and repent! Do the deeds you did at the first; if not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place—that is, if you do not repent.
 6 But you do have this going for you: You hate what the Nicolaitans practice—practices I also hate.
 7 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.’

Jesus' Message to the Church in Smyrna

8 "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write the following: "This is the solemn pronouncement of the one who is the first and the last, the one who was dead, but came to life:

9 'I know the distress you are suffering and your poverty (but you are rich). I also know the slander against you by those who call themselves Jews and really are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

10 Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. The devil is about to have some of you thrown into prison so you may be tested, and you will experience suffering for ten days. Remain faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown that is life itself.

11 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will in no way be harmed by the second death.'

Jesus' Message to the Church in Pergamum

12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write the following: "This is the solemn pronouncement of the one who has the sharp double-edged sword:

13 'I know where you live—where Satan's throne is. Yet you continue to cling to my name and you have not denied your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed in your city where Satan lives.

14 But I have a few things against you: You have some people there who follow the teaching of Balaam, who instructed Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel so they would eat food sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality.

15 In the same way, there are also some among you who follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 Therefore, repent! If not, I will come against you quickly and make war against those people with the sword of my mouth.

17 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give him some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on that stone will be written a new name that no one can understand except the one who receives it.'

Jesus' Message to the Church in Thyatira

18 "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write the following: "This is the solemn pronouncement of the Son of God, the one who has eyes like a fiery flame and whose feet are like polished bronze:

19 'I know your deeds: your love, faith, service, and steadfast endurance. In fact, your more recent deeds are greater than your earlier ones.

20 But I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and by her teaching deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

21 I have given her time to repent, but she is not willing to repent of her sexual immorality.

22 Look! I am throwing her onto a bed of violent illness, and those who commit adultery with her into terrible suffering, unless they repent of her deeds.

23 Furthermore, I will strike her followers with a deadly disease, and then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts. [cf. [Jer 17:10](#)] I will repay each one of you what your deeds deserve.

24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, all who do not hold to this teaching (who have not learned the so-called "deep secrets of Satan"), to you I say: I do not put any additional burden on you.

25 However, hold on to what you have until I come.

26 And to the one who conquers and who continues in my deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations—

27 *he will rule them with an iron rod
and like clay jars he will break them to pieces, [Ps 2:9]*

28 just as I have received the right to rule from my Father—and I will give him the morning star.

29 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Jesus' Message to the Church in Sardis

3:1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write the following: "This is the solemn pronouncement of the one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: 'I know your deeds, that you have a reputation that you are alive, but in reality you are dead.

2 Wake up then, and strengthen what remains that was about to die, because I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

3 Therefore, remember what you received and heard, and obey it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will never know at what hour I will come against you.

4 But you have a few individuals in Sardis who have not stained their clothes, and they will walk with me dressed in white, because they are worthy.

5 The one who conquers will be dressed like them in white clothing, and I will never erase his name from the book of life, but will declare his name before my Father and before his angels.

6 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

Jesus’ Message to the Church in Philadelphia

7 “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write the following: “This is the solemn pronouncement of the Holy One, the True One, who holds the key of David, who opens doors no one can shut, and shuts doors no one can open: [cf. [Isa 22:22](#)]

8 ‘I know your deeds. (Look! I have put in front of you an open door that no one can shut.) I know that you have little strength, but you have obeyed my word and have not denied my name.

9 Listen! I am going to make those people from the synagogue of Satan—who say they are Jews yet are not, but are lying—Look, I will make them come and bow down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

10 Because you have kept my admonition to endure steadfastly, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is about to come on the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one can take away your crown.

12 The one who conquers I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never depart from it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God (the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from my God), and my new name as well.

13 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

Jesus’ Message to the Church in Laodicea

14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write the following: “This is the solemn pronouncement of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the originator of God’s creation:

15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot!

16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth!

17 Because you say, “I am rich and have acquired great wealth, and need nothing,” but do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked,

18 take my advice and buy gold from me refined by fire so you can become rich! Buy from me white clothing so you can be clothed and your shameful nakedness will not be exposed, and buy eye salve to put on your eyes so you can see!

19 All those I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent!

20 Listen! I am standing at the door and knocking! If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into his home and share a meal with him, and he with me.

21 I will grant the one who conquers permission to sit with me on my throne, just as I too conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

22 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”’

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Chronological Notes

- 1) “Scholarly opinion concerning the date of Revelation’s composition is divided between an early date (64–69) and a late date (95–96). In addition, some opt for a middle ground, conjecturing that composition began in the 60s and was completed in the late 90s. Although certainty continues to be elusive, the late date, during the reign of Domitian, has considerably stronger support. On the whole the preponderance of the internal and external evidence suggests the mid-90s during the reign of Domitian as the most probable date of composition. The external testimony overwhelmingly favors the late date, which became the established tradition throughout church history. The internal testimony, while less than conclusive, also tends to support a later date. Although some passages may reflect historical circumstances prior to 70, most of the evidence seems to point to a later date. The book of Revelation was written around 95–96 by John in obedient submission to the vision he received while in exile on Patmos.”¹

¹ Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, (B&H Academic, 2009), p. 814–824.