

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Week 2 – The Alpha and the Omega

September 13, 2016

### Revelation 1:4-8

#### Revelation 1:4

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

John, while on Patmos, addresses seven specific churches. However, as mentioned previously, the message to the churches is for all believers. John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote the Gospel of John between 80 & 90 AD which was approx. 50 years after he had witnessed Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. When John penned I John in 95 AD, he was actively ministering to churches. John was the sole remaining Apostle. An Apostle in Scripture had to have seen the resurrected Jesus (Acts 1:22). Note: Paul was an Apostle. Paul saw the resurrected Jesus on the Road to Damascus. It had been recorded by several Church Fathers (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius) that John lived at Ephesus in Asia Minor, carrying out an extensive evangelistic program, overseeing many of the churches that had been established. As the last remaining Apostle, John's words were highly authoritative among the churches.

Ephesus (Acts 19:10) was located within the "intellectual center" of Asia Minor. As "predicted" years before by the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:28-31), false teachers arose from within the church. The false teachers advocated new ideas which eventually became known as Gnosticism (from the Gk. word "knowledge"). Gnosticism was the most dangerous heresy that threatened the early church during the first century. Gnostics taught that matter was evil and spirit was good. These false teachers denied Jesus' true humanity. They believed they were preserving Jesus from evil! Gnostics also claimed elevated knowledge. They boast a higher truth known only to those in on the deep things – the mystical knowledge of truth. We have today groups who teach Gnosticism – Christian Science, Scientology, New Age, the Ecclesia Gnostica Church.

With Gnosticism being so prevalent, do we understand why the Apostle John, in I John 1 stated, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life....* Jesus is Immanuel – God IN THE FLESH! He had to be. Scripture prophesied this AND, the Messiah, the Son of God, had to die. He had to be fully human – while fully God – to LAY DOWN HIS LIFE!!!

When John was arrested, he was in Ephesus, ministering to the church there and in the surrounding cities. John, as the scribe, receiving the revelation from Jesus about Jesus through the angel, addressed seven churches in Asia Minor – in the Roman province of Asia which today is modern southwestern Turkey. When John was arrested, he was in Ephesus, ministering to the church there and in the surrounding cities. Asia Minor was comprised of seven postal districts. At the center of those districts were seven key cities which served as central points for the sending out of information. It is to the churches in those cities that John writes. The seven churches were situated on a circular route

Revelation 1:4-5

*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, 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, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

*Grace to you and peace* – Grace is a Greek greeting, *kha-res*. Grace is unmerited favor/undeserved favor. It is totally of God. Grace is not works. If salvation is of works, it is not by grace and cannot result in peace. *Peace* is a Hebrew expression. Peace means harmony – repairing that which was broken (Num. 6:26).

John is greeting seven churches. The number “seven” is used fifty-two times in Revelation. Seven means completeness. We are reading of God’s complete, perfect plan – in all of its fullness!

*Who is and Who was and Who is to come. . .* God’s eternal presence is not limited by time. God is eternally present from eternity past and into eternity future. This description stresses the continuity of God's sovereign dealings with humankind.

*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, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ.* We need to observe that God Who IS – is now present! He is eternally present.

John was writing to the seven churches. Do you think those churches were experiencing persecution? John was exiled for his testimony of Jesus. Do you think his flock would need to know that God is working in the midst of their circumstances now?

Do we need to know that God is on His throne as our world spirals downward – as we view the chaos on the news every day? Is it important for us to be reminded of God’s sovereign control no matter what is transpiring?

This grace and peace is also from *the seven Spirits*. *Seven* – completeness. This is the Holy Spirit. Why do we see Him as *seven Spirits*? Consider Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit (Is. 11:2; NOTE: Isaiah 11 is addressing the Millennial Kingdom and speaks of how Jesus will reign. The Holy Spirit provides divine empowerment). He is...

The Spirit of the LORD (Jehovah) – Who shall anoint God the Son, Jesus (Isa. 61:1).  
The Holy Spirit anoints.

The Spirit of wisdom – Who enables believers in Jesus to make right decisions (Prov. 2; I Cor. 2:6-11)

The Spirit of understanding – Who gives believers in Jesus the ability to understand God’s word! Spiritual things are spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2:6-11)

The Spirit of counsel – Who gives believers in Jesus the ability to give sound advice

The Spirit of might – Who empowers believers in Jesus to carry out what God wants

The Spirit of knowledge – Who enables believers in Jesus to understand God’s word which, according to I Cor. 2 is unattainable and undesirable by human wisdom

John 16:13-14 - *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*<sup>14</sup> *He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*

I Cor. 2:12 - *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

The Spirit of the fear of the Lord – Who gives believers in Jesus the ability to respect God’s will – to bow to Him!

Seven is the number of completeness, so John is identifying the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

v. 5a - *and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.*

In His person, Jesus is...

*the faithful witness* – the author of the book of Hebrews tells us to consider Jesus *Who was faithful to Him who appointed Him* (Heb. 3:2).

In His position, Jesus is...

*firstborn from the dead* – The use of firstborn (Gk – *prototokos*) does NOT mean that Jesus is a created being and not God. Within Israel’s history, the firstborn was the ranking son – having preeminence – supremacy in rank. Firstborn emphasizes priority of position

*firstborn from the dead* - Jesus was dead and became alive! And, as such, Jesus has the preeminence, He is predominant, He is superior, He is supreme. Because He is the Creator! We see the priority of Jesus’ rank as over and above creation.

Col. 1:15-17 - *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*<sup>16</sup> *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*<sup>17</sup> *And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

And, in Jesus all things consist – lit. “hold together”. He sustains us and the universe. Jesus is the One Who will bring all things to their divinely ordained consummation.

We, as human beings, can’t conquer death. No human being can conquer death/destroy the power of death. But Jesus has done so! Jesus alone provides everlasting life with God as opposed to everlasting punishment. Dan. 12:2 – following death, some shall

awake to everlasting life forever WITH God; some shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt apart from God – eternally separated from God.

*Firstborn from the dead* – Jesus is the preeminent One Who has risen from the dead. Because Jesus rose from the dead, His followers are guaranteed to rise from the dead. Jesus is our firstfruits. Jesus has established the pattern through His resurrection for all those who place their trust in Him. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we are guaranteed to rise.

During the Jewish feast of firstfruits, a portion of the harvest was dedicated to the Lord, commemorating the entire harvest. Jesus is our firstfruits (I Cor. 15:20-23). His resurrection dedicated the entire harvest – the harvest of souls. Because He rose from the dead, believers in Jesus are guaranteed of resurrection.

In His power, Jesus is...

*the ruler over the kings of the earth* – Jesus is the rightful ruler/king – Rev. 19:16 - *And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.* Jesus is the ruler over the kings of the earth by divine right not by the willing acceptance of the kings themselves. Please become familiar with PSALM 2.

Is Jesus currently sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem? NO!

Jesus is currently our Great High Priest (Heb. 4), seated at the right hand of God (Psa. 110:1; Acts 2:33-35; Heb. 1:3). This is where He is now interceding for us – we who are believers. Jesus will not sit on the throne of David and rule until He physically returns and establishes His Kingdom – the Kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus will establish His kingdom on the earth and He will appoint rulers who will reign with Him – II Tim. 2:11-12 - *For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. <sup>12</sup> If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.*

Jesus' provision for believers:

Love

v. 5b - *To Him who loved us* – *loved* in the Greek in this verse is a present participle which means He is *loving us* – present tense.

Rom. 5:8 – *But God demonstrates (He continues to demonstrate) His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Cleansing/Forgiveness

*and washed us from our sins in His own blood,*

*washed us from our sins* – this is an OT picture:

Psa. 51:2 – King David cried out to God...*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin*

Eze. 36:24-27 - *For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes....*

Lev. 15 – speaks of purification rites – of physical cleansing of the defiled flesh – looking forward to cleansing from sin.

*blood* – God gave the Jewish people the sacrificial system which required the shedding of the blood of animals for 1500 years for the covering of sin/atonement. The sacrificial system looked forward to the ultimate sacrifice of the Messiah Who would take away sin...Who would redeem those who place their trust in Him for salvation through His own blood.

Revelation 1:6

Jesus ...*has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him (to Jesus) be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

*kings and priests* - the favored word noted by Bible scholars – concerning the translation for “kings” – is “kingdom”. God has made us a kingdom. He has promised a physical, literal, material kingdom – He promised it to Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures. He will deliver that kingdom. And, that kingdom includes Gentile believers. Jew and Gentile, one new man in Jesus (Eph. 2:15), has always been God’s plan.

Matt. 8:10-11 – when Jesus healed the Gentile Centurion’s servant, Jesus commented on the great faith exhibited by the Gentile Centurion – and told the masses that He had not seen such great faith even in Israel. Jesus said, *And I say to you that many will come from east and west (these are Gentile believers), and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*

AND, only believers will enter that kingdom. Jesus told Nicodemus, *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again (born from above; born of God), he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).* The Kingdom that God has promised will be a physical, material kingdom that can only be inhabited by those who are born of the Spirit of God!

*Priests* – How are we priests? Believers are called by God to serve Him by offering up spiritual sacrifices, i.e., being a people zealous for good works (I Pet. 2:5-9).

Believers will co-rule with Christ during His coming earthly kingdom.

Rev. 20:4-6 - *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.<sup>5</sup> But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.<sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

v. 6 - *to His God and Father* – Jesus, in His submission, in His humiliation, in His identifying with mankind as Immanuel, God in the flesh, brought many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). Jesus will deliver the kingdom to God the Father.

I Cor. 15:27-28 - *Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.<sup>25</sup> For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.<sup>26</sup> The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.<sup>27</sup> For “He has put all things under His feet.” But when He says “all things are put under Him,” it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.<sup>28</sup> Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*

v. 6 - *to Him be glory* – to Jesus be glory. He is God. Isa. 42:8 – God will not give His glory to another. Jesus must be God. He is God!

The theme of the Bible is the glory of God.

Hab. 2:14 – during the Millennial Kingdom - . . . *the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

*glory* – splendor, brightness, exalted state. Jesus emptied Himself of His glory when He, in submission to the Father, came to earth. We need to REMEMBER that He never gave up His deity. Jesus is eternally God!

Heb. 1:1-3 - *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; <sup>3</sup> who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person*

John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Matt. 17:1-2 - *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; <sup>2</sup> and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.*

John 17:1-5 - *Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, <sup>2</sup> as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup> I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.’*

*To Him be glory. . .*

*and dominion* – sovereignty, control, supremacy, jurisdiction

What does dominion mean in God’s plan?

Dan. 7:13-14, 27 - *I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. <sup>14</sup> Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed. . . Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.*

When God created man, God gave man dominion – which, because of sin, was usurped by the enemy of our souls – Satan. BUT GOD’S will cannot be thwarted. Man will indeed have dominion through Jesus! Jesus will receive dominion and give it to those who are *the saints of the Most High* in the Millennial Kingdom. As followers of Jesus, we’ll have dominion in the Kingdom on earth. What will be our role in the Millennial kingdom on earth?

Rev. 5:9-10 – in praise to God, the 24 elders in the throne room of God fall down before the Lamb of God, Jesus, and sing a new song saying. . . ‘*You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,*<sup>10</sup> *And have made us kings (a kingdom) and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.*’

Followers of Jesus shall reign with Him on earth.

Note II Tim. 2:12 - *If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.*

Regarding Jesus’ followers being made *priests*, we are priests in that we have direct access to God. The priesthood of the believer came about when the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. God was declaring that the OT priesthood was no longer necessary. People can come directly to God through the great High Priest, Jesus (Heb. 4:14-16; I Tim. 2:5).

#### Revelation 1:7

*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.*

*Behold* – fix your eyes on!

*He is coming* (present tense) and *every eye will see Him* (future tense). The grammar places the event on the edge, between the present and the future. It is the futuristic present. It is “about to occur”. Jesus is in the process of coming! His coming is imminent – it is upon us!

Jesus came the first time in humiliation; He will return in exaltation. He came the first time to be killed; He will return to kill His enemies. He came the first time to serve; He will return to be served. He came the first time as the suffering servant; He will return as the conquering King. The challenge that the book of Revelation makes to every person is to be READY for His return.

*with clouds*...Jesus often appears in Scripture in the clouds.

Ex. 14:19-20 – *the Angel of God who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them.*<sup>20</sup> *So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.*

Dan. 7:13 – Daniel, in a vision, saw... *One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven!*

Matt. 26:64 – Jesus said to the High Priest, Caiaphas, at His trial, ...*I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.*

About Jesus’ ascension into heaven 40 days after His resurrection.

Acts 1:9-11 - *Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.<sup>10</sup> And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,<sup>11</sup> who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*

Rabbis – have taught that if Israel was worthy, the Messiah would come in the clouds; if Israel was not worthy, the Messiah would come lowly, riding upon a donkey.

Babylonian Talmud; Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 98 - *And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven<sup>34</sup> whilst [elsewhere] it is written, [behold, thy king cometh unto thee ... ] lowly, and riding upon an ass!<sup>35</sup> — if they are meritorious, [he will come] with the clouds of heaven;<sup>36</sup> if not, lowly and riding upon an ass.*

*And every eye will see Him* – Jesus' Second Coming will not be in secret. At His first coming, Jesus was somewhat obscure. During His earthly ministry, He was scorned and rejected by many. When Jesus returns, every eye will see Him. The whole world will know!

*Even they who pierced Him* – Both Jews and Gentiles are responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Acts 4:27-28 - *For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together<sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.*

NOTE: Zech. 12:10 - <sup>10</sup> *And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*

Me/Him – whom did mankind pierce? GOD! (See Acts. 20:28)

*all the tribes* – in many places *tribes* would denote the Jewish tribes (Matt. 19:28; Luke 2:36; 22:30; Acts 13:21; Rom. 11:1; Heb. 7:13; Phil. 3:5. . . .) However, the phrase *all the tribes* has a more global meaning (Matt. 24:30).

*of the earth* – global community (Gen. 12:3; 28:14; Amos 3:2; Zech. 14:17).

*will mourn* – refers to the act of beating one's breast as an act of mourning.

Matt. 24:30 - *Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

The sign appears in heaven – it's visible worldwide and cannot be restricted to Israel solely. *will mourn (wail) because of Him*

The Jews will mourn because of the awful realization of the truth of the crucifixion of their own Messiah. The Gentiles too will mourn as they realize the truth of Christianity which they have steadfastly rejected, and the inescapable fact of their impending judgment. Purpose of Tribulation: purging of Israel and judgment of the nations.

### Revelation 1:8

*“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 are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Among the Jewish rabbis, it was common to use the first and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet to denote the whole of anything, from beginning to end. This statement of eternity could apply only to God! Jesus was at the beginning of all things (John 1:1 – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*) and will be at the close.

The “Alpha and Omega” identifies Jesus as the God of the OT (Isa. 41:4; Isa. 44:6; Isa. 48:12). Jesus is found in the first verse of Genesis (*In the beginning, God. . . Elohim [plurality in the Godhead]*) and in the last verse of Revelation, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen* (Rev. 22:21)

*Who is and Who was and Who is to come...the Almighty* – In the Gk. - pän-to-krä'-tör - the ruler of all. In Hebrew, Almighty is *Shaddai* – the all sufficient One. *Shad* – breast. The many breasted One – the nurturing One.

Jesus told John to write the things he, John, has seen – JESUS – in addition to the things which are and which will take place (Rev. 1:19). We need to see Jesus in all His majesty. If we don't see Who He is, if we don't know Who He is, if we don't know Him personally...the rest of the book would be horrific!

### QUESTIONS

Have you been face-to-face with Jesus this week? Would you like to share?

What was your V8 moment?

How will this impact your walk with the Lord?

With what were you overwhelmed?

Do you have an understanding of the first eight verses in Revelation? How would you describe them?

What questions do you have from this lesson?

### SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

Read the handout for week 2 and look up the Bible verses/passages referenced.

If you don't agree with what was presented, with what is written in the handout...why? What do you believe? Support your different view(s) with chapter and verse(s) from the Bible.

Concerning comments that were not clear, research by using your Bible and by using a word study book/online program.

What difference has this study/will this study make in your life?

Read the handout for week 3 when you receive it via Email.

Share what you have learned thus far about the book of Revelation with a believer and/or with a non-believer.