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# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

## LESSON 1 – Introduction to Prophetic Concepts and the Revelation

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### COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, Tyndale House Publishers (1983)

### ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

In addition to the books indicated in the notes, the following books are excellent resources:

John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Moody Publishers (1989)

(outstanding book, very readable and not super technical)

Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, Moody Publishers (1992)

(lots of good information, very thorough, super deep and technical, this book chases every rabbit)

J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, Zondervan

(a thorough treatment of Biblical prophecy; this is an excellent book often considered the “standard” in the field)

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, Ariel Ministries (2003)

(more detailed than the Pentecost book, with a special focus on the role of Israel in prophecy).

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### LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this lesson is to introduce the prophetic concepts of the garden theme, the Abrahamic and David Covenants, the Day of the Lord, the tribulation or Daniel's 70th week, the inheritance of Jesus Christ, the Rapture, the Revelation of Jesus Christ and study the first chapter.

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### LESSON OUTLINE

#### I. THE GARDEN

##### A. Some questions about the Garden of Eden

- i. Whose garden was it? (Genesis 2:8)
- ii. Who lived in the garden? (Genesis 3:8)
- iii. What was the one affirmative command given to Adam? (Genesis 1:28)
- iv. What would have occurred, with reference to the Garden, if Adam and Eve had not sinned? (Genesis 2:24)
- v. Can God's purposes be thwarted?
- vi. What man can fulfill the one affirmative command given to Adam? (Daniel 7:14, Hebrews 2:5-11)

##### B. The Garden is a recurring theme (just a few examples below)

- i. The Feast of Booths (Leviticus 23:39-43)
- ii. Jesus' triumphal entry (John 12:12-13)

iii. The Tabernacle and the Temple (1 Kings 6:18, 23, 29; Ezekiel 41:15-26)

iv. New heaven and new earth (Revelation 21-22)

## II. COVENANTS

- A. The Abrahamic Covenant refers to the promises God made to Abraham that he would build a nation from his offspring, that he would be a blessing to the nations, and that he and his offspring (i.e., Israel) would possess the Promised Land forever. Key passages include Genesis 15:4-7 and 17:3-8.
- B. The Davidic Covenant refers to the amplification of the Abrahamic Covenant found in 2 Samuel 7:8-16 in which God promises to establish David's throne forever and establish the Jewish people in the Promised Land forever. (see also Psalm 89:3-4; Zechariah 6:12-13; Luke 1:32)

## III. THE DAY OF THE LORD

- A. A day of the Lord can refer to any time of national blessing or national judgment on Israel or others.
- B. The Day of the Lord refers to a future time of climactic national blessing for Israel (and all children of God) and global judgment.
- C. Representative (but far from exhaustive) verses. (Daniel 9:24-27, 12:1-7; Joel 3:1-3, 9-21; Zephaniah 3:6-17; Haggai 2:20-23; Zechariah 14)

## IV. THE TRIBULATION OR DANIEL'S 70TH WEEK

- A. Daniel's 70th Week refers to a future **seven year** period of time at the beginning of the Day of the Lord when God executes judgment on those that oppose him. (Daniel 9:24-27)
- B. Daniel's 70th Week is also referred to as the Tribulation.
- C. Sometimes the latter half (latter 3.5 years) of the Tribulation is referred to as the Great Tribulation because of the increased severity of the judgments during this period.

## V. THE INHERITANCE OF JESUS CHRIST

- A. Jesus has inherited all of creation. In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Jesus returns to take what is his.
- B. Key passages concerning the inheritance of Jesus Christ. (Zechariah 9:9-10; Psalm 110, Psalm 2, Acts 13:26-33, Daniel 7:9-14)
- C. Children of God can share in Jesus' inheritance. In part, our inheritance includes reigning with Christ in the future. (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:9-10, 20:4)

## VI. THE RAPTURE

- A. This term does not occur in the Bible, but is a transliteration of a Latin term (*rapturo*) that does occur in the Latin translation of the Bible. The Greek word is *harpazo* and means to "snatch away." For a good physical illustration of what the word means, read Acts 8:39.
- B. The rapture refers to an event where all living Christians are "snatched away" to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds to forever be with him. Christians who have died will be resurrected first, followed by the resurrection (i.e., receiving of our glorified/eternal bodies) of Christians living at the time of the event. The tribulation follows (not necessarily immediately) the rapture event.

- C. Key passages on the rapture. (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58)
- D. There are different views about whether and when the rapture occurs. The view that the rapture precedes the Tribulation is called the *pre-tribulational view*. The view that the rapture comes at the end of the Tribulation is called the *post-tribulational view*. These are the primary viewpoints, although there are others such as the *mid-tribulational* and *pre-wrath* views (but they are not widely held).
- E. Support for the *pre-tribulational view*:
  - i. This is a natural result of interpreting the verses according to a literal, plain sense hermeneutic.
  - ii. This is consistent with God's pattern throughout the Bible of removing His children prior to moving in judgment against a people group.
  - iii. Verses indicating *pre-tribulational* rapture. (Luke 21:34-37; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, 5:1-10, Revelation 3:10)
- F. For further detailed study of the rapture and the tribulation.
  - i. John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation*, Zondervan (1976) (this considers the post-tribulational viewpoint in detail and rebuts it).
  - ii. John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, Zondervan (1979) (this book addresses at length the arguments for a pre-tribulational rapture; an outstanding book).
  - iii. Charles C. Ryrie, *Come Quickly, Lord Jesus*, Harvest House Publishers (1996) (an excellent book about the rapture, but much shorter and less technical than the Walvoord book).

## VII. THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

### A. AUTHORSHIP BY THE APOSTLE JOHN

- i. Revelation 1:1 states that the author is "John" and that he is on the island of Patmos (v. 9)
- ii. Early church fathers recognized the Apostle John as the author (Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others).
- iii. Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and the historian Eusebius all confirm that the Apostle John was exiled on the Isle of Patmos. Eusebius also affirms John's return from the isle immediately after the death of Emperor Domitian (A.D. 96). Iranaeus adds that John lived in Ephesus after returning from Patmos.

### B. DATE OF THE WRITING

- i. Most conservative scholars either date the book at 95 or 96 A.D.; some date it at 68 or 69 A.D.
- ii. Domitian reigned in Rome from 81-96 A.D. The church father, Iranaeus (103-202 A.D.), wrote that John wrote from Patmos during the reign of Domitian, and since this is confirmed by other early church writers, such as Clement of Alexander and Eusebius, most conservative scholars believe the book was written between 81-96 A.D.
- iii. Specifically, Iranaeus wrote: "We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him

who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, **towards the end of Domitian's reign.**" (emphasis added)

- iv. The later date (95 or 96) has better support, but the date of the writing should not affect our interpretation of the book.

### C. OVERALL OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- i. Verse 1:19 provides God's overall outline of the book.
- ii. There are three sections
  - 1. The things which were, namely John's vision in chapter 1.
  - 2. The things which are, namely the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3.
  - 3. The things which are to come, namely the future events recorded in chapters 4 through 22.

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## EXEGETICAL OUTLINE OF REVELATION 1

- I. Introduction (1:1-8)
  - A. Prologue (1:1-3)
  - B. Salutation (1:4-8)
- II. The Vision of Christ (1:9-20)
  - A. The Setting (1:9-11)
  - B. The Scene (1:12-16)
  - C. The Subsequent Response and Commission (1:17-20)

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## NOTES ON REVELATION 1

**1:1** "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:"

The title of the book is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ." It is not *revelations*, but *the Revelation of Jesus Christ*. The word revelation (Greek *apokalupsis*) means unveiling. The revelation was transmitted from God the Father to Jesus to an angel to the Apostle John to Jesus' slaves. The word "shortly" indicates imminence. We are living in the Church Age and the events in the Revelation are next on God's prophetic calendar.

**1:2** "Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

John assures us that he is merely giving witness to what God has shown him. See Hebrews 1:1-2 for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

**1:3** "Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand."

This is the only book in the Bible that expressly states a blessing for those who read or hear the book (i.e., hear in a public reading in a 1st century church) AND keep it. Surely this is true of all the books in the Bible, but only in this one is it expressly stated.

**1:4** “John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;”

This verse makes the first of several references to the number seven. This is God’s number of perfect completion. God did not arbitrarily pick churches in the 1st century to address the book to, but instead, intentionally picked seven churches in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). John expresses a greeting and desires that his audience be the recipients of the grace and peace that only God give. In this verse, John indicates that the grace and peace come from God the Father and the seven Spirits before his throne, a reference to the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit. (Isaiah 11:1-2) John pictures the Holy Spirit before the throne of the Father.

**1:5** “And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,”

Jesus is the faithful witness, the first to receive a resurrected (or glorified body), and the prince of the kings of the earth. This phrase “kings of the earth” occurs several times in the Revelation and elsewhere and refers to the rulers of the Gentile nations. (Psalm 2:2, Revelation 6:15, 16:14, 17:2, 18, 18:3, 9, 19:19, 21:24) As the prince of the kings of the earth, Jesus is sovereign over them all. Jesus washed us with his own blood on the cross.

**1:6** “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

As we will see in the unfolding of the Revelation, Jesus is returning to take what is his (all creation) and rule over it. Because of what Christ did for us, we will rule with God (i.e., kings) and dwell with Him (i.e., priests). In light of what he did for us, he is worthy of our praise, and he will have glory and dominion (i.e., a kingdom that is all of creation) forever.

**1:7** “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”

When Jesus returns (the Second Coming or Second Advent, not the rapture), everyone will know it. He will come with the clouds (recall Acts 1:9-11) and every living person without exception will see him, including the Jewish people (those who pierced him, see Zechariah 12:10) and the Gentiles. There shall be wailing because Jesus is coming in judgment.

**1:8** “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

Jesus asserts that he is the “alpha and omega” (i.e., the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet). See Isaiah 44:6, where God the Father states the same. Jesus expresses here that he is God, the beginning and the ending, the all in all. Jesus is (he lives), he was (he has always existed), and he is to come (he is returning). Jesus is the “Almighty,” a common name for God that speaks of his power and sovereignty.

**1:9** “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

John identifies with his audience, for he is spiritually a brother and friend in their present distress. This in part gives an indication for the purpose of the book, which is to comfort distressed churches. John will share the kingdom that Jesus will establish with his audience. John writes from Patmos, a small island off the coast of Turkey (a prison island at the time). He is jailed there because he faithfully preached the word of God and testified of Jesus Christ. He truly can identify with the persecuted he writes to.

**1:10** “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,”

John writes on a Sunday, the “Lord’s Day.” John likely received the vision, and announces it, on Sunday because that is the day of the week the early churches gathered (by apostolic practice) to worship and it is the day of the week on which Jesus raised himself. Jesus’ resurrection was his victory over death and Satan and made him the heir of creation, and it is this last point that is a major theme of the Revelation. John is in the Spirit, perhaps a trance-like state in which he can see the visions God has for him. John hears a loud voice like a trumpet.

**1:11** “Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”

Jesus instructs John to write down the visions and circulate the writing to the seven churches in Asia Minor, namely the churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

**1:12** “And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;”

When John looks to Jesus, he sees seven golden candlesticks. These are identified in verse 20 as the seven churches.

**1:13** “And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”

Jesus walks in the midst of the seven candlesticks. He is majestically attired. No man can make a church. Jesus makes churches and they are his. They have the privilege of his walking among them. As we will see later, this cannot be taken for granted; when a church goes too far in apostasy, it can cease to be a church. As long as a church is a golden candlestick, it is absolutely secure in Christ.

**1:14** “His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;”

John is describing the glory of Jesus. During Jesus’ earthly ministry, that glory was veiled, except at the mount of transfiguration. (see Daniel 7:9)

**1:15** “And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.”

His feet like brass indicates strength. His voice is loud, with indicates authority.

**1:16** “And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”

Jesus holds seven stars in his right hand. They are identified in verse 20 as the pastors of the seven churches. Men do not make pastors, Jesus does. Those he makes pastors he holds in his right hand, meaning that he gives them a certain authority and protection. The sword from his mouth probably indicates the he can bring judgment by his very words.

**1:17** “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:”

John did the natural thing, coming face to face with Jesus and experiencing the overwhelming purity and holiness of Jesus as compared with his sinfulness, he hits the dirt. (compare Ezekiel 1:28; Isaiah 6:5) Similar to the removal of Isaiah’s fear, Jesus removes John’s fear so that he can receive the vision and write it.

**1:18** “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

Jesus testifies of his life, death, and resurrection (which is permanent). Jesus has the keys of hell (or hades) and of death, meaning that he has authority over them. By virtue of his death, burial and resurrection, he has authority over these things. This is good news to us, because through Jesus Christ, we escape death and enjoy life eternal.

**1:19** “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;”

John is commanded to write what he sees. This verse is one of the most critical in the book, for it provides the divine outline. John is to write the things which were (chapter 1), the things which are (chapters 2 and 3), and the things to come (chapters 4 through 22). This indicates that chapters 4 through 22 were events future from John’s perspective.

**1:20** “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

This first chapter is in part what we call apocalyptic literature. It uses abstract symbols. One of the characteristics of apocalyptic literature is that God tends to explain the symbols to us, not hide them. The reason God uses this style is to take global events and demonstrate His perspective and sovereignty over them by putting them in relatively straightforward pictures we can see. Here, Jesus identifies the seven candlesticks as the seven churches John will write to, and the seven stars are their pastors.

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## RECOMMENDATION

It is highly recommended that each person taking this course read pages 17-46 for this lesson and chapter 2 for next week in Henry M. Morris’ commentary.