

**Text: Revelation 1.1-20**

From the book of Daniel, we turn to Revelation, the most detailed revelation of end time events in the Bible. Daniel is probably second to Revelation, although it is much more concerned with the nation of Israel. Here is Tom Constable's opening paragraph:

The first chapter contains a prologue to the book, which is similar to the one in John 1:1–18, the prologue to John's Gospel (cf. 1 John 1:1–4). It also relates a vision that God gave John that prepared him for what follows. This presentation has the effect of showing that Jesus Christ is the culminating figure in human history (cf. Heb. 1), and it prepares the reader for the revelation of His future acts that constitutes the bulk of this book.<sup>1</sup>

As we get into Revelation, it would be good to remind ourselves of David L. Cooper's *Golden Rule of Interpretation*:

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.”<sup>2</sup>

**Revelation 1: The Christ of Glory: the vision past<sup>3</sup>****I. The Preface (1-3)****A. The subject of the revelation [apocalypse] (1)**

1. Jesus Christ is the revealer and the subject
2. What he is revealing will take place “soon” — *i.e.* the fulfillment is imminent, no other prophetic word awaits fulfillment

<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Rev 1.1.

<sup>2</sup> David L. Cooper repeated this “Golden Rule of Interpretation” many times, I am not sure where he stated it first

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Custer's notes on Revelation are brief. Due to the importance of the book, I plan to expand the notes and take a slower pace through the material.

3. "His angel" communicates the revelation to John
    - a. Angel = messenger
    - b. Constable suggests Gabriel
    - c. But... "Angel of the Lord"?
  4. The angel communicates the word of Christ to John (Christ's bond-servant)
- B. John testifies that he faithfully communicated God's message (2)
1. The word of God
  2. The testimony of Jesus Christ
  3. All that he saw (44 times in the book, John says, "I saw")
- C. A blessing on the student of the revelation (3)
1. The blessing is for those who read, hear, and obey
  2. The time is near – imminence reiterated

## II. The Address and Doxology (4-6)

- A. The epistolary opening (4)
1. Writer
  2. Addressees
  3. Greeting
    - a. Note: seven Spirits before the throne
      - 1) Some think these are the seven principle angels
      - 2) Others think a reference to the Holy Spirit in his perfection
    - b. In favor of the Holy Spirit, see the Trinitarian blessing
      - 1) From the one who is, was, and is to come
      - 2) From the seven Spirits
      - 3) From Jesus Christ (5a)

## B. The doxology (5b-6)

1. Doxology directed to Him who loves us and made us a kingdom of priests (5b-6a)
2. Doxology offers a prayer of praise, ascribing glory and eternal dominion to Him (6b)

## III. The Theme (7-8)

### A. The major theme, the physical return of Christ to the earth (7)

1. The prophetic oracle begins with the conclusion (see 19.11-16)
2. The return of Christ is apparent to all
3. The return of Christ especially brings conviction to “those who pierced him” (*i.e.* Israel), and all will mourn over him

### B. The solemn guarantor of the theme, God Almighty (8)

## IV. The Preparatory Vision (9-20)

### A. John’s commission (9-11)

1. John speaks directly to the seven churches (9)
  - a. Identifying his union with them, though absent in body
  - b. Identifying his reason for absence, imprisoned for the testimony of Christ
  - c. Several early church fathers say this happened about AD 95
  - d. Patmos was a penal colony for political prisoners at that time
2. John’s Sunday experience: the vision opens (10)
  - a. The vision he saw was ‘in the Spirit’ – not something others could see
  - b. The timing was a Lord’s day, a Sunday
3. A loud voice commissioned him to write what he saw (11)
  - a. The voice instructs him to address the vision to the seven churches

b. The whole vision (the entire book) was to go to the churches, not just the portions of the next two chapters addressed to individual churches

## B. The source of the commission (12-18)

1. The voice came from behind John (12a)

2. The first sight John recognizes is seven lampstands [interp. later] (12b)

3. The figure amidst the lampstands (13-16)

a. Appears to be a man, robed like a priest (13)

b. His appearance makes him out to be more than a man

1) White hair – like Ancient of Days, Dan 7.9 (14a)

- Several references in Revelation make Christ equivalent of the father (v. 18, 2.8, 5.12, 22.13)

2) Eyes like a flame of fire – bright, piercing gaze (14b)

3) Feet glowing brightly like molten bronze (compare transfiguration) (15a)

4) Voice full and majestic: “authoritative, powerful, and irresistible”<sup>4</sup> (15b)

5) Held seven stars (as if in protection) in his right hand (16a)

6) Sword out of mouth (16b)

a) Refers to his tongue, probably, which symbolizes his word

b) The term sword is the Roman short sword, the standard weapon of the Roman soldier

c) The point is that by his Word he will exercise judgement and deal death

7) Shining face (16c); again, recall the Transfiguration

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<sup>4</sup> Constable, Rev 1.15.

“It is primarily as Judge that Jesus Christ appears in Revelation (cf. Matt. 3:11). He judges the churches (chs. 2–3), the whole earth (chs. 4–16), Babylonianism (chs. 17–18), world rulers at Armageddon (19:19–21), and Satan (20:1–3, 10). He also judges the earth during the Millennium (20:4–6), the rebellious earth at the end of the Millennium (20:7–9), and all the unsaved dead (20:11–15). The first 20 chapters of the book deal with judgment and the last two with the new creation.”<sup>5</sup>

### C. John’s reaction and comfort (17-18)

1. John falls in complete surrender and submission to this figure (17a)
2. Jesus raises him up, Fear not, I am the one who was dead and is alive (17b-18)
  - a. Jesus’ words must recall the long-ago relationship John had with him as the beloved disciple
  - b. Jesus emphasizes his right and his authority

## V. The final details of the commission (19-20)

### A. The broad scope of the mission (19)

1. Write the things you have seen [chapter 1]
2. Write the things which are [chapter 2-3]
3. Write the things which shall be after these things [chapter 4-22]

### B. The explanation of the lamps and the stars (20)

1. The stars are the “angels” of the churches: probably refers to the pastors
2. The lamps are the churches themselves

This last bit of the vision reveals the watch care the Lord himself exhibits over his churches. He is in their midst, he knows their doings, he holds their angels in his hand, he watches over them.

<sup>5</sup> Constable, Rev 1.16.

**Conclusion:**

“God interpreted many of the symbols He used in Revelation elsewhere in Scripture. Correct interpretation of this book, therefore, depends on a knowledge of the rest of God’s previously given revelation. This is also true of every other book of the Bible.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Constable, Rev 1.20.