

WEEK 3
JOHN'S AWESOME VISION
40 DAYS THROUGH REVELATION
REVELATION 1:9-20

SCRIPTURE READING AND INSIGHTS

Begin by reading Revelation 1:9-20 in your favorite Bible. Read with the anticipation that the Holy Spirit has something important to teach you today (see Psalm 119:105).

In yesterday's reading, Christ was described as the Alpha and the Omega and as the One who is and who was and who is to come. In this chapter we will focus on John's description of the glorified Christ in heaven and on Jesus' intimate familiarity with churches on earth. With your Bible still accessible, consider the following insights on the biblical text, verse by verse."

REVELATION 1:9-11

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation (1:9) - John and his readers were persecuted by Roman authorities for their faith in Christ. Jesus had affirmed, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). The apostle Paul taught the same (Acts 14:22).

Patient endurance (1:9) - The trials John and his readers faced called for patient endurance amid conflict. The prophecies in the book of Revelation were intended to empower them to patiently endure, for God assured them of victory in the end.

That are in Jesus (1:9) - Jesus gives us His strength and peace in the midst of the storm. Recall what He had told His followers: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

On the island called Patmos (1:9) - Patmos is a mountainous and rocky desert island on the Aegean Sea with an area of about 60 square miles. It lies off the southwest coast of Asia Minor —modern Turkey. People were banished and exiled to this desolate and barren island for crimes committed on mainland Rome and were usually forced to engage in hard labor in mines. Patmos was a Roman penal colony.

The testimony of Jesus (1:9) - John gave relentless testimony for and about Jesus. This is why he was persecuted by Rome.

I was in the Spirit (1:10) - This refers to the state of spiritual ecstasy in which John received a vision containing a revelation from the Lord. The Lord supernaturally "pulled back the veil" so John could see things to come (see Acts 10:10-11).

On the Lord's day (1:10) - Some scholars take this as Sunday, the first day of the week, on which Christians gathered to worship and celebrate the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20). This may be the case, or John may have been saying, "I was in the Spirit on a Lord-glorifying and Lord-manifesting day."

I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet (1:10) - John probably had not heard the voice of his beloved Savior for more than 60 years. Now he hears it again, this time “like a trumpet”—loud, majestic, and otherworldly.

Write what you see in a book” (1:11) - “Book” indicates a scroll made of parchment. God often directed people to write down His revelations for future generations (Exodus 24:4; Joshua 24:25-26; 1 Samuel 10:25; Isaiah 8:1).

Send it to the seven churches” (1:11) - These churches are addressed in Revelation 2–3. The order of mention of these seven churches forms a geographical half-moon, beginning with Ephesus, going north to Smyrna and Pergamum, and moving east and south to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. John had apparently been like a spiritual father to these churches.

REVELATION 1:12-16

I saw seven golden lampstands (1:12) - Jesus reveals in Revelation 1:20 that “the seven lampstands are the seven churches”—that is, the ones addressed in Revelation 2–3. The churches are symbolized as lampstands because they bear God’s light in a dark world (see Matthew 5:16).

A son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest (1:13) - “Son of man” is a messianic title derived from Daniel 7:13. It was Jesus’ favorite title during His three-year ministry (it occurs 81 times in the Gospels).

Jesus, the Son of Man, is in the midst of the churches—that is, He is intimately acquainted with all that is going on in each of them. Revelation 2:1 tells us that Jesus walks among the churches. The long robe and sash designate Christ as a priest (see Exodus 28:4; Leviticus 16:1-4; Hebrews 2:17).

The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow (1:14) - This points to the infinite wisdom and purity of Christ, the divine Messiah. The white hair may also symbolize eternity, much like “Ancient of Days” (Daniel 7:9,13,22).

His eyes were like a flame of fire (1:14) - This description points not only to Christ’s absolute holiness but also to His penetrating scrutiny in seeing all things as they truly are. For example, He accurately diagnoses the strengths and weaknesses of the seven churches in Revelation 2–3. Christ’s eyes of scrutiny will also play a key role at the future judgment (see 1 Corinthians 3:13).

His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace (1:15) - The polished brass feet may symbolize divine judgment. Fire consumed sin offerings on the bronze altar. Seen in this light, Christ the divine Judge moves among the seven churches to judge what is right and what is wrong.

His voice was like the roar of many waters (1:15) - No one would dare challenge One with such a voice!

In his right hand (1:16) - Scripture always portrays the right hand as a place of honor and distinction (see Ephesians 1:20).

He held seven stars (1:16) - Revelation 1:20 reveals that the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. This could indicate that each church has a guardian angel assigned to it. Or

“angels” could refer to the pastors of each of the seven churches, because the Greek term for “angel” literally means “messenger” (see Luke 9:52; James 2:25). If this is correct, then the fact that Christ holds the stars in His hand demonstrates Christ’s providential control over each church and its leaders.”

From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword (1:16) - This is apparently a reference to the Word of God. Ephesians 6:17 refers to “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Hebrews 4:12 tells us that “the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.” Christ stands against His enemies with the sword of His Word (see Revelation 2:16; 19:19-21).

His face was like the sun shining in full strength (1:16) - Christ’s bright white appearance here is similar to Christ’s appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration, where “his face shone like the sun, “and his clothes became white as light” (Matthew 17:2). Christ is the God of glory (see John 17:5).

REVELATION 1:17-18

I fell at his feet as though dead (1:17) - Falling before the Lord was a common response among those who saw the Lord in Bible times (Genesis 17:3; Numbers 16:22; Ezekiel 1:28; Acts 9:4). This too reminds us of the Mount of Transfiguration, where the disciples “fell on their faces and were terrified” (Matthew 17:6).

“Fear not” (1:17) - The Lord comforted and reassured John by touching him and speaking to him. Just as Christ had exhorted His followers not to fear during His three-year ministry (Matthew 10:31; Luke 8:50; 12:7,32), so He encouraged John.”

“I am the first and the last” (1:17) - The phrase “the first and the last” is used of Almighty God in the Old Testament (Isaiah 44:6). Christ’s use of this title here (and Revelation 2:8; 22:13) demonstrates His equality with God.

“The living one” (1:18) - Christ was crucified, and then He defeated death by rising from the dead (John 2:19; Revelation 1:5).”

“I have the keys of Death and Hades” (1:18) - In the New Testament, a key implies authority to open a door and give entrance to a place or realm. Jesus’ words here imply that as God, He has the authority to grant entrance and exit from the realms of death and Hades (John 5:21-26; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:12-14). Jesus sovereignly decides who lives, who dies, and when.

REVELATION 1:19

“Write therefore...” (1:19) - Here we find a three-part outline of the book of Revelation. “The things that you have seen” points to the things John saw and recorded in chapter 1. “Those that are” points to the current state of the seven churches (chapters 2–3). “Those that are to take place after this” points to future events (chapters 4–22).

“REVELATION 1:20

“As for the mystery” (1:20) - A biblical mystery is a truth that cannot be discerned simply by human investigation and that requires special revelation from God. Generally, this word refers to a truth that was unknown to people living in Old Testament “times but explained in the New Testament (Matthew 13:17; Colossians 1:26).

“The seven stars...the seven golden lampstands” (1:20) - Jesus is apparently referring to the seven pastors of the seven churches.

MAJOR THEMES

Names and titles

In the ancient world, names and titles were not mere labels as they are today. A name revealed important characteristics about a person. That is why we learn much about Jesus Christ in Revelation 1.”

The glory of God and Jesus

God’s glory is the luminous manifestation of His person. Brilliant light consistently accompanies His glory (Matthew 17:2-3; 1 Timothy 6:16). The word “glory” is often linked with verbs of seeing (Exodus 16:7; 33:18; Deuteronomy 5:24; Isaiah 40:5) and appearing (Exodus 16:10).

The kingdom

Scripture uses the word “kingdom” in two primary senses. Presently, God spiritually rules over His “people from heaven (Colossians 1:13; see also 1 Corinthians 4:20). In the future, after His second coming, Christ will reign on earth in the millennium (Revelation 20:1-6; see also Isaiah 65:17–66:24; Jeremiah 32:36-44; Zechariah 14:9-17).

DIGGING DEEPER WITH CROSS-REFERENCES

Fear —Psalms 27:1; 56:11; Proverbs 3:25; Isaiah 51:12; John 14:27; Romans 8:31; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18.

Death —Psalms 23:4; 116:15; Ecclesiastes 3:1-2; 7:2; 8:8; Isaiah 25:8; Ezekiel 33:11; Romans 14:8; 1 Corinthians 15:26; Philippians 1:21; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 21:3-4.

Being a witness of Christ —Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:18-20; 10:39-40; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1.

LIFE LESSONS

Strength from other Christians - Each of us is a “brother and partner” for every other Christian (Revelation 1:9). Remember that a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). We gain strength from each other, especially during trials.

Trusting God with the future - We may not know every single detail of what the future holds, but we do know the One who does. Let’s trust Him (Psalm 37:5; Proverbs 3:5-6).

A worshipful attitude toward Jesus - Though Jesus is our Savior and Friend, let’s not forget that He is also our glorious and majestic Lord and sovereign God who deserves our utmost reverence (Revelation 1:17; see also Exodus 3:5).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

What evidence do you see in Revelation 1 that Revelation is a Christ-centered book? Be specific. What implications might this have for your own life being Christ-centered?

John refers to “patient endurance” in Revelation 1:9. What does James teach us about this (James 1:2-4)?