

Revelation 1:1-4 – A Revelation of Comfort

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The Book of **Revelation is not as hard to understand as many claim**. Yes, there are some images that are difficult to understand, but the general thrust of this book is not difficult.

Why do I say this book is not as difficult to understand? If you study the whole Bible (all apocalyptic passages from books like Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and Matthew 24) you will find a sweet harmony of its parts, especially when you let the clear parts interpret the not so clear parts.

People who have difficulty understanding the main point of this book are often guilty of destroying the consistency of the parts. Usually they are trying to find mysterious things that are not there because of their preconceived notions!

Your job is to carefully consider the words, symbols, and pictures you see here and then compare clear Scripture with unclear Scripture.

Today, you will begin to see some of the biggest clues to understanding this book.

Our goals are: **That you will receive and carefully study this book, and that you too will receive Christ's comforts under stressful times.**

Our headings are:

The **Revealer of Revelation**

The **Reason for the Revelation**

The **Result of the Revelation**

The **Recipients of the Revelation**

The Revealer of the Revelation

1 The **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,

1. What does "Revelation" mean?

"Revelation" means the "**unveiling of something hidden**" or "**insight into spiritual truth.**"

2. Christ is the Revealer of the Revelation.

a. Jesus testified of the things of this book in a general way when he was on earth in his incarnate and pre-incarnate form.

He appeared to Adam, Abraham, and Moses in his Theophanies, and then he was incarnated and lived for 3 ½ years, teaching truths to those around him.

b. Christ confirmed his Revelation by an angel. There was a specific angel who came with these words of prophecy.

Revelation 22:6 Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets **sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.**

c. Christ confirmed the Revelation to John directly.

3. Lessons:

a. Since Christ is the ultimate speaker here, listen to it, consider it, learn from it, and let it correct and encourage you.

The Reason for this Revelation

1b, 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, 2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. 3b for **the time is near**.

1. The Lord Jesus gave this revelation to encourage Christians to endure their suffering, especially since more was coming soon.

This is mentioned twice – in V1 and V3 -below.

With encouragement, the churches would endure suffering and continue to do the work the Lord called them to do.

2. Because these events were written to comfort the saints during suffering, it meant these events would take place soon, after all, would anyone have been comforted in their suffering if relief for their suffering was 2,000 years later? No!

To make this even more certain, the imminence of their relief was mentioned at the beginning and at the ending of the book.

Revelation 1:1The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants — things which **must shortly take place**.

Revelation 22: 6 Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which **must shortly take place**.

Revelation 22: 10 And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, **for the time is at hand.**

Never in the history of the world has "shortly" meant 2000 years. In fact, the expression 'shortly takes place' comes from a word that means the "**rapidity of execution**" or something done "**with speed.**"

This is the sense often repeated in the Book of Revelation itself. Look more!

Revelation 22: 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am **coming quickly.**" Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Could "coming quickly" mean 2000 years? One gets the sense of "rapidity" when one reads other New Testament writers.

Further, if something were in the future, the words "latter times" were used, but there is a clear sense of urgency here. And it would make sense for the Lord to express that urgency of relief because of the present suffering of his people.

3. It is important then, knowing the book was to comfort the suffering saints, to know exactly when it was written.

I have no doubt Revelation was written before the Fall of Jerusalem in AD70, rather than in AD95-97, as is popularly believed today, in order to encourage Christians who were suffering under the severe Neronian persecution.

Why do I believe this was written before the Fall of Jerusalem, the more commonly held belief of the early church fathers, like Eusebius and Cyprian?

a. The whole tenor of the book describes the persecution of the saints by the Jews, so it would make no sense for the book to have been written well after Jerusalem fell and the Jewish nation had ceased to exist.

b. John would have been extremely old- maybe over 100-to have written in AD95-97. While it possible, it does not seem probable that he would write at that age.

c. Cerinthus (pseudo-theologian) died long before John, yet he borrowed much in his writings from John's Revelation.

d. Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27) points to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 when there would be a sealing up (ending) of all prophecies. This is a very strong argument.

e. Others who believe the book was written about AD95-97 during Emperor Domitian's reign, begin to defend that view from a man who wrote 115 years after Jerusalem was destroyed. Reliability is obviously a question there.

f. This "time is near" idea is similar to the warning of Jesus that catastrophic things would happen in Israel within one generation of his life and the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

This is taught in Matthew 24:1-35. This idea is found in all of the Gospels. Consider two examples:

Matthew 23:36 "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come **upon this generation.**

Mark 13:30 "Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation will by no means pass away** till all these things take place.

Nevertheless, for the 1st three chapters of Revelation, it won't matter much which date you prefer.

4. Lessons:

a. Don't get sucked in to all the intrigue and mystery that have been created by men from this book.

b. Receive encouragements from God as you deal with similar demonic influences as 1st century Christians. God is aware of your sufferings. He is in control of everything that happens. Rest in his encouragements and promises!

The Result of the Revelation

3 Blessed 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.

1. The churches were expected to give good attention to the read Word of God...and receive the comforts!

2. The word "hear" means listening to the words and obeying them, so it was more than accumulating facts in their heads.

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore whoever **hears** these sayings of Mine, **and does them,** I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

3. The result was that they who heard and obeyed the words of this Revelation would be "blessed."

"Blessed" does not mean "happy." "Blessed" describes the way that God sees you.

4. Lessons:

a. Learn the words in this and all books of the Bible and apply it to your lives so comforts and encouragement can come to you. God knows your life will not always be easy...but he will put his arms around you by his Word. Feel his warmth!

b. Specifically, learn all kinds of doctrines from God's revealed Word. Learn of the Trinity, God's sovereignty, his love, his patience, his judgment, his forgiveness, and his power. Learn of his "judgment of the wicked" and "rewards or the righteous." This knowledge will encourage you to keep resisting the pressures to compromise.

The Recipients of the Revelation

4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia

1. Jesus Christ directs this revelation to the 7 churches in Asia Minor – a province of Rome.

These were real churches with real problems and real persecution (and they were expecting more). They needed to be encouraged so they would endure their present and future suffering and not compromise.

To further show these were real churches with real problems, Apostle John shows and expectation that his readers would understand what he was saying! (He wasn't talking about the Chinese and Russian armies, Donald Trump, USA, and Britain.) What comfort would learning about Ronald Reagan do for those suffering 2000 years ago?

And when the people cried out, "How long would these troubles last?" the Lord pointed said, "Not long." God doesn't lie! Revelation 6: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "**How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?**" 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they **should rest a little while longer**, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

Obviously God was speaking of something that was going to happen soon.

2. But what is also peculiar is the number 7 – the number of completion or fullness.

How significant is "7" in the Bible? In Revelation, along with the 7 churches which are in Asia, you will read of 7 Spirits, 7 golden lampstands, 7 stars, seven lamps of fire, 7 Spirits of God, 7 seals, 7 horns, 7 eyes, 7 trumpets, 7 thunders, 7 thousand people were killed, a fiery red dragon having 7 heads, and 7 diadems. **The whole Bible is filled with many special uses for the number 7.** In the rest of the Bible you can read of 7 days in a week, 7 days before circumcision, 7 major feasts, and many other symbolic uses for 7.

This number meant Jesus was directing these messages to all the churches at that time and all churches today.

3. Lessons:

a. Just as you take personal applications from all the other Apostles' letters, so you must learn God's message from Revelation for you today. The principles still apply! For example: You will see warnings to avoid compromises with society and the civil authorities in order to do business, just as the churches then were warned to avoid compromises with society and the civil authorities in order to do business.

b. Our congregations are not very different from the 7 congregations to whom this letter went. You will see this as we examine the details of the 7 churches.

Conclusion:

Christ revealed (not hid) things that would soon take place in order to comfort the suffering church. Christ **desired that his people read and believe his words in order to receive his comfort.** In reading, men would not be uncertain or surprised with what would happen during persecution, but would **find comfort that all the activities of the world are ordered and controlled by God – including the rise and fall of kings.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Grab hold of the promises and knowledge of his Word and receive temporal and eternal benefits you received through Jesus – especially receive comforts in hard times in your home, church, or state.

2. Be bold and speak up against those who are targeting the church of Jesus...warning them that if they do not repent...God would bring the same judgments he brought on the Jews and Rome for persecuting his people. Don't be afraid to do this! Christ is sitting on the throne! He has your back!

Finally, only by listening to and believing God's Word would you find forgiveness of your past sins, hope for the future...and strength to fight life's battles today. Will you accept the truth of God's Word's today and find hope? I trust you will, for the consequence of not accepting the truth of God's Word is spending eternity in hell.