

KNOWING MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

Summary and Historical Background

The New Testament begins with four Gospels, which records the humiliation of Jesus Christ: He took the form of a servant and was made in the very likeness of man. As a man he humbled himself to die, even to die on a cross (Phil 2:7-8). God gave His Son the responsibility to seek and to save lost sinners from going to Hell (Lk 19:10). Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God that sacrificed His life to take away our sins and save our lives (Jn 1:29). He took the sins of the world and died on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of every person. Then He was raised from the grave, which proved that His Father's righteous demands were fully met. Now any sinner can be saved from Hell when he turns from his sins and calls on the Lord to save him (Rom 10:13). When he puts his faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice to save him, he surely will be saved from God's holy wrath. Since Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, never to die again, He will share His life with all those that receive Him so they also will have eternal life.

The New Testament ends with Revelation, which records the glorification of Jesus Christ: God highly exalts Him by raising Him from the dead and gave Him a name which will cause every knee to bow to Him and every tongue to confess that He is Lord to the glory of His Father (Phil 2:9-11). Then near the end of the Apostle John's life, God gave His Son the revelation how this world would be taken from Satan and given to Him. In turn, Jesus Christ gave this revelation to His angel, who gave it to John. First, the glory of Christ was showed to John. Then John recorded Christ's examination of seven churches in Asia. Next, John saw Christ's authority and power to defeat Satan, which would come from God when He received the scroll from God's hand. Finally, John saw how Christ would defeat Satan during the Tribulation and cast him into the bottomless pit (abyss). Christ must do this so He can rule the world in righteousness for His Father. This last book of the New Testament lifts the image of Jesus Christ from humility on the cross to honor on the throne. Both facets of the life of Jesus Christ are necessary to restore the earth to righteousness so it can truly glorify God. Prophecy deals with both facets of Jesus' life because prophecy is about Jesus Christ. "The testimony of Jesus Christ is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10) Therefore, it is necessary to study Revelation to have the full knowledge of Jesus Christ

The divine characteristics of Jesus Christ given in this chapter show that He is qualified to be the Supreme Lord of the churches (Rev 2-3), the Superb Warrior during the Tribulation (Rev 4-19) and the Sovereign Ruler on earth in the Kingdom of God (Rev 20-22). Revelation discloses the final outworking of the plan of God in which He will be victorious over Satan and sin.

I. Introduction to Revelation – 1:1-3

A. The Title – 1:1

1:1 – "Revelation" in the title of the book is found in the first words, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." The Greek word for revelation is *apocalypsis*, which means to "take from," that is, to "uncover," "unveil," or "disclose." This book is a revelation of Jesus Christ. The words, "of Jesus Christ," are in the genitive case, which can be understood in two ways: as an objective genitive where Christ is being revealed, or as a subjective genitive where Christ is giving the revelation. Evidence for Christ being revealed is found in chapters 1, 5, 19-22, where His magnificent glory is unveiled. On the other hand, evidence for Christ giving this revelation to John is found in the first verse. It says that God gave to Christ a revelation, an unveiling of future things, which He gave to His angel (22:6), who gave it to John, who was to give it to the churches so all believers could benefit from Christ's revelation. Christ revealed to John His examination of seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev 2-3), His right to rule the earth (Rev 4-5) and His future judgment of Satan, Antichrist, the False Prophet and their allied nations (Rev 6, 8, 9, 11-20). He also gave John a preview of the New Jerusalem and its glory (Rev 21-22). It is possible to see this book as a revelation of Jesus Christ, but the better way is to see it as a revelation from Jesus Christ. For a

fuller explanation of this matter, see Robert L. Thomas' commentary, *Revelation 1-7, an Exegetical Commentary*, pp 50-52.

B. The Source – 1:1

1:1 – God is the ultimate source of this revelation. Jesus Christ received it from Him to reveal it to His servants. This was done when He revealed it to John by a special angel and John in turn revealed it to the rest of God's servants when he recorded these events in the book of Revelation. This is a reliable message because it came from God, who is omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, holy, self-existent, and eternal. These events will surely come to pass.

C. The Purpose – 1:1

1:1 – The purpose of Revelation is to reveal the absolute authority of Jesus Christ over all His creation (cf Mt 28:18). Since the Gospel accounts revealed the humble submission of Jesus Christ to His Father to save lost sinners (Phil 2:6-8), now it was time to reveal Jesus Christ as the mighty Son of God that could destroy the power of Satan and sit on the throne of David to rule all nations with wisdom and power (Phil 2:9-11). Chapter one gives an awesome description of Jesus Christ as John saw Him in His glory. His appearance was so overwhelming that he fell at His feet as dead (Rev 1:17). When the reader beholds the glory of Jesus Christ, it prepares him to respect His authority as He reveals present and future events. In chapters two and three, He reveals His present authority over the churches. In chapters 4-5, He discloses what will happen in the future, when God will offer to give the scroll in His hand to the one who is worthy to break its seven seals. The person who worthy will be able to claim the promise written in it. No one in Heaven will have the authority to take the scroll and open it, except Jesus Christ. It is quite clear from Psalm 2 that the decree of God is written in this scroll; it will declare who is the legitimate owner of the earth and has the authority to rule all nations (cf Ps 2:7-9; Rev 19;15). Satan has ruled the earth from the time he usurped the authority God gave to Adam and took it for himself. He did it by getting Adam to sin against God. When Jesus Christ receives the scroll from God, He will have the authority to remove Satan from his ruthless rule of the earth and take control of it for the glory of God, His Father (Rev 6-20). His authority over the earth will continue for 1000 years until it is time for the heavens and earth to be destroyed when all unbelievers will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20). Then He and His Father will rule over the new heavens and earth from the New Jerusalem in eternity (Rev 21-22). These events were revealed to John so he could record them for the churches (1:1, 11).

D. The Time – 1:1

1:1 – The promise that the revelation of these future events would take place shortly or soon or quickly can be puzzling since they have not taken place for two thousand years. How can that be soon? From man's viewpoint "soon" means very near, because his life-span is short. From God's viewpoint "soon" can be a year or thousands of years away, because He is eternal and a few thousand years is near to Him compared to eternity. So "soon" does not mean these events will happen immediately, but they will happen imminently. In prophetic literature, future events are revealed with no exact time for fulfillment. Anytime could be the time of fulfillment. So believers are told to watch and pray so they will be ready when prophesied events will take place. Prophesied events are imminent, but not necessarily immediate. The imminent fulfillment of events in this revelation provides continuous hope for believers that are walking in truth, but they are an ominous warning to those walking in sin.

E. The Means – 1:1

1:1 – God sent this message through His Son and it was signified by His angel to John. God did this through 'many signs, which are figures of speech and symbols. Many of these signs are based upon numbers, colors, literal people, places and events that are known to the students of the Old Testament. For example, when Christ promises the overcomer that he will eat the hidden manna (2:17), the reader must know that some manna was put in a pot and placed in the Ark of the Covenant, which was in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle (Ex 16:33-34) That is the fact upon which the figure of speech rests. Jesus said that He is the Bread of Life, but He is hidden from unbelievers. Those that ate the manna in

the wilderness died, but those that eat His flesh have everlasting life (Jn 6:48-51) Eating His flesh is a figure of speech for believing on Him, which gives a believer eternal life (Jn 6:63-64). Therefore, the reader is not left to his own imagination to interpret the figures of speech in this message. He can interpret it accurately by the Old Testament facts on which the figures of speech are based.

F. The Author – 1:1-2

1:1-2 – John, who was one of first disciples of Jesus, is the writer of Revelation, but the true author is God. John testified that this book is the Word of God according to the witness that he received from the angel that Jesus Christ sent to him (Rev 22:16). Therefore, these words must not be changed by addition or subtraction lest the one who does it suffer severe consequences for his action (cf. Rev. 22:18-19).

G. The Promise – 1:3

1:3 – A threefold blessing is promised by God in this verse. (1) A blessing is promised to those who read this prophecy in the public services. A leader would read the Scriptures for the congregation, because individuals did not have a copy of the Bible. One Bible per church was all they could afford. (2) A blessing is promised to those who hear this prophecy. They had to be in the church to hear it. (3) Finally, a blessing is promised to those who keep (obey) this prophecy. God expects this book to be understood and obeyed. The Christian that loves Christ's appearing will keep these words and be blessed by God. However, many believers neglect this book because they think it is too hard to understand. They may have been given fanciful meanings for the words instead of the natural meanings, which would make any book hard to understand. Notice, God calls Revelation a prophecy, not an allegory or a history. This is strong evidence for a futuristic interpretation, where words are treated as they are in normal literature.

II. Greeting to the Churches – 1:4-8

A. Recipients of the Greeting – 1:4

1:4 – John wrote to seven churches in Asia Minor (present day Turkey) that are representative of all churches that would come into existence in the ages to come. In chapters two and three the sins and solutions, praises and promises, criticism and counsel regarding these churches are recorded for the benefit of future churches (more will be said about this in chapter 2). Churches were given this revelation because they were the lampstands that would hold up the light of the Gospel to the world. They are to be lights in a world of darkness. The message in Revelation would be fuel for producing light for the nations.

B. Nature of the Greeting – 1:4

1:4 – John greets the churches by extending grace to them. This is an expression of generous favor to them. He also promises them peace from God. This is a blessing based on Christ's work of redemption, which brings an end to the hostilities between them and God (Rom 5:1).

C. Source of the Greeting – 1:4-8

1. The eternal God – 1:4

1:4 – The greeting comes from God, who is and was and is to come. He is the "I AM", the One who is always present (Ex 3:14-15). He never had a beginning and never will have an ending. His past, present, and future existence sets him apart from time. Since He is eternal, His knowledge of the future is perfect. This also is true of His Son and the Holy Spirit. The revelation that John received came from an infinitely perfect source.

2. The Holy Spirit – 1:4

1:4 – The greeting also comes from the seven spirits before the throne of God. The seven spirits occurs four times in Revelation (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). "Seven" in Scripture often refers to something that is perfect, complete or full. Here are two examples: Seven days are needed to make a full week; the seven churches perfectly represent all churches during the church age. The reference to the seven spirits is best understood as the Spirit's full power and perfect knowledge (Zech 4:1-10). Zerubbabel would not

have power or might in himself to build the Temple of God, but by the Spirit (4:6). The great mountain, a symbol of obstacles that Zerubbabel would encounter, would become a plain, a symbol of obstacles resolved by the Spirit (4:7). The seven eyes of the Lord that run throughout the earth represent the Spirit's knowledge that would enable Zerubbabel to build the Temple. The seven Spirits will appear again in 3:1, 4:5 and 5:6. The fact that the Spirit is before the throne of God shows He is under the authority of God to do whatever He desires. The Spirit's submission to God the Father is an example for believers; they must surrender their lives to Him to fulfill His plan.

3. Jesus Christ – 1:5-7

1:5a – The final greeting comes from Jesus Christ. A list of special things is said about Him. The list begins with His faithful witness to the truth. He bore a consistent and faithful testimony to His disciples (Jn 3:33-34; 17:6-8) and to unbelievers (Jn 3:32; 7:14-18; 8:25-28; 12:48-50) until the very end (Jn 18:37; 1 Tim 6:13).

The list then declares that Jesus Christ was the firstborn from the dead, which means He was the first one in time to be resurrected with a glorified body, but it also means He has the preeminence over all others that would be resurrected (Acts 26:23; Col 1:13; I Cor 15:20; Heb 2:14-15). He is first in rank over all His creation (Phil 2:9-11).

Christ is the Ruler (Prince) over the kings of the earth. Earthly kings exercise dominion over their kingdoms, but Christ is sovereign over all kings and their kingdoms. Their rule is to fulfill His purpose (Prov 16:3; 21:1; Eph 1:10-11). By the end of the Tribulation, all will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Zech 12:10; Rev 19:16).

Christ loved the believers in the churches. The TR text has this phrase in the past tense, which fixes the believers' attention on the greatness of His love when He sacrificed Himself for them. The Westcott and Hort text has this phrase in the present tense: Christ "keeps on loving us." Christ's love is just as vibrant toward believers today as when He died on the cross (Jn 10:11; Heb 13:8). Either expression is a great encouragement to a believer.

Christ washes sinners in His own blood when they receive Him as their Savior. John used a similar expression for believers who fall into sin when he said the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses them from all sin (1 John 1:7). Even though the blood of Jesus Christ was shed two thousand years ago, it still washes away the vilest sins and makes sinners clean.

1:6 – Christ has made believers a Kingdom; they are citizens in His Millennial Kingdom and they will rule the nations with Him (Phil 3:20; Rev 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4). He also has made believers to be priests; they have direct access to God now and they will continue to have this privilege in the Millennial Kingdom (Eph 2:18; 1 Tim 2:1-4; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 20:6).

Notice the progress of Christ's blessings to believers (Rev 1:5-6): He loved them, He washed them, He made them a Kingdom and He made them priests of God in His Kingdom.

Since Jesus Christ has done all these great things for believers, He is worthy of glory and dominion. "Glory" refers to His radiance, like the glory of the sun. "Dominion" refers to His power or might (cf. Dan 7:13, 14). This will be given to Him after the Tribulation; then He will rule the entire earth for 1000 years.

1:7 – John emphatically announced Christ's Second Coming; he would come with clouds when every eye will see Him. This is not the Rapture. John has reference to Christ's coming to earth after the Great Tribulation. When Christ comes to rapture the believers, not all eyes will see Him, but after the Tribulation all eyes shall see Him. Many of the Jewish leaders will recognize Him by His wounds, which their forefathers caused when they demanded that He be crucified (Zech 12:10). They will weep for their sins and years of rebellion against Him (Zech 12:11-14) and they shall be cleansed (Zech 13:1). Many Jews will believe on Him during the Tribulation so they will be ready for Him when He comes to them the second time. They will be gathered with Him in Jerusalem (Mk 13:24-27). Gentiles that are saved after the Rapture will also be blessed and honored at His coming.

Unsaved Gentiles also shall see Christ, but they shall see Him as their Judge (Rev 14:14-20). They shall cry out in terror, like the unsaved people will do in the middle of the Tribulation (Rev 6:12-17); the majority of them will refuse to repent. Nevertheless, every knee shall bend and every tongue shall confess His right to rule over them (Phil 2:10-11).

D. The Confirmation in the Greeting – 1:8

1:8 – Some scholars attribute the words of Revelation 1:8 to Christ and some to His Father. Both have strong support. What is said of one can be said of the other. We will consider these words as from the Father. He confirms the second coming of Christ that was stated in verse seven. His confirmation is true because He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. His words from the first to the last can be trusted. He can confirm the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, because He is eternal, the one who is, who was and who is to come. He knows all things from eternity past to eternity future. He knows Christ will return in the future; it is His plan. Finally, He can confirm Jesus return to earth; He is almighty and is able to accomplish whatever He has planned. He has the power to make certain that Christ will return. Satan cannot prevent His return. In the past God created all things for His glory and He sustains all that He made. In the future He will judge and destroy all things by His Son that displace His glory. Therefore, this message from the Father is of utmost importance.

When Christ introduced Himself to the church in Laodicea, He referred to Himself as the Creator who was the beginning (or, source) of all things (3:14). All things were made by Him and nothing was made apart from Him (cf Jn 1:3). This is true, but it does not negate the work of the Father and the Spirit in Creation. One might say the Father planned it, the Son created it and the Spirit breathed life into it. The Father, Son and Spirit are God; they are true in their words, eternal in their existence and almighty in their works. However, they differ in authority. The Father has the greatest authority, then the Son and finally the Spirit. What is said in 1:8 gives the greatest authority to the return of Christ to earth.

III. Vision of the Savior – 1:9-20

A. The Circumstances of the Vision – 1:9-11

1. John's physical location – 1:9

1:9 – John identified himself as the brother and companion of the believers in tribulation. He had been exiled to Patmos during Domitian's reign. John was exiled because of his faithful stand for Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet 4:19-20). Patmos was a foreboding rocky island where Rome sent prisoners to work in the mines. But the plans of wicked men could not shut out the Spirit of God. It was there that John saw Jesus Christ in His resurrected body and heavenly glory and he received a revelation from Him of immense importance.

2. John's spiritual condition – 1:10

1:10 – On a certain day John was in a spiritual condition, not limited to space and time, but "in the Spirit." He was in the Spirit "on the Lord's day." Some say that this vision came to John on a Sunday. That would fit well with Christ's judgment of the churches at the time of their meetings on Sunday (Rev 2-3). Others say that "on the Lord's day" refers to the Day of the Lord. In this case John was transported by the Spirit to that future Day, when Christ will judge all the wicked under the rule of Antichrist after which He will rule the earth for 1000 years in righteousness. Isaiah speaks of the Tribulation events as the Day of the Lord (Isa 2:12; 13:6, 9) and the Kingdom events as the Day of the Lord (Isa 27:12-13; 28:5; 30:26; cf 2:2-5). This view would fit well with the major message of this vision (Rev 4-22). John was confronted by a great voice that sounded like a trumpet. The great voice is that of Christ).

3. John's personal obligation – 1:11

1:11 – Christ commanded John to write what he was about to see and send the prophecy to the seven local churches located in Asia Minor, which today is known as Turkey. Christ's messages to these churches will be the study of chapters 2-3.

B. The Contents of the Vision – 1:12-16

Christ examines His churches so He can bless them (Rev 2-3). This vision of Christ shows His authority over the churches so they will honor Him with all due respect and worship Him. He is the magnificent, all-wise, all-powerful Sovereign, Who has the keys of Hades and death. His purpose in examining these seven churches was to put away any sin so they could be a pure, bright witness of the Gospel. His treatment of these churches was to encourage the Christians that gave heed to His words, but to warn those that refused to listen. Christ would severely punish rebellious members, who were preventing the light from reaching the lost. These members probably were not true believers; they were giving evidence of their fallen nature. Another purpose in examining these seven churches seems to be the example that this would leave for other churches down to the present day. Each church was different and faced different problems, but churches in all ages and in all cultures can relate to some of these problems and benefit from their example. Jesus is the same Lord of all the churches that claim to know Him as Savior. He never changes and the way He treated the seven churches of Asia is the way that He will treat the churches today.

1. The setting of the vision – 1: 12-13

1:12 – John hears a voice and turns to see seven golden lampstands (not candlesticks), which were to hold oil-burning lamps. These stands for lamps were symbolic of the potential witness of these seven churches. Just as a stand held up a lamp to bring light to a room, so these churches were to hold up the Gospel to give light to this spiritually darkened world (1:20). As gold is a precious metal, so the churches are precious to the Lord. "Seven" is a number that is often used for completion or perfection in Scripture. These seven churches give a complete spectrum of all types of churches found in all parts of the world in all ages (Rev 2-3).

1:13 – The first person that John saw in the midst of the seven golden lampstands was Jesus Christ. This position shows that He is in charge of the churches (Eph 1:22, 23; 3:21). He is their sovereign Lord. He gives them freedom to make choices, but holds them accountable for their actions (Rev 2-3). He is preparing the true believers in the churches to be faithful citizens so they will effectively rule the earth with Him when He brings His Kingdom to earth (Rev 2:26-27; 3:21).

In this verse Jesus is called the Son of man. It is necessary to read Genesis 1-2 to understand why He should be called the Son of man. God made the earth as the place where Adam and Eve would live and where their children would live. They were to fill the earth with people that loved God and would serve Him. God made Adam the king of the earth (Gen 1:26-28). He was to rule everything on the earth for God. But Adam failed in his responsible position when he listened to Eve and sinned against God by eating of the forbidden tree. Adam chose to obey Satan rather than God. When he obeyed Satan, he put himself under the authority of Satan; he delivered his kingdom to Satan (Lk 4:6). Satan usurped the rule of the earth by his deceit, but he had no right to rule the earth since he is not a man; he is an angel, a fallen angel. God did not make the earth a place for angels, and most certainly He did not make it a place for Satan. His place and the place of those who obey him will be in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10-15). God told Satan on the day that he usurped the earth for His purposes that he would be defeated by one born of a woman (Gen 3:15). It is now known that one is Jesus, the Son of man. He will take the kingdom from Satan and will rule over the nations of earth for the benefit of His Father. It is noteworthy that Daniel is the first one to refer to Jesus as the Son of man. He prophesied that the Son of man would receive His Kingdom from the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:13-14) as He promised in Psalm 2. In the fullness of time, at His first coming, the Son of God became the Son of man. He laid the foundation for Satan's final defeat by dying on the cross for the sins of all men. At His second coming, He will come with His Kingdom in Heaven that His Father, the Ancient of Days, has given Him and He will rule over all nations on earth. Then He will put Satan in the bottomless pit (the abyss) and will have His Kingdom on earth for 1000 years. The Son of man will take the place of Adam and not fail as he did.

Christ will be wearing a long garment down to His feet. Long garments were worn by important people (Mk 12:38).). Old Testament priests secured their garments about the breast with a girdle rather than at the waist, giving the robes a long majestic look. This revealed the honor and dignity of Christ and could

picture His role as a Priest and King to the churches. He is a Priest in that He intercedes for believers in the churches (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 4:14-16). He is a King with authority and has power to judge the churches (2:5, 16).

The golden girdle that secured His robe about his chest symbolized His righteousness and faithfulness (Isa 11:5). He does not need witnesses in His court of justice to know the truth; He knows all things and He will judge the churches as well as the nations with absolute righteousness (Isa 11:3-4). The apostle Paul speaks of the girdle in his description of the Christian soldier (Eph 6:14); it is a girdle of truth. Truth harmonizes well with righteousness and faithfulness.

2. The symbolism of the vision - 1:14-16

1:14 – Christ's hair is depicted as white like wool or snow. White hair could symbolize both His holiness (Isa 1:18) and His wisdom (cf Dan 7:9). He refers to His holiness in 3:7. He alludes to His wisdom by having the seven Spirits of God (3:1). The churches are blessed to have an all-wise and holy Head over them.

Christ's eyes are a flame of fire to discern the hidden intents of the hearts of men (Heb 4:13). He does not need a corps of investigators to discover what is happening in His churches, nor will He need them in His Kingdom when He rules all nations. He knows everything and He knows it accurately. Also, His eyes are a flame of fire to consume all sin (Heb 12:29). He will judge and not tolerate sin. Believers need to repent, because "the Lord will judge His people" and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:30, 31). With His eyes Christ will know how to deal with the churches--whether to bless them, or to correct them, or to punish them (Rev 2-3) and with His eyes He will rightly judge the beast (Antichrist), the false prophet and the armies gathered against Him in the final battle of the Tribulation (Rev 19:12).

1:15 – Christ's feet were like unto brass (probably bronze, a copper alloy), a metal that is symbolic of judgment for sin in the Bible. The brass altar for burnt sacrifices was symbolic for the judgment of sin (Ex 38:1-7). His feet were like brass that had been burned in a furnace. The intense heat would produce a strong alloy symbolizing strong judgment. His feet symbolized power to trample upon His enemies whether they are heretics or hypocrites in the church, or heathen in the world. He will consume them in judgment (Rev 2:18, 20-23; 19:15; cf 1 Cor 11:29-30; Isa 63:1-6).

Christ's voice was like the roar of many waters. It has reference to His authority. The awesome sound of His voice will be like that of a mighty waterfall or like the waves of the sea crashing against the rocks in a storm. He will be heard when He speaks. No longer will sinful men ignore Him. Both the saved and unsaved will give attention to Him. His voice will drown out all other voices because they are of lesser authority.

1:16 – Christ had seven stars in His right hand. The seven stars are the seven angels of the seven local churches in Asia (1:20). The Greek word for "angels" can also be translated "messengers." With the meaning of messengers it would indicate that they are the pastors of these churches. Since Christ holds the pastors in His right hand, it shows that the pastors are responsible to Him for bringing His messages to their congregations. A pastor's first responsibility is to Him, not to the church. He must give an account of his ministry in the church to Christ (Heb 13:17). However, the fact that Christ is among the churches (lampstands) to judge their ministry, it shows that the churches are ultimately responsible to Him.

Christ had a sharp sword with two edges come out of His mouth. This signifies that His words are like a sword to judge the sin of believers and unbelievers (Rev 2:12, 14-16; Rev 19:15, 21; cf Isa 49:2). This weapon has reference to a large sword used in bringing great devastation to an enemy. It is a different sword than that mentioned in Eph 6:17 or in Heb 4:12. This sword was used to bring death. The Roman soldiers did not swing their swords from side to side to hack at the enemy, for that only wounded them. Instead, they taught their soldiers to use their long two-edged swords to jab at the enemy in order to pierce through them and kill them. So Christ's word will slay the carnal believers and hypocrites in the churches (1 Cor 11:29-30) as well as the armies of the world that oppose Him (Isa 11:4).

Christ's whole being will shine like the penetrating light of the sun at high noon. In the New Jerusalem there will be no need of the sun or the moon to give it light, because His glory will be its light (Rev 21:23). John saw the brilliant light of His countenance on the mount of transfiguration (Mt 17:2). This figure represents the holiness of Christ in its true beauty and is reassuring to the righteous believers in the churches (Rev 3:7).



SYMBOLIC IMAGE OF JESUS CHRIST

C. The Consequences of the Vision – 1:17-20

1. John's reassurance – 1:17-18

1:17 – When John saw this vision of Christ, he fell at His feet as though he were dead. John was in the presence of unveiled holiness, power, and majesty. It produced the same overpowering effect upon him as upon Abraham (Gen 17:3); Manoah (Jud 13:20); Ezekiel (Ezk 3:23; 43:3; 44:4); Daniel (Dan 8:17; 10:8-9, 15-17); and upon the disciples on the mount of transfiguration (Mt 17:6). Human flesh cannot endure the sight of pure holiness (Ex 33:18, 20). Since the holiness of God had such an effect upon John, a spiritual disciple of Christ, consider its consuming destruction upon the lost (Rev 6:14-17; 20:11).

Christ laid his hand on John and told him not to be afraid. The awesome vision terrified John, but Christ reassured him that all was well. The right hand is symbolic in Scripture of divine power (Dt 33:2).

Jesus Christ told John that He was the first and the last. He is eternal. This proves that He is more than a prophet. He is one of the persons of the Godhead.

1:18 – Jesus Christ went on to tell John that He is the living one that was dead, but now is alive forever. Jesus' death and resurrection is the Gospel message. The fact that He will be alive forever is assurance that those who die with Him will live with Him forever (Gal 2:20). John had been an eyewitness of Jesus' death and resurrection, but now he was seeing Jesus in brilliant glory, so Jesus had to reassure John that He is the same person. At the present time He lives, in the past He was dead (better, He died), and in the future He will always be alive.

Jesus Christ has the keys of death and hell. The keys speak of authority. Christ is sovereign and has full authority over death and hell. "Hell" is not the best translation for the Greek word, *hades*. Hades is the place of the dead while Hell is the prison of the lost. In the Old Testament, the place of the dead was called Sheol. Lower Sheol (lower Hades) was the place for unbelievers, while Sheol (Hades) was the place of believers. Before Christ's resurrection, believers went to Hades, also called Abraham's bosom or Paradise (Lk 16:22; 23:43). But Jesus' resurrection changed this. When He arose from the dead, He changed the place of the Old Testament saints by taking them to Heaven (Eph 4:8). His resurrection also guaranteed His promise that the gates of Hades would not prevail against the Church (Mt 16:18). Hades cannot keep the bodies and spirits of believers in the grave. True believers go to Heaven immediately after death. Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).

2. John's instructions – 1:19-20

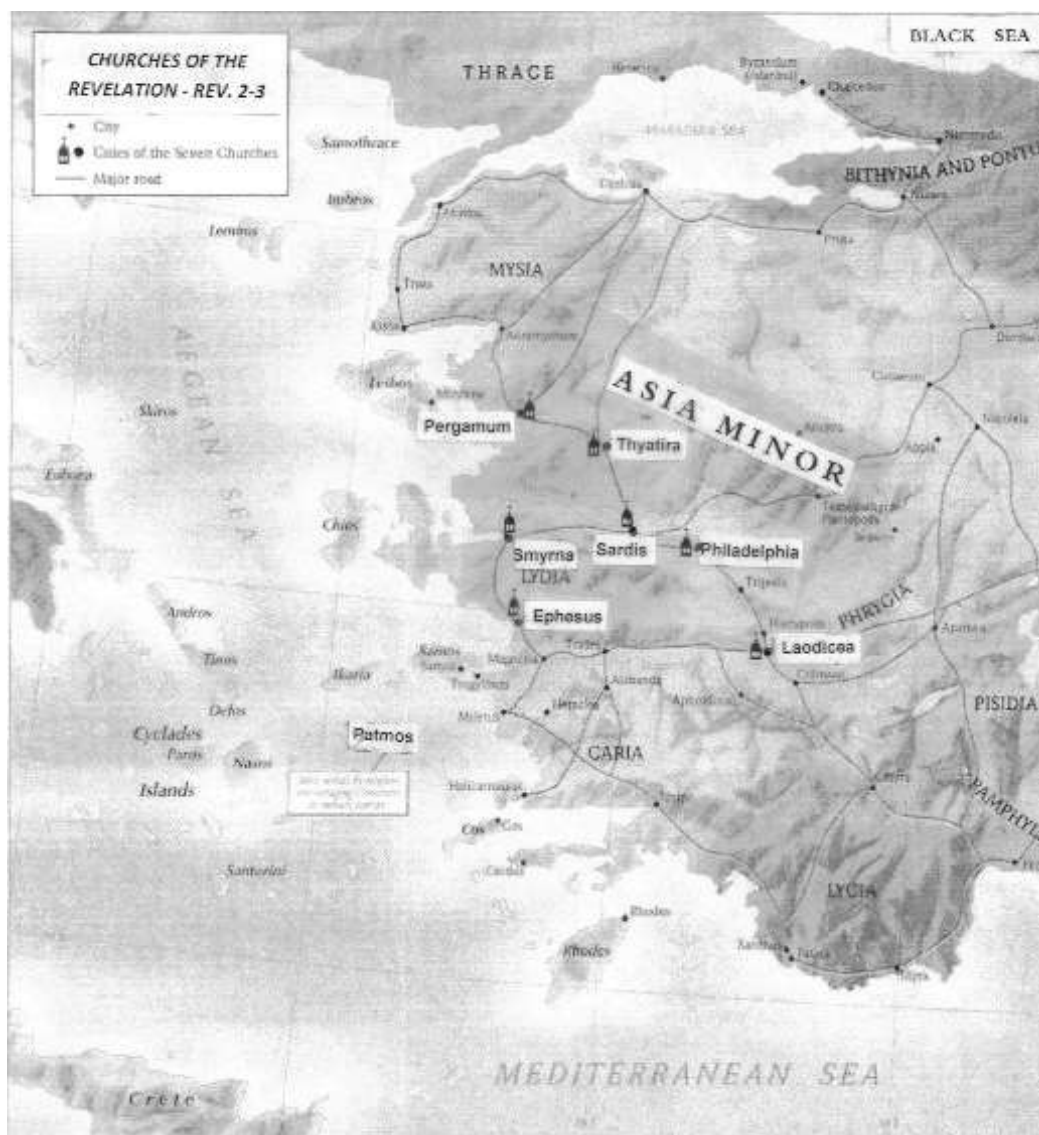
1:19 – Then Christ commanded John to write what he saw when he beheld His glory (Rev 1) followed by the things which are, namely the condition of the seven churches of Asia Minor that existed in his time (Rev 2-3). Finally, he was to write the things that shall be hereafter, which referred to scroll with seven seals given to Christ, the detailed events of the Tribulation and a glimpse into both the Millennial Kingdom and the Eternal Kingdom (Rev 4-22). This is the divine outline of the book of Revelation.

1:20 – The mystery of seven stars in Christ's right hand and the seven lampstands is explained to John. A "mystery" in Scripture is something that cannot be known except by a divine revelation. For instance, the rapture was a mystery to believers until God revealed it to Paul (1 Cor 15:51ff).

In this case the mystery of the "stars" is identified as angels, which can be translated "messengers." These are the individual pastors of each of the seven local churches addressed in chapters 2-3.

The mystery of the "lampstands" represents the seven historical churches in the cities of Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. A map showing the location of these churches in Asia Minor (present day Turkey) is given below and on the next page. The situation

in these churches will be discussed in chapters 2-3.



LOCATION OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION