**Questions on Revelation chapter 1**

**Introduction**

So far, our study related to the book of Revelation has been in regard to understanding apocalyptic writing and the differing methods by which people will attempt to interpret the book. As a matter of fact, I think that it has been mentioned in our studies the relationship between the word translated as revelation and apocalypse or apocalyptic.

In the course of identifying some of the differing methods of interpretation we were able to see where a misunderstanding or mis-interpretation of this book have led some folks into false doctrine or even served as foundation for some of these falsehoods. We also looked at the way that we (the brethren here in Grapevine) intend to approach our study of this book and hopefully be edified and uplifted in having a greater understanding of the book, as well as how it might be applied today.

We also looked at some of the conditions under which Christians at the time of this writing had to live and the hardships and persecutions that were afforded by the Roman government under which they lived.

If you don’t mind, the first thing that I’d like to do is share a thought about the book as a whole.

*2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*

*Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

We have examples of how dreams and visions were revealed and interpreted in the Book of Daniel

We know that there is much of the New Testament that would be very difficult, if not altogether impossible to understand without at least some knowledge of Old Testament Scripture. I say this so that I might give you a few things to consider about the book of Revelation as we begin our study. Much of what we find in the book of Revelation is not original. As a matter of fact, references are scattered throughout the Old Testament books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah, as well as other writings of the Apostle John and other books of the New Testament.

Let me real quickly just give you a stake in the ground regarding this point. Look to the book of Daniel and see where Daniel reveals dreams and interpretations of King Nebucanezar.

I believe that it is a really great thing when anyone wants to study to have a greater understanding of those things that can be found in God’s word. However, one of our preaching brethren told me that some of the best material to study as a pre-requisite to a study in the book of Revelation is….just simply the rest of the Bible. A familiarity with the rest of the Bible will help us to get the most out of a study in the book of Revelation. It was this understanding and familiarity of the signs and symbols seen in the Apocalyptic writing of John that potentially made Revelation a more easily understood and meaningful book for folks at the time of the writing.

Verse 1 begins by declaring what this writing is, and declares that it is, **“The Revelation of Jesus Christ”**. I’ve heard terms applied to John in reference to this book, when he is called John – the revelator. I suppose that’s correct if what that means is that he given was tasked with recording the things that are revealed in this book and were revealed to him. As a matter of fact, when verse 2 says that John bare record in the KJV of the Bible, other translations say that he testified, gave testimony to, or bare witness.

*Re 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. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, 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.*

But as we will notice shortly, the revelation of Jesus Christ had a heavenly source. The meaning of the word, “Revelation”, is much like it sounds. It is a revealing, uncovering, disclosure, manifestation or perhaps to make something that was previously obscure clear.

As explained in verse one, this revelation was passed from God to Jesus, and from Jesus to John through the agency of an Angel.

*Re 4:1 ¶ After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*

Without going into too much detail, there are probably a number of places that we could go to confirm the agency of angels. However, one that is specific to the book of Revelation is over in chapter 10 when the mighty angel takes the book from the lamb (spoken of in Chapter 5) and gives it to John.

This is born out in the later part of verse 1 where it says, *“and He sent and signified it through his angel unto his servant John.”* and then through John’s written record in the form of this book of “Revelation” to Jesus’ servants which were, at least initially, the 7 Churches of Asia and possibly symbolic of the Church as a whole at the time of this writing,…and now even Christians such as you and I today.

*Re 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

It was through the agency of an angel that this revelation was signified to be of God…. meaning that it was approved from **THE** SOURCE of supreme deity. It’s clear from verse 1 that the Book of Revelation is provided on God’s authority.

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God demonstrated His authorship by the use of signs. The book of Revelation is famous for the use of symbols and symbolism. There are some that would claim a differentiation between signs and symbols.

When miracles are performed in the scriptures they are often referred to in terms of signs and wonders and were for the purpose of proving the deity of God and to produce belief in Him, Jesus…… or as an endorsement of someone who was acting with the approval of God Himself. And that’s just what it was here in verse 1. It was God’s stamp of approval. My understanding is that historically letters would be sealed with wax and that the impression of one’s family sign would would be placed in the wax. This would signify that the one who’s seal was impressed upon the wax was the one who sealed the contents of the letter. It bore their mark and served as proof of who the contents were from. Coming back to the word “signified” in verse 1; something **“signified”** of God bore His seal of approval.

As we study the scriptures we read of miraculous “Signs and Wonders”, and “Symbols and Symbolism”, which is why we need to look at what these things mean. If you are anything like me, you will sometimes put these two words into the same grouping or category, maybe even synonyms of one another (and that may be appropriate to the way in which we use these words). In speaking with some of the other brethren, it does appear that this is true of more than just myself. But I think that an in-depth study of these words may cause us (at least in places) to make a distinction in their purpose, at least as it pertains to our study, may not actually be synonymous with one another. They convey a different meaning or purpose. Signs mean what they mean, and they are what they are **because God declares them as signs.** At times men wanted proof in order to believe. As we should be painfully aware, some still didn’t believe.

*Joh 4: 48* Jesus made that statement*, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*

Almost every time the original word for sign (semeion) is used, it is in reference to a proof of the Deity of God. They are not contextually dependent as we will find that symbols sometimes are. I want to study this at greater length myself, but for now I’ll tell you that those who would make a distinction between signs and symbols will also tell you that a symbol is contextually dependent and that they are representative or stand in the place of something else, while signs are definitive every time that they come up and are not contextually dependent.

*Ac 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth,* ***a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs****, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:*

*Nicodemus said in John 3:2 …. for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

A sign represents something definitive every time that it comes up. It was for the purpose of either manifesting God’s approval and/or to assert His supreme deity. There were lots of god’s (with a little “g”) that people worshiped, and still do today, even though they may not think of them as such. But this was ***THE God (Capital “G”).***

And it was the revelation of THE Son of God that was **signified** to be the revelation of Jesus Christ…because God said that it was.

Verse 1 says that this revelation was to show **Jesus’ servants** **things which must shortly come to pass.**

Verse 3, as well as Chapter 22:10 both say … ”***for the time is at hand”.***

Why do you think that it was important for the recipients of this revelation to know that these things must shortly come to pass? So we need to keep in mind the circumstances of Christians at the time of this writing. I think that this is a really important point for the Christians at that time and for us today. Important enough that its mentioned at least three times of note. And I think that we should also note the word “must” when it is mentioned that these things “must…shortly come to pass. God would not allow His Kingdom to suffer defeat. These words represented light at the end of the tunnel. Something to strengthen their foundation (their faith) in the wake of the storm (physical hardships or even the threat of losing their lives for worshiping someone or something above the Roman emperor Domician). The bible tells us in Heb. 6:19 that hope is an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. So when hardships came, it was not a surprise, but would serve to strengthen their faith in God, their hope for better things, their confidence in the ultimate Victor, and the One and Only Almighty God who was able to save their souls in eternity.

They needed to know that there was hope. Hope is what would help them endure the hardships that would shortly come to pass and has helped Christians throughout time to do just exactly that.

There are a number of Beatitudes, or “**Blessed are’s**”, that are found distributed throughout the book of Revelation. Verse 3 contains the first of these. Others can be found in 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7 and 22:14…interestingly enough, making a total of seven. Verse 3 has 3 components, conditions if you will, for being blessed

* Read the words of this prophecy (Johns written testimony of the Revelation of Jesus Christ)
* Hear the words of this prophecy meaning that they must understand. Both the apostles John and the Apostle Paul spoke of hearing but not understanding. (this has proved to be somewhat challenging for man over time), and now don’t just read, don’t just hear or understand, but
* “Keep”, hold fast, stay focused on and obey those things that are written therein. Remember what you have learned in the revealing or uncovering of those things spoken of. One translation says, “*and lay to heart that which is written*”.

*Jas 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

*Re 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

How would these Christians be blessed? In the same way that we hope to some day be blessed.

*Re 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. 6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

*Re 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

I want to encourage everyone, self included to read all of the book of Revelation. But if you want to know how those that read, understand and keep the words of this prophecy are blessed, go read chapters 21 and 22.

***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; 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,***

So, in verse 4 John refers to the seven churches of Asia, and yet they are not specifically named until coincidentally, seven verses later in verse eleven.

*Re 1:11 … 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.*

Knowing the symbolism of numbers used in this book, it’s an interesting question to consider when it comes to who John is writing to. It’s been talked about in previous studies that the number seven is a symbol of completeness, and yet there are seven specific churches in seven specific places that are specifically named, each with its own set of circumstances and challenges.

Let me digress for just a moment and ask if you’ve ever heard of the term **Synecdoche**? If I understand correctly it’s when a part of something is used to represent the whole or visa versa. I believe that this may be part of what is happening here with regard to addressing the seven churches of Asia. An online example of Synecdoche was that of Cleveland winning by 6 runs. As you might guess, Cleveland is being used to represent the Cleveland baseball team.

While churches existed in each of these places, and each addressed in terms of what their spiritual challenges may have been, I think that perhaps the church universal was also being addressed.

A really helpful quote that I believe has already been made from this pulpit is that of Brother Ron Courter with regard to numbers in the book of Revelation. He said that “numbers count, but you don’t count numbers”. In other words, numbers are meaningful in Revelation, but not necessarily with regard to mathematics.

The opening salutation found in verses 4 and 5, is in many ways common, or maybe even somewhat customary with regard to salutations. While Paul’s opening salutation of both first and second Corinthians says,

*2Co 1:2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

In his closing salutation of II Corinthians Paul fills out, or completes, the Holy trinity by mentioning the Holy Ghost.

*2Co 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen*

*1Jo 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

In Summers’ book, “Worthy is the Lamb” he states,

***“The wish of grace and peace are also pictured as coming from the “seven spirits” which were before the throne of God. This is likely and Apocalyptic method of referring to the Holy Spirit since seven is a number for perfection. The third person of the Trinity is not left out.”***

John T. Hines in the Gospel Advocate commentary states,

***“The most satisfactory explanation of the expression, “seven Spirits” is that it means the Holy Spirit. The decisive reason for that is that it is used in the salutation in direct association with God and Christ and that a blessing is invoked from the Three.”***

In verse 4 grace and peace are, in Summers’ words, extended from the One which is, which was and which is to come. Present, past and future. When it comes to this verse commentators will often take us to Exodus 3:14

*Ex 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*

While this may be something that man can only imagine and cannot completely fathom, this was an expression of God’s eternal and unchangeable nature.

Along with God in verse 4 and as noted in other salutations, Jesus is included in this opening salutation as well. ***Those things conveyed to John are the Revelation of Jesus Christ and according to verse 1 were given to Him by God. Those things which were shown to John through angelic agency were an exact representation of what Jesus received from the Father.***

***5 … 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,***

Galatians 2:20 declares Jesus’ love for us in that he gave himself for us.

*Col 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

*Re 7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

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

*1Pe 2:4 ¶* Speaks of Jesus as *a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,* Then verse 5 says, *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

*I Peter 2:9-10 declare God’s people to be a chosen generation and a royal priesthood with Jesus as our High Priest according to Heb.5*

Jesus’ authority and dominion is expressed throughout the book of Revelation. Also we just read over in Col. 1 how he is before all things, and that in all that he has preeminence in all things. Hebrews 5:4 tells us that no man assumes the position of High Priest. Only one that is called of God.

*Heb 5: So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. 6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. 7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; 8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; 10 ¶ Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.*

With Revelation being the picture book that it is, I can’t help but feel that the picture being painted here is not just one of Jesus, but one of Jesus and His eternal glory, majesty, power and sacrificial love….and all of that being contrasted to the temporal lordship of one who would have had Christianity destroyed and removed from the face of the earth. Domitian was arrogant enough to think himself to be equal with God and would usurp the authority of God, unlike Jesus who instead humbled himself and actually was equal with God.

Rome was the most powerful nation ever. They weren’t like the USA, China, Russia, Germany or Japan. All these nations are rivals or competitors if you will. Rome existed in a world where there were no real rivals. Their Emperor demanded to be worshiped and idolized as if he were a God. He had those that would not, punished or even took their lives from them. And ultimately this unrivaled most powerful nation ever, and their self proclaimed god were ultimately destroyed from within.

Yet, God made the book of Revelation. Domitian was as powerful as man can perceive power to be, and yet, Domitian couldn’t write the book. He couldn’t tell the story. And as powerful a man as Domitian may have been, he wasn’t a God. He was just a man, an actor on the stage of a narrative that only God could write. Subject to all of the things that Jesus, a man, subjected himself to. An yet Jesus was also deity, the Son of God, come to be our high priest and claim for himself a people who would love and serve Him.

*Eph 1:19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

***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.***

Jesus reassures the readers of this revelation that He would return,… and when He does, everyone would take note, including the very ones who pierced his side in crusafiction. All such like will mourn because of their unbelief and the sin that binds itself to such a disposition.

*Mt 26:59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; 60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. 62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. 64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

*Ac 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

***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.***

Revelation 1:4 Revelation 4:8

**12. What do the terms “Alpha” and “Omega” mean? Verse 8.**

* The beginning and end
* The First and the last
* The beginning and end, the first and the last

Speaking of the order of Melchizadec

*Heb 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.*