

## **Revelation, the last book in the Bible**

### **The Author (1:1b–2, 4, 9; 22:8)**

The Holy Spirit used the apostle John to give us three kinds of inspired literature: the gospel of John, the three epistles, and the book of Revelation. His purposes may be outlined as follows:

#### *Gospel of John*

Believe, 20:31

Life received, Salvation, The Prophet

#### Epistles

Be sure, 1 John 5:13

Life revealed, Sanctification, The Priest

#### Revelation

Be ready, 22:20

Life rewarded, Sovereignty, The King

John wrote Revelation about AD 95, during the reign of the Roman emperor Titus Flavius Domitian. The emperor had demanded that he be worshipped as “Lord and God,” and the refusal of the Christians to obey his edict led to severe persecution. Tradition says that it was Domitian who sent John to the Isle of Patmos, a Roman penal colony off the coast of Asia Minor. This being the location of John’s exile, perhaps it is not surprising that the word *sea* is found twenty six times in his book.

During Christ’s earthly ministry, John and his brother James asked Jesus for special places of honour by His throne. The Lord told them that they would have to merit their thrones by sharing in His suffering. James was the first apostle martyred (Acts 12:1–2); John was the last of the apostles to die, but he suffered on Patmos before his death (see Matt. 20:20–23).

## The Outline

To the best of our knowledge, the book of Revelation is the only book in the Bible that contains an inspired outline of the contents. You see that in the beginning of the book in Rev 1 verse 19. It makes it easier as you read the book apart from its interpretation.

“What you have seen” refers to the vision in Revelation 1.

“What is now” – refers to Revelation 2 to 3, the special messages to the seven churches.

“What will take place later” - covers the events described in Revelation 4 to 22.

## A very special book and its basic characteristics.

What John heard in Revelation 4:1 substantiates this interpretation.

“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

In review, we can summarize the basic characteristics of this remarkable book as follows:

**It is a Christ-centered book.** To be sure, *all* Scripture speaks of the Savior, but the book of Revelation especially magnifies the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ. The book is, after all, the revelation of Jesus Christ and not simply the revelation of future events.

**It is an “open” book.** John was told not to seal the book (Rev. 22:10) because God’s people need the message it contains. Revelation *can* be understood, despite the fact that it contains mysteries that may never be comprehended until we meet at the throne of God. John sent the book to the seven churches of Asia Minor with the expectation that, when it was read aloud by the messengers, the listening saints would understand enough of its truths so as to be greatly encouraged in their own difficult situations.

**It is a book filled with symbols.** Biblical symbols are timeless in their message and limitless in their content. For instance, the symbol of “Babylon” originates in Genesis 10—11, and its meaning grows as you trace it through Scripture, climaxing with Revelation 17—18. The same is true of the symbols of “the Lamb” and “the bride.” It is exciting to seek to penetrate deeper into the rich meanings that are conveyed by these symbols.

**It is a book of prophecy.** This is definitely stated in Revelation 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18–19; note also 10:11. The letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor dealt with immediate needs in those assemblies, needs that are still with us in churches today, but the rest of the book is devoted almost entirely to prophetic revelations. It was by seeing the victorious Christ presented that the persecuted Christians found encouragement for their difficult task of witnessing. When you have assurance for the future, you have stability in the present. John himself was suffering under the hand of Rome (Rev.1:9), so the book was born out of affliction.

**It is a book with a blessing.** We have already noted the promise in Revelation 1:3, as well as the six other “beatitudes” scattered throughout the book. It is not enough simply to hear (or read) the book; we must respond to its message from the heart. We must take the message personally and say a believing “Amen!” to what it says. (Note the many “Amens” in the book: Rev. 1:6–7, 18; 3:14; 5:14; 7:12; 19:4; 22:20–21.)

**It is a relevant book.** What John wrote about would “shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1) because “the time is at hand” (Rev. 1:3). (Note also Rev. 22:7, 10, 12, 20.) The word *shortly* does not mean “soon” or “immediately,” but “quickly, swiftly.” God does not measure time as we do (2 Peter 3:1–10). No one knows when our Lord shall return, but when He begins to open the seals of the scroll (Rev. 6:1ff.), events will occur with speed and without interruption.

**It is a majestic book.** Revelation is the book of “the throne,” for the word *throne* is found forty-six times throughout. This book magnifies the sovereignty of God. Christ is presented in His glory and dominion!

**It is a universal book.** John saw nations and peoples (Rev. 10:11; 11:9; 17:15) as part of God’s program. He also saw the throne room of heaven and heard voices from the ends of the universe!

**It is a climactic book.** Revelation is the climax of the Bible. All that began in Genesis will be completed and fulfilled in keeping with God’s sovereign will. He is “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending” (Rev. 1:8). What God starts, He finishes!

## **Summary**

In Revelation 1—3, Christ is seen as the exalted Priest. King ministering to the churches.

In Revelation 4— 5, He is seen in heaven as the glorified Lamb of God, reigning on the throne.

In Revelation 6—18, Christ is the Judge of all the earth.

In Revelation 19, He returns to earth as the conquering King of kings.

The book closes with the heavenly Bridegroom ushering His bride, the church, into the glorious heavenly city.

## **Application**

Whatever you do as you study this book, get to know your Saviour better.