

Revelation 1

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. ³ Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near.

Verse 1: The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants:

Book of Revelation has the form of a letter from Christ to His Church.

- Divine authority (of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him)
- Certainty ('that *must* soon take place')
- Crucial relevance (vs 3, who keep what is written, for the time is near).

Revelation to His servants: not a mystery, but clear message!

- To show His servants.
- Revelation hard to understand?
- Good knowledge of the Bible important! Lots of connections.
 - o Exodus, Daniel, many other prophecies.
 - o For the plagues: both Exodus and Deut. 27+28 reference to God's punishment and curse.

the things that must shortly take place:

Shortly / Soon: it is the last hour.

End time: 1000 years in Revelation 20.

- Beginning (Genesis),
- Time of Shadows (OT): preparing the world for salvation
- End time (NT): preparing the world for judgment.

1 John 2:

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the^[d] Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

Acts 2:

¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;

things which must shortly take place

God is preparing the world for His judgment.

Before He does so, He prepares His church (2-3).

Warnings: seven seals: threats, causing fear, confusion: depriving the world of their hope and their trust, to make them trust in God. (6:15)

Two responses:

- 1. The 144,000 sealed, the multitude that no one can count: see 7:10**
- 2. The world: No repentance, but continuation in rejection of God.**

Questions for discussion:

- ⇒ Looking at the situation in which we are now, how are we different from this world, in our response to God's warnings? (read Deuteronomy 28:28 and 2 Timothy 1:7 as two contrasting texts)
- ⇒ How can the world see that we are different?
- ⇒ How did the church in the past respond to disasters and plagues, and can we learn from that?

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.
2 Timothy 1:7*

*(Part of God's curse over disobedience:)
28 The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart.
Deuteronomy 28*

Then: Seventh seal → preparation for the next series: the seven trumpets.
increase in intensity.

11:15 : seventh trumpet. The coming of the kingdom. Return of Christ. Day of judgment.

12-14 : Summary of the Great Battle, which started with Genesis 3:15.

15-16: God's judgment: the seven plagues, angels with seven bowls.

17-18 : God's judgment over the world powers

19: God's vindication of His people

2 suppers:

- the marriage supper of the Lamb
- the great supper of God (19:17-21)

Verse 2: Testimony of Jesus Christ

Testimony must be passed on:

- Christ sent His angel to John
- John bore witness: he wrote it in this book, sent it to the churches
- The Churches read it out loud, the members hear it.

Questions and answers:

1. Question:

In relation to Verse 3, how can we keep a 'prophecy'?

Answer:

A prophecy is often not only prophesying what the future will bring, but also a warning or encouragement. Throughout Revelation we will see that these warnings are a call to the people to repent. And also the Church receives encouragements and warnings. It are these parts of the prophecy to what the word 'keep' refers to.

2. Question:

Do you know of any examples of how the church responded to disasters and plagues in the past? We sort of came up with some general responses, but a lot of the disasters or plagues were a real long time ago (eg black death in 1300s) . We came up with ideas of during sickness the Christians helped those who were sick, or in war time , they hid the Jews... And in this situation, we are all in isolation and particularly the church is in isolation, so how can we apply these examples then in our situation?

Answer:

Here is a good article, which has links to other sites as well:

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/13/christianity-epidemics-2000-years-should-i-still-go-to-church-coronavirus/>

And:

<https://www.eternitynews.com.au/world/should-a-christian-flee-the-plague-martin-luther-was-asked/>

In our situation, that would mean, for example, that you have to obey the government in social distancing, but at the same time you can help them by doing groceries for them, or having contact with them, over the phone or internet. Or doing other chores for them. What we can also do is encourage them and listen to them.

3. Question:

What about the numbers in Revelation: how do we interpret them?

Answer:

They have to be interpreted as symbols, and their meaning can be determined using other parts of the Bible. The number 7 is an important number and comes back several times in Revelation. Connected with that also the numbers 3, 4, and 12. The number 1000 indicates a very long time, a complete time. Which is the end time.

I will say more about numbers as symbols in a later Bible Study.

4. Question:

In the broader context of the book of Revelation, it seems that the common consensus is that the author is John (inspired by the Holy Spirit), written when he was exiled on the island of Patmos. What Scripture passages verify the date and location of this? Or has it been determined by writing of early church fathers and historians? Is this a point of contention?

Answer:

Yes, there is no real contention about the author, at least not among Reformed theologians. Modern theologians will doubt the author of just about any book of the Bible, and also Revelation, because they want to place the book of Revelation in later time.

But believing theologians, who accept the divine authority and inspiration of the Bible, all believe that John is the author.

The time is more a point of contention. Among these theologians, some believe Revelation was written before 70, before the destruction of Jerusalem. Or else, they say, there would probably have been a reference to that destruction. Others believe it was written around 90. The end of the century was a time in which there were more and more regular persecutions so it would fit better into that time. It is hard to determine what year it was written. It is the last book of the Bible, so we don't find any reference to it in other books of the Bible, which were all for certain written before 70. Also among church fathers and historians we cannot find a definitive answer. Both opinions are held among the Reformed theologians. Personally I lean more toward an earlier date, before 70, but cannot say so with certainty.

5. **Question:**

Should we try to 'match' current circumstances with specific instances or plagues mentioned in Revelation? Or should we be content knowing that these things will come to pass and trust that God will bring them about in His good time and pleasure, rather than trying to predict and figure it all out ourselves?

Answer:

If we look at current circumstances then we often can see that something like this has been prophesied in the Bible, either in Revelation or in other books of the Bible. It is not that we can keep a check list to check off which plagues we have had and which not but the Bible makes clear that all these plagues will sooner or later in one form or another come over this earth. If you look at history you will probably be able to recognise most of the plagues described in the Bible. But we should not try to figure out how far we are on God's calendar. Nobody knows the day or hour.

6. **Question:**

The book of Revelation is given to us (the Church) to be able to understand the tribulations and trials that come our way in this world. To enable us to withstand these tribulations and persecution.

The footnotes to my Bible says "enduring trials that come our way is a prerequisite for reigning with Christ". Ref Rom 8:17, Phil 3:10, 2 Tim 2:12. Yet this generation of Christians in Australia have mostly (so far) suffered little if any persecution. Instead we have been richly blessed. How should we see this? Is there a lesson or warning?

Answer:

God is testing us. For a long time the church had it very good in our western society but that also caused a lot of challenges and temptations. The church was tested in that way. We see with sadness the church often gave in to that, which led to the decline of the church in the Western world. In a way we can be thankful that God is sending us difficult times again, because the churches in our western countries have to wake up and turn to God again. God can use the present circumstances, as well as the recent development regarding certain legislation in our country, to test the church. God, at the same time, is also warning our country with the bushfires and now this Corona virus. In a few years we may be able to see better how this was a blessing for the church, but for now we can be assured that everything has a purpose in God's work. Everything happens at His time.

Yes, it is a privilege for us to suffer for Christ, it is a prerequisite also. Everyone who wants to live a godly life, will be persecuted. But that can also happen in a society where we have lots of freedoms. God wants us to remain faithful and steadfast in all circumstances.

7. **Question:**

You mentioned that we should not come with preconceived ideas when studying Revelation, as so many do, because then we fall into the danger of trying to fit God's Word into our ideas. Instead, where we do not immediately understand, we should let other parts of Scripture explain what is meant in Revelation. I agree that we can not be dictated by one idea e.g. preterite (all has been fulfilled), historical (all are in process of fulfillment), futurist (all are in the future) or spiritual (this is only symbolic and never literal) readings.

What about preconceived ideas (often erroneous, yes) that have been theologically debated and often find their way into church belief statements such as dispensationalism and pre/post/a-millennialism? Do these not influence how we read a Bible book like Revelation (or even other prophecies like Daniel, for example)?

Answer:

Yes, they do. Pre- and post-millennialism both believe that there is a separate period of 1000 year at some time during the end time. They have a lot of differences, about when Christ returns, for instance. Pre-millennialists, because of their position regarding the 1000 years, must necessarily believe in two comings of Christ, in a rapture, and more connected to that. There you see that a certain position (pre-millennialism) necessitates a certain explanation of Revelation. Post millennialism has that too, but to a much lesser extent.

Generally within the Reformed tradition we refuse to believe in a 1000 year as being different from the End time (although there are some moderately post-millennialist reformed theologians), as I explained in the Bible Study. Because of that, we are often called a-millennialists, as if we are another group with another view about the 1000 year. However, that is not true. It is just that we want to read and explain Revelation without any pre-conceived notions of a separate period of 1000 years. Among these so-called a-millennialists, there are different explanations of details of Revelation and that is possible, also within the bounds of our confessions. But that is the case with many more texts in the Bible. Not because the Bible is not clear. The message of the Bible is abundantly clear. But God allows us to have different explanations of details, and sometimes it is also that we need to grow knowledge to gain a better understanding. Over the many centuries that the church has worked to explain the Bible, we also have grown in understanding of many parts of the Bible. God has blessed us with some great thinkers, from which we may benefit.

8. **Question:**

When we speak to somebody not from the church and they say 'If God is a God of love, how can he let all this happen'? How do we respond?

Answer:

There are different ways of responding to this, depending on the situation and the person you are talking too. Generally, I would try to explain how God is not the author of evil, but it is the result of our own sin. God restrains evil. If God would let this creation go its own way after the fall in sin, the situation would be much worse, as you can see in situations like war, in World War II but also recently the war in Syria. Also the Corona virus COVID-19 and its spread is the result of human actions: human beings doing/eating things they should not be

doing/eating or flaunting basic hygiene rules. God shows us what the result of our own actions is, while at the same time in His grace holding back some of the worst results. Another way of explaining it is, comparing it to disobedient children. If a parent warns his child time and again, for its own good and protection, but the child doesn't listen, even ignores the parent completely and blatantly goes against the rules of the parent, then often the only way to keep the child from destroying itself is using discipline, which can come in different ways but can also include using physical punishment as last resort. That is also how God is warning us. God wants the world to repent and be saved. And that is about eternal life and eternal death! So it is God's love, that He sends these plagues, to prevent us from having to suffer even worse and eternally.

Again, the way how you say this, will depend on the person you have in front of you. The one needs more careful explanation than the other.

9. **Question:**

Could we have a definition of church and world?

Answer:

The Church is the body of Christ in this world, the believers. Christ also wants His body to be visible in this world. It should not be a vague idea, but should be actively present in this world, being a salt and a light. Therefore, we believe that the church can also be distinguished locally, in the believers who gather together on Sundays for worship services (as much as possible) and who during the week support, encourage, exhort and admonish each other and are active in this society as well to show Christian charity to those in need. Who do good to all, not only to those of the household of faith.

The world can be explained in different ways. When Paul speaks about the world and its evil works, then there the meaning of world is: all unbelievers, all those who don't belong to Christ. In that sense it is spoken about in Revelation as well. (Rev. 12:9, 13:3, 16:14).

However, world can also mean God's creation or the entire mankind. In that sense it is used in Rev. 3:10, 13:8, 17:8.

The context will have to make clear what the meaning is in a specific situation.

If we speak about church and world, then often world is meant in the sense of unbelievers.

10. **Question:**

"The Revelation OF Jesus Christ" ... does this 'of' mean 'from' Jesus Christ, or 'about' Jesus Christ, or both?

Answer:

It means that the Revelation comes from Jesus Christ. This verse is the title of the letter or book, and shows the origin, destination and contents. It comes from Jesus Christ (who in turn received it from God) and is sent to His servants, and it is about the things that are soon going to happen.

Greeting the Seven Churches

⁴ John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End,*” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Verse 4: John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

John: more about him in verse 9. There also about the time of writing of this book. Revelation given in series of sevens. Completeness. Seven days of the week.

Numbers in Revelation:

Other numbers: 3 (Trinity), 4 (corners of the earth), 12 (tribes, apostles), 1000.

$7=3+4$, $12=4 \times 3$

God's order: world history no chaos. Order! God's work!

Seven churches: specific churches, see vs. 11. Representative for the entire church.

Question for discussion:

- ⇒ Should every church have its own minister of the Word or could we just as well tell our members from all churches to watch the live stream from one minister in the federation? Can we learn something from how Christ addresses each of the seven churches?

Grace to you and peace:

We, God's people, may receive His grace and peace! No need to fear!

Him who is and who was and who is to come,

See Exodus 3:14-16 : I AM WHO I AM. the God of promise.

Who is to come: not: Who will be.

The seven Spirits before His throne:

Seven spirits: the Holy Spirit. Everywhere present.

Verse 5: Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

Faithful witness: He speaks the truth.

Witness: martyr: witnessing by giving His life. Good Friday!

Martyr: one of the themes of the book: victory by martyrdom.

Firstborn from the dead: His victory. Also: firstborn. Not only one.
Ruler: to Him is given ALL authority in heaven and on earth, see Matt. 28.

Questions for discussion:

- ⇒ Verse 5: witness: martyr: this speaks about suffering. The Book of Revelation is given to the church to prepare her for and encourage her in the sufferings that come over her. The churches in Australia in our time haven't seen a whole lot of suffering yet. How do we have to see this: should we expect more suffering? Or is it because we shy away from witnessing out of fear for suffering? Or is there something else we should consider here?
- ⇒ At the moment, as a result of government measures, we experience a bit of what our brothers and sisters in China and other countries are suffering: not being able to meet together, except in small groups. How does this present situation influence the way you appreciate the fellowship which we may experience on Sundays?
How important is the fellowship with each other to you?

To Him who loved us

Love of Christ for His church very clear throughout this book.
He gave His own life, for us. The church is precious to Him!

and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

This sets the Church apart from the world: see 7:14. They are righteous.(see 14:4-5; 19:8-9)

and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father,

see 1 Peter 2:9, Ex. 19:6

to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Everything to the glory of God: redemption, calling, also punishment over unbelievers.

Verse 7: Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

With the clouds: see His Ascension, Acts 1:11

Daniel 7:13: 'with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man'.

Every eye, even they who pierced Him: frightening for them.

all tribes of the earth: they see Him whom they persecuted coming as judge from heaven.

Yes, Amen.

Verse 8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Alpha and Omega: first and last letter of Greek alphabet.

Beginning and End. Repeated in vs. 11.

The Almighty.

Questions and answers:

1. Question:

Is the Lord Jesus going to return to China first as they are suffering persecution?

The Lord has placed us in Australia to serve Him in His ways, part of our suffering could be seen in the government requirements to turn the church into a business. The struggle is real to stay true to his commandments, Sunday trading, school starting at kindy, our children are 4 when they go into formal school.

Answer:

The LORD is using persecution and other ways to separate the goats from the sheep.

Satan, the world, our own sinful heart, will never cease to attack us.

Do we see that we are being attacked? Where? That is important.

If we live an easy life in complacency, then the suffering we see that fellow Christians suffer, around us or in other countries, should make us look critically at our own life.

I agree with you, certainly, Satan attacks us here as well. But if we don't see that, then we are losing the battle and we should wake up.

2. Question:

prophets are not mentioned in verse 6?

Answer:

No. This is a reference to Exodus 19.

In Exodus 20 God spoke directly to His people and thereafter the people told Moses not to let God speak to them. In Deuteronomy 18 we see that Moses brought this to God and God responded to that saying that it was good what the Israelites said and God from then on would send prophets.

Before that the whole people were priests and were to be a kingdom. Also the priests were limited to Levi after Exodus 19.

3. Question

What is the link between the name 'Ancient of Days' and God.

Answer:

God is eternal. He is from before time. The Ancients of days are those from very long ago, from before we can remember, from before our time. That is why God is symbolised in the 'Ancient of Days'.

4. Comment:

It is not only on Sunday but also during the week now that the communion of saints is affected by what is going on.

Answer:

That is true. However, the Sunday is a very special day for God's people and the worship services especially. Satan attacks there where it hurts the most.

5. Comment:

Satan is using this opportunity to attack the church during a period of vulnerability.

Response:

That is right, but if we depend on Jesus Christ, then God will use this period of vulnerability and the attack of Satan to strengthen the church and build her up. He will turn it to our benefit.

6. Question:

In regards to Verse 4-7, why do you as minister use only the first part as greeting, and then say Amen after 'kings of the earth' and not continue and finish at the end of verse 6 where the Amen is written?

Answer

That is what was taken in the past as a fitting greeting. The following words are not as much a greeting as well as a doxology to God.

I know that some churches include those words, and in itself it is not wrong to let the greeting be followed by this doxology.

Nevertheless, including it makes it more than just the salutation at the beginning of the worship service.

About saying Amen: I believe that the Amen is from the congregation. It should be from the entire congregation. That is then a response of the congregation to the greeting of the LORD.

7. Question:

In regard to the first question that you have given us: the question seems to imply that we should always be expecting a fair amount of suffering and persecution for being followers of Christ. Times of little or no persecution seem to necessarily mean that the church is too withdrawn. Is this necessarily the case? Could it be that God would give periods of relative peace to His church in certain places in the world so that it has time to establish itself. For example, the relative peace enjoyed here in Australia has enabled institutions like the FRSA, Fair Haven, Eucalypt, etc to be established which may not have been possible if there had been 'active' persecution and suffering.

Answer:

That is right. Yes, if we look at the history, then we see indeed that times of persecution are always followed by 'better' times, meaning times of relative peace and quiet. It does not always have to be persecution.

But on the other hand, Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12 that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

If Satan does not attack us in one way or another, then it is time to wonder if we have become complacent and have given in to Satan.

In times of complacency, persecution can be a blessing.

Yes, we are very blessed with the peace we have received here, but looking at the political climate, humanly speaking, can we expect that to continue? There is so much uncertain. Therefore it is good to prepare for the possibility of persecution and to think about how to respond to that, so that it does not take us by surprise, see Hebrews 12. God disciplines those whom He loves. "If you are left without discipline, ..., then you are illegitimate children and not sons."

8. Question:

In reference to your comment "In times of complacency, persecution can be a blessing." this is a good point. We are truly blessed to live in times of such peace and freedom. Perhaps we need to look at persecution differently. It is natural for us to think of persecution as purely physical. However, we live in a blatantly anti-Christian society, which completely immoral. Much like Sodom and Gomorrah. This reality is a ever present spiritual battle, and it poses challenges even in our own homes. We can easily become desensitised. If we look at it this way could Satan not be using this as persecution? Just some thoughts...

Answer:

Yes, thank you for this. I totally agree.

It is important that we see the attacks of Satan and resist him. He IS attacking here as well.

9. Question:

You wrote: "The churches in Australia in our time haven't seen a whole lot of suffering yet. How do we have to see this: should we expect more suffering? Or is it because we shy away from witnessing out of fear for suffering? Or is there something else we should consider here?"

What are your thoughts? Should we consider the introduction of same-sex marriage, euthanasia, abortion, religious discrimination (e.g. including that of Israel Folau, and dislike of Margaret Court's openness in expressing her faith), drag queen story time in libraries, sex conversion therapy etc. be forms of persecution?

Personally, in our contact with workmates and neighbours/unbelieving contacts, we have never been met with open hostility and harassment when we share that we are Christian etc . It seems that many unbelieving Australians are blase about Christians/God/Bible and not openly hostile...? Further, a lot of anti-Christian sentiment seems to be directed

online and is in and amongst mainstream media, rather than in the general public. Any thoughts?

Answer:

Thank you for sharing your experiences. I think that many of us have the same experiences. Generally, Christians are being vilified in the media and on social media, but as soon as people are getting to know the Christians personally, they change their tune. That is why it is important for us as Christians to be active in this society and let others know that we are Christians.

There is a (relatively small) group in our society that is actively attacking everything Christian and as long as our society does not know Christians personally, they are going along with that.

That is a form of persecution. But we can counter-attack here by getting out in this society and let people know that Christians are friendly, kind, patient people, (who show the fruit of the Spirit in their lives). That is how God wants us to live and spread the gospel.

Revelation 1:9-20

⁹I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. ¹⁴His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; ¹⁶He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength. ¹⁷And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. ¹⁹Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. ²⁰The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Verse 9 - 11

Verse 9:

John: the apostle (gospel of John, 3 letters): testimony of church fathers in 2nd century

Time: just after a great tribulation/persecution, see 17:8 : was, is not, will come.

Either before 70, after Nero's persecution, or end of the century, after Domitian's persecution.

Place: Patmos: inhabited island with settlement.

Brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ

Tribulation, Kingdom, Patient endurance: Three central themes in Revelation.

On the island of Patmos: either in exile or traveling to preach the gospel.

Testimony of Jesus = Word of God. Testimony of Jesus preached by apostles.

Verse 10:

In the Spirit: The Holy Spirit. Inspiration.

Lord's Day: Name for the Sunday, day of resurrection.

Loud voice/trumpet: See Ex. 19:19 : sound of the trumpet, God's voice.

Verse 11:

Repeats verse 8: emphasis! Must be remembered throughout the whole book!

What you see, write: God's command: Revelation must go to the church.

Seven churches in Asia: Chosen from all the churches: representation of the entire Church of all times and places.

Verse 12 – 16:

Verse 12:

Seven golden lampstands: see verse 20: seven churches.

They are a light! Recurring theme in Bible: God is light, we reflect His light!

Verse 13:

Son of Man: Reference to Daniel 7, but also directly to Christ!

Seven churches (vs 11): Seven separate lampstands, not one big light!

Local churches. Christ the Head. Shepherd

Question:

The way the seven churches are described, what does this teach us about church government: should we have a hierarchy, with one national or worldwide leader of the church on earth, or only local churches, federated as churches within a federation? What direction does the Bible give us here and why is this important?

Verse 13-15 :

See Daniel 7, 10, Ezekiel 1:25-28. Describes His majesty, overwhelming glory, holiness Christ's glory and majesty expressed in symbols.

Verse 17 - 20**Verse 17:**

John's reaction: fear and trembling. See Isaiah 6.

As dead: result of God's holiness: He is too holy for us to approach Him.

Christ encourages him: you will not die, because you are redeemed.

First and last: everything holds together in Him. God's eternal plan, His work of salvation, it all comes together in Christ.

Question:

We should not be scared of God's holiness, but we should be overwhelmed by it. How do we approach God, and Jesus Christ, in our worship services, in our prayers, in our Bible readings? Have we lost much of the reverence which the Bible tells us about here and in other parts? Do we realise that we are coming before the living God?

Verse 18:

The First and the Last: The whole gospel, Good Friday, sacrifice, resurrection: death is conquered. God reconciled us to Him. He does not come to kill us by His holiness, but to save us!

I am alive forevermore: His promise to us, forevermore: His life is our life.

Amen: certainly!

keys of Hades and Death: death has no power over us, Christ has power over death!

Verse 19:

The things which you have seen: they are the things that are and that will take place after this.

Are: for that time, in which John lived.

Which will take place: it is also prophecy.

How to explain Revelation? As a prophecy. Like so many prophecies: they had a message for the people then and there, but also a deeper meaning for later generations.

Different approaches to the book.

But: let Scripture explain Scripture.

Symbols from the other books of the Bible come back.

Like the Lord's Supper: we are eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ, not literally, but spiritually. It does speak about the body and blood of Christ: very close connection.