**The Book of Revelation**

**Introduction**

**and Chapter 1**

**Introduction to the Book of Revelation**

When studying Revelation, you will find that differing interpretations and beliefs are abundant. However, there are four main interpretations to discuss briefly that will give the student of Revelation some insight into the beliefs of teachers and scholars one may encounter.

**Preterist**

The first view we will look at is known as Preterism, also sometimes called the “contemporary historical” interpretation. Preterists believe that everything in the Book of Revelation was written only to reflect what was happening at the time that Revelation was written. This would mean that they believe everything in Revelation was written and fulfilled by the end of the first century, more specifically by 70 A.D. when the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed. The “beast” of Revelation is thought to be Nero, or sometimes Domitian, and “Babylon” is thought to be the Roman Empire. The second coming was fulfilled by the destruction of Jerusalem. The “great tribulation” references the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Judaism as it had been practiced up until that time. Preterism believes that Revelation was simply written as an encouragement to the believers of the day who were suffering immense persecution. The message to the church is to continue to stand in hope that one day God would return, destroy “the beast” and set up the eternal kingdom on Earth. The Preterist belief gives rise to what is called “replacement theology,” which states that the Jews are no longer the people of God and that God has no future specific plans for Israel. They believe Israel has been replaced by the church and that a number of the promises made to Israel in scripture now apply only to the church.

It is also worth noting that Preterists believe that everything relating to the Book of Daniel was fulfilled by the second century.

**Idealist**

The idealist interpretation, sometimes called the “allegorical interpretation,” holds that the Book of Revelation is not to be interpreted literally at all, but that it is to be seen only symbolically. “The beast” is not a person or a system but is a representation of certain “social injustices.” Some of these “injustices” may be materialism and greed, exploitation of the poor, etc. The symbolism of Revelation is seen as nothing more than a picture of the battle between good and evil. The Kingdom of God is not a literal kingdom but, instead, is a picture of a society that continually improves and moves away from evil. Idealists, like preterists, do not believe that Revelation has any value in predicting future events.

**Historicist**

The historical interpreter believes that The Book of Revelation has been fulfilled progressively and covers the time from the end of the first century until the time of Christ’s return. The historicist believes that much of the Book of Revelation has already been fulfilled. Many historicists believe that the “locusts” of Revelation 9 represent the rise of Islam. “Mystery Babylon” is the Roman Catholic church and that the fall of Babylon was fulfilled when Napoleon Bonaparte came to power and the Roman church lost power in France. The beast of Revelation is thought, by many, to be the Pope. The ten Kings were ten Germanic tribes that conquered Rome after Rome fell in the fourth century.

The predominant problem with the historicist view is that many of the interpretations are subjective. Interpretations even among individual historicists differ based on individual events that they may choose to focus on.

**Futurist**

The Futurist interpretation teaches that Revelation Chapter 1 relates to the “things which you have seen.” **(Revelation 1:9-20)** Revelation Chapters 2-3 represent either the present time of John, that is, they represent the current state of the churches in the time that John wrote the Revelation or they represent seven eras of church history that are manifested from the time of John until the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel, which is the final seven years prior to the return of Christ to set up his kingdom here on Earth. Some believe, as I do, that chapters 2-3 represent both the state of the church at the time of John, as well as the seven eras of church history leading up to the time of the tribulation.

Starting with Revelation 4:1, all the events of Revelation refer to what is happening in Heaven and on Earth from the beginning of the tribulation period, through the Millennium and continues into the eternal Kingdom of God.

**Three Millennial views:**

It is also important to note another key aspect of interpreting Revelation which relates to the view of the thousand years, or the Millennium which is spoken of in Revelation 20. **(Revelation 20:4-7)**

**Amilleninal view**

Amillenialists believe that there is no literal thousand-year reign of Christ here on the Earth. The thousand years of Revelation 20 are strictly symbolic. Christ could return at any time to judge the world, and usher in the “New Heavens and the New Earth.” After this there will simply be Eternity with God.

**Postmillennialist view**

There are some postmillennialists that believe in a literal one thousand year reign of Christ, however, a majority see the millennium as predominately figurative, and representing a symbolic amount of time that will span from the time of Christ until his return.

The postmillennialist believes that Jesus established his Kingdom and provided redemption in the first century. After this Jesus gave the disciples the great commission and provided them with the authority to establish the Kingdom of God throughout the Earth. This view believes that eventually the gospel will triumph throughout the world, ushering in a time of peace and prosperity that will culminate with the return of Christ to rule over the already established kingdom.

**Premillennialist view**

The Premillennialist view holds to the belief that Jesus will personally return to establish his kingdom. In the years leading up to the return of Christ, there will be a time of great tribulation which will culminate with the return of Christ and the binding of Satan for one thousand years. At that time Christ will set up the kingdom in which he will rule and reign in a perfect kingdom in which the saints will rule with Him. **(Revelation 20:4-6)** After the one thousand years, Satan will temporarily be released from bondage to lead a last-ditch attempt at rebellion against God. However, this rebellion will quickly be put down and, at that time, Satan will be sent to his eternal punishment, tormented in the lake of fire forever. (**Revelation 20:7-10)** At this time the wicked dead are judged at the great white throne and will also be sent to eternal punishment. **(Revelation 20:11-15)** After this, eternity begins with a new Heaven and a new Earth.

**Author:**

John the Apostle **(Revelation 1:1)**

**Date:**

95 A.D.

Revelation was obviously written during a time of intense persecution. This was most likely started by Nero, who ruled from A.D. 54 until he committed suicide in A.D. 68. For this reason, some, like the preterists, believe that Revelation was written was written prior to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.

However, most evangelical scholars believe that Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian in A.D. 95 or some say A.D. 96. This is based on the accounts of multiple early church fathers like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexander and Eusebius who affirm that Revelation was written A.D. 95 or 96 during the reign of Domitian.

**Location:**

Revelation was written while The Apostle John was exiled on the Island of Patmos. By his testimony, John was sent to this rugged island because of his testimony of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. **(Revelation 1:9)** Patmos is a small Island about 40 miles southwest of Ephesus. Patmos was an island used by the Romans as a penal colony. Patmos is about 10 miles long and approximately 6 miles wide.

**Outline:**

There seem to be dozens of ways of outlining and breaking down the Book of Revelation, but the best outline is the outline provided in the Book itself. **(Revelation 1:19)** The Book of Revelation breaks down into three sections.

1. the things which you have seen, which refers to the John’s vision of Jesus. ***(Revelation 1:9-20)***

2. The things which are, which refers to the churches that are referenced in Chapters 2-3. “The things which are” encompasses the characteristics of the church during the church age.

3. The things which will take place after, which refers to the events of Revelation 4:1-22:21.

Each of these sections of this book reveal a particular facet of who Jesus is and what his activities will be during the period after his first coming.

**Revelation 1:1(NKJV)**

*1The 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,*

**Revelation**

*Apokalupsis (Strong’s 602)*

*Unveil, A disclosure of truth which was not known before. Uncover, Lay bare*

It is important to note that the purpose of Revelation is to reveal the past, present and future activity of Jesus. This book is also a revealing of future events which were delivered to Jesus by The Father and subsequently revealed to John and the church.

*The things which must shortly take place.*

Revelation is not simply a book of symbolism or spiritual principles. It is an uncovering of the future events that will assuredly happen just as they are revealed. Much confusion about the Book of Revelation stems from the belief that these events are not literal but symbolic. It is clear that John intended his writings to be taken literally. There is much symbolism in The Book of Revelation, but the symbolism only points to a reality that is literally to come.

When a literal view of the events of this book is accepted, it is easy to delineate between what is symbolism and what is reality.

**Revelation 1:2(NKJV)**

*2who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.*

These things were not made up or written down second hand. John says these are the things I personally experienced and witnessed during the vision. John signifies that the words written are accurate to the words and the testimony of Jesus. He wrote down everything he saw exactly as it was revealed to him.

**Revelation 1:3(NKJV)**

*3Blessed 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.*

At the time that Revelation and the other books of the New Testament were being written, there were not multiple copies that would allow every individual to have their own. An epistle would be written and delivered to the church and someone would stand and read it to everyone else.

**Revelation is the only book that has within it a promised blessing for those who read, hear, and keep the words in it.**

The fact there is so much unjustified confusion, intimidation and fear of Revelation is not accidental, it is by design. Satan knows there is a special blessing attached to the words of this book and he has done a masterful job driving people away from it and introducing confusion into its study.

*The time is near.*

We should pay even more attention to John’s writing considering that the time of their fulfillment is getting closer by the minute.

**Revelation 1:4-5(NKJV)**

*4John, 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, 5and 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,*

Why were these words written to these particular churches? Undoubtedly, there were many churches by the time the book was written.

Seven is the biblical number of completion. These seven churches, with all their individual characteristics are representative of the church as a whole in three different ways. First, they are representative of the churches at the time of the writing. Second, they are representative of the seven periods of the church age which we will discuss in Chapters 2-3. Third, they are representative of each individual Christian and the sins, struggles and victories we deal with on a personal level.

*Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come.*

It is not appropriate to simply read these words as a simple salutation and move on. These are words of prayer and blessing to a people who desperately needed grace and peace.

**Grace**

*Charis (Strong’s 5485)*

*I. Grace*

 *A. That which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: Grace of speech*

*II. good will, loving-kindness, favor*

*A. of the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues*

**Peace**

*Eirene (Strong’s 1515)*

*Exemption from the rage and havoc of war*

*Peace between individuals, i.e. harmony, concord*

*Security, safety, prosperity*

*Of Christianity, the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is*

Consider the state of the Christians who would be reading these words. They have endured severe persecution. Many have been martyred and the promise of Jesus to the church of Smyrna is that it is going to continue and even get worse. **(Revelation 2:8-11)** At this point in time, the disciples had all been martyred except for John who, tradition says, was boiled in oil and then exiled to this prison island. If there was any group of people that needed grace and peace, it was the Christians living at the time of the writing.

It is also true that Christians living in every age need the grace and peace of God. Let it be your prayer for the church that there would be more grace and peace in the midst of our trouble.

**Notice in verse four we have mention of each member of the triune Godhead.**

**1. From Him who is and who was and who is to come is a reference to the Father.** We also see Jesus use this title in the Almighty God. **(Revelation 1:8)**

**2. From the Seven Spirits represents The Holy Spirit in all of His fullness.** Seven is also the number of perfection and represents the perfection of The Holy Spirit. It is possible that there is also reference to the sevenfold description of The Spirit in the Book of Isaiah. **(Isaiah 11:2)**

**3. And from Jesus Christ pictures Jesus in his threefold office.** As the “Faithful Witness,” Jesus is pictured in the ministry of the prophet. “Firstborn from the dead,” pictures Jesus as the one who took his own blood into the Holy of holies and performed the work of the priest. “Prince of the Kings of The Earth,” shows Jesus as the King of Kings. Jesus, as a prophet is The Word of God. As priest, He is the Lamb of God, and as King, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

*To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,*

Jesus is the all-sufficient one who, because of His great love, offered Himself as the perfect, unblemished sacrifice for our sin. By His blood we have been made clean, holy, and righteous in the eyes of God. **(Romans 3:23-26, Ephesians 1:7)**

**Revelation 1:6(NKJV)**

*6and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Some early texts read, “A Kingdom of priests.” This rendering seems to give reference to the Old Testament covenant God made with the Israelites. **(Exodus 19:6)** There is also a connection in this verse to the New Testament counterpart to Exodus 19:6 which tells us that we have been chosen as a royal priesthood and a holy nation. **(1 Peter 2:9)**

**The Kingship of the believer**

**In the Present age:**

* We are to rule over self and sin **(Romans 6:5-14)**
* We are to rule over material things **(Matthew 6:19-21)**
* We are to rule over fear and the fear of man. **(Matthew 6:31-34, Matthew 10:28)**

**In the age to come:**

* We will rule and reign with Christ on Earth during the Millennium. **(Revelation 5:10, Revelation 20:4)**

**The Priesthood of The Believer**

**In the Present age:**

* We offer our bodies as living sacrifices. **(Romans 12:1-2)**
* We offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving. **(Psalm 50:14, Psalm 50:23: Praise=Thanksgiving, Psalm 95:2, Psalm 100:4, Psalm 107:22, Psalm 116:17, Jonah 2:9, Philippians 4:6)**
* We offer worship and Praise. **(Hebrews 13:15, John 4:23)**
* We offer the sacrifice of humility and repentance. **(Psalm 51:17)**

**In the age to come:**

* We offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and worship. **(Revelation 7:9-12, Revelation 11:17)**

As we consider Jesus, who did not leave us to die in our sin, but washed us from our sin in His own blood, and as we meditate on the truth that He did not just wash us, but has also set us apart as kings and priests for His kingdom and majesty, what response can we give but, “to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

**Revelation 1:7(NKJV)**

*7Behold, 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.*

Clouds are representative of the power and presence of God. When Israel was delivered from Egypt they were led by a cloud. **(Exodus 13:21-22)** When Moses went up on the mountain with God, scripture says he went into the midst of the cloud. **(Exodus 24:15-18)** When Jesus ascended, he was taken up and received into a cloud. **(Acts 1:9)** The Psalms tell us that God has his dwelling in the clouds.

**(Psalm 18:11, Psalm 97:1-2)**

Jesus told us this event will happen as the culmination of the tribulation period when he returns to the Earth. **(Matthew 24:30)**

This coming of Christ will be the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel and of Zechariah.

**(Daniel 7:13-14, Zechariah 12:10-14)**

As Jesus returns to the Earth to set up his kingdom, The Spirit of God will pour out his grace and supplication (Mercy) upon the Jewish people and they will recognize Jesus as the Messiah they have pierced. This recognition will ignite a spirit of repentance that will sweep through the entire land. The Kings, Priests, Prophets and all the people will mourn in repentance. This will ultimately open up a fountain of cleansing and revival for the Nation of Israel. **(Zechariah 13:1)**

**Revelation 1:8(NKJV)**

*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.”*

Up until this point, John has been the speaker. In verse eight, Jesus interjects and gives his authority to this letter.

The Alpha and the Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus claim is that he is everything from A to Z, from start to finish. Everything that has ever been and will be is because of him. He is the one who was and is and is to come.

**Revelation 1:9(NKJV)**

*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.*

John writes not as one who is detached from the suffering of the believers he is leading, but as one who is in the midst of the trials with them. In the true church, leaders and believers are together in the walk of faith.

Notice that the “Kingdom” is placed between tribulation and patience. This is how it works in the days we live in. We may suffer many trials and tribulations. We must wait patiently for the promises of God to fully manifest. However, while on the course of patient endurance we discover the greatness of what it means to be citizens of the Kingdom of God. **(Acts 14:21-22)**

Notice that it is for **The Word** that John is suffering and has been exiled to the prison that is the Isle of Patmos. It is not for wrong he has done, but for the truth he refuses to compromise. Our view of scripture should be shaped, in part, by the sacrifice others have made to make sure that its message continues to spread no matter what the sacrifice.

**Revelation 1:10(NKJV)**

*10I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,*

John was “in the Spirit,” that is, he was in a trance-like state in which he was caught up into the Heavenly vision that would reveal all of those things which were to come upon the Earth.

John was caught up on “The Lord’s day.” This phrase has been the cause of some controversy in that some interpret it to mean the first day of the week, Sunday. Some interpret it to mean the Sabbath day, which would be Saturday. Still others interpret it as referring to the “day of the Lord,” that is spoken of throughout the Old and New Testament.

It is most likely that the “Lord’s day” refers to the **first day of the week** when believers gathered to worship, study and reflect on the resurrection of Jesus.

John, on The Lord’s day, was probably reflecting and meditating on the long past resurrection of Christ when he was caught up into the vision of days to come. However, it is also true that the vision he is about to have will transport him into the “day of the Lord.” It is possible that both views of this scripture are truthful.

The voice that John heard was none other than the voice of Jesus himself. The voice of Jesus represented is not the still small voice that Elijah heard. Instead, the voice of Jesus was a booming sound, as of a trumpet.

**Revelation 1:11(NKJV)**

*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.”*

Again, Jesus states “I am the Alpha and the Omega.” Why did Jesus say this again? As Jon Courson relates, many people understand that God is the beginning. They know that He created all things and set all things in motion. Most also understand that God is the end. It is Jesus who will be ruling and reigning at the end of all things. The problem many have is that God is also God in the middle. Jesus is about to reveal what is about to happen in the church age and the age to come. This can be a fearful, confusing thing to comprehend. However, we must remember, during all things, God is still in control. **(See Jon Courson New Testament Application Commentary: (Page 1667) – Jon Courson**

Jesus tells John to write what He sees in a book and send it for all to read. Compare this with Daniel, who was told to write down what he saw and seal it until the time of the end. **(Daniel 12:4)**

The seven churches are, obviously, not all the churches that existed. They were, as we will see in chapters two and three, churches that represent certain characteristics found in the body of Christ throughout each generation. We also believe these churches represent the characteristics of each church age from the time of Christ up until the time of his return as well as characteristics represented in each individual believer throughout the church age.

It is also important to note that the order of these churches relates to the pathway that a messenger would carry letters to each city.

**Revelation 1:12(NKJV)**

*12Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,*

The lampstands represent the seven churches that will be revealed in Chapters 2-3. **(Revelation 1:20)**

Some translations use the word candlesticks. I believe the symbolism of a lampstand better fits what is being described in this verse.

**The Book of Revelation (Page 9) - Clarence Larkin**

*A candlestick requires a light such as a candle, which is self-consuming, while a “Lampstand” is for the support of a lamp whose wick, instead of burning away is fed from the oil within. In the Scriptures, oil is emblematic of the Holy Spirit, and as Jesus Himself interprets the “Lampstands” as meaning the Seven Churches to whom He was about to send messages, we see that Jesus looks upon the churches as not the light, but simply the “Light holder.” From the fact that Jesus speaks of “stars” and “Lampstands” it is clear that we are living in the night of this Dispensation, for “stars: and “lampstands” belong to the night.*

There is also debate as to whether these lampstands symbolize the Golden Menorah of the Jewish Temple or seven individual lampstands. I believe that these lampstands are, indeed, seven different singular lampstands. Each church mentioned in Chapters 2-3 are represented by one individual lampstand. While the Jewish faith was centralized, the church of Jesus Christ will be one church in faith, but individual in function. Each church mentioned in Revelation 2-3 had individual strengths and weaknesses. They did not all operate the same way or do the same things. However, Jesus still sees them as His church.

The lampstands represent the church as light in the world. The churches themselves are not the light, but as the oil of the Spirit of God fills the churches, it causes their light to shine bright.

**Revelation 1:13-16(NKJV)**

*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.*

**In the midst of the seven lampstands**

I love this picture. Where is Jesus in this vision? He is not distant from the churches, not unaware or out of control. Instead, Jesus is pictured as being in the midst of the churches. For all its shortcomings and failures, the church is still God’s plan for proclaiming the message of the Gospel to the world. It is still the church that is to be the light shining in the darkest places. Jesus is here with us. It makes no difference whether the church is flawless or failing, persecuted or comfortable, zealous or apathetic, Jesus is still here. He is still working to transform the church into a pure and holy, spotless bride.

Since Christ is in the midst of the lampstands, he is fully aware of what is happening. He knows what is right and what is wrong and is prepared to pronounce blessings and judgments on the churches, which we will see in Chapters 2 and 3. He is also prepared to pass judgment on the world as we will see in the following chapters.

**One like the Son of Man**

John sees one like the Son of Man. “Son of Man” was Jesus favorite description of himself. He used this designation of Himself 23 times.

This designation and description of The Son of Man reminds us of Daniel’s vision of the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man in Daniel Chapter 7. **(Daniel 7:13-14)** Jesus is now appearing to judge the church, the world and to set up His everlasting kingdom.

**White garment down to his feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.**

The robe seems to be a priestly robe and the Golden band a sign of royalty. It would appear that Jesus is being presented as the royal priest coming to bring judgment and set up his eternal kingdom. The description John gives us, again, reminds us of the vision the Prophet Daniel spoke of in Daniel 7. **(Daniel 7:9)**

The white robe covered his entire body to his feet. There is also symbolism here in that the church is called the body of Christ and the pure white robe of Christ’s righteousness covers us.

**His head and hair were white like wool.**

The hair represents the eternity of Christ. He is, as the Father is, the Ancient of Days. **(Daniel 7:9)** The eternal one is also the one who is full of righteousness, wisdom and authority. The white hair of Christ also speaks to the one who is pure and has the ability to make his children pure. When we hear that his hair is “white as snow,” we are reminded of the words of Isaiah, though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow.” **(Isaiah 1:18)**

**His eyes like a flame of fire**

The eyes of Christ speak to his omniscience. It is Jesus whose gaze can pierce our hearts and see all that is going on inside of us and in this world. There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.

To the church the burning fire of Christ’s judgment will burn away the wood, hay and stubble that is in our lives and prepare us for our eternal reward. **(1 Corinthians 3:11-17)**

To the world the burning fire of Christ’s judgment will bring destruction and tribulation. Whatever the fire burns, we know that it will be judgment that is absolutely just and righteous.

**His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace.**

The feet of brass also represent the divine judgment of Christ when He returns. Brass is, throughout the Old Testament, connected to judgment for sin. **(Exodus 38:29-30)** The feet represent action and movement. Christ will not stop until He has crushed his enemies and destroyed those who will rebel against Him. His judgment will be complete and will wipe away every ounce of rebellion. **(Isaiah 63:3, Revelation 19:15)**

**His voice as the sound of many waters**

The voice of Jesus is loud and powerful. It is the voice of absolute authority. It speaks louder than every other noise and voice of the Earth. It is the voice of Jesus calling down his judgment. The whole Earth will tremble at the sound of this voice.

**He had in His right hand seven stars**

We are told in Verse 20 that the seven stars are the “angels” of the seven churches. This probably does not relate to what we would perceive as angels but seems to refer to the “messengers” or the pastors or leaders of each of the seven churches. We will discuss this more in our study of verse 20.

The right hand of Christ represents the place of intimacy, favor, authority, protection and sovereign control.

**out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword**

It may appear at first glance that we should say that this sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus is the Word of God that we read about in the book of Hebrews. **(Hebrews 4:12)** Each passage describes a “two-edged sword.” However, further study shows us that there are two separate words used for sword in these passages.

**Hebrews 4:12**

**Sword**

*machaira (Strong’s 3162)*

*a large knife, used for killing animals and cutting up flesh, a small sword, as distinguished from a large sword, curved sword, for a cutting stroke, a straight sword, for thrusting*

**Revelation 1:16**

**Sword**

*rhomphaia (Strong’s 4501)*

a large sword, properly a long Thracian javelin, also a kind of long sword wont to be worn on the right shoulder

The word “rhomphaia” is a word that is used only seven times in the scripture. **(Luke 2:35, Revelation 1:16, 2:12, 2:16, 6:8, 19:15, 19:21)** The first time it is used is in reference to the suffering that Mary will endure as she sees her son crucified many years later. Every other instance this word is used it is in reference to the judgment that is coming upon the Earth. Hence, this sword proceeding from the mouth of Jesus is not the Word that divides and reveals the thoughts and intents of our heart. This sword is a sword of judgment being brought upon the nations of the world.

**and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.**

The glory of Jesus appears to John to be as bright as the sun. When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, the light was blinding, and his face appeared to shine like the sun. **(Matthew 17:1-2)** When Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, we see a similar description. **(Acts 9:3-5)**

**Revelation 1:17-18(NKJV)**

*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. 18“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

John is so overwhelmed at the appearance and glorious presence of Jesus that he falls on his face as if he had died. This is a common event in the lives of those who come into the true presence of God. **(Job 42: 5-6, Isaiah 6:5 (Undone=Cut down), Daniel 8:17, John 18:4-6, Acts 9:4)**

In the midst of his fear, the comforting hand of Jesus reaches out and assures John not to be afraid. Jesus then reminds John again; I am in control of everything. There is no need to worry.

**Jesus give John a three-fold reason not to be afraid.** Jesus again reiterates that he alone is the first and the last. He is the one who lives, died, and rose again. Lastly, Jesus says that he is the one who holds the keys of Hades and of death. If this is the God who is on John’s side, and ours, we have no reason to fear.

**Revelation 1:19(NKJV)**

*19“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.*

John is commanded to “write the things you see.” This command is to record and make known things that Daniel was commanded to seal up until the end. This gives us an indication that from the time of the writing of The Revelation until now, we are to live with the knowledge that the time of Christ’s return is at hand.

**As we discussed in the introduction:**

**Outline:**

There seem to be dozens of ways of outlining and breaking down the Book of Revelation, but the best outline is the outline provided in the Book itself. The Book of Revelation breaks down into three sections.

1. the things which you have seen, which refers to the John’s vision of Jesus*.* **(Revelation 1:9-20)**

2. The things which are, which refers to the churches that are referenced in **Chapters 2-3.** The things which are encompasses the characteristics of the church during the church age.

3. The things which will take place after, which refers to the events of **Revelation 4:1-22:21.**

Each of these sections of this book reveal a particular facet of who Jesus is and what his activities will be during the period after his first coming.

**Revelation 1:20(NKJV)**

*20“The 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.*

The stars in the hand of Jesus are the “angels” of the seven churches. These angels are not literal angels as we would think.

**Angels**

*Aggelos (Strong’s 32)*

*I. a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God*

The word translated angel here is to be translated messenger. It would seem from the context of Chapters 2-3 that the messengers referenced are the pastors/leaders of the seven churches. Seven other times, the word Aggelos is used as a description of a human messenger. **(Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:24, Luke 7:27, Luke 9:52, 2 Corinthians 12:7, James 2:25) Note on 2 Corinthians 12:7:** *Some believe the messenger of Satan to be an individual or a group of individuals who harassed Paul during his ministry. This may or may not be the case.*

The lampstands, again, are representative of the seven churches that John is commanded to write to.