Revelation 1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Do Not Be Afraid

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Before Revelation shows me a single seal or trumpet, it shows me Jesus — risen, robed as priest, blazing as judge, walking among His churches. The man on the prison island isn't forgotten; the One who holds the keys of death lays His hand on him and says, "Do not be afraid."

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

Scripture in the text and key-verse cards: King James Version (public domain). Quotations in the notes: New American Standard Bible® (NASB 1995), © The Lockman Foundation; used by permission. Commentary sources: David Guzik, Enduring Word.

00 The Text

REVELATION 1 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | Sky Key repeated word
⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | Amber Time / place / contrast

1 ▲ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants Amber things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of Sky the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

3 ★ Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and Green keep those things which are written therein : for the time is at hand.

4 John to the Sky seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is , and which was , and which is to come ; and from ▲ the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is ▲ the faithful witness, and ▲ the first begotten of the dead, and ▲ the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and ★ washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us ★ kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, Amber he cometh with clouds; and ⚠ every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8 ▲ I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is , and which was , and which is to come , ▲ the Almighty.

9 I John, who also am your brother, and Amber companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in Amber the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for Sky the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was Amber in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, Green write in a book, and send it unto the Sky seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw Sky seven golden candlesticks;

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks ▲ one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and ▲ his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went ▲ a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Green Fear not; ▲ I am the first and the last:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore , Amen; and ★ have the keys of hell and of death.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter ;

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the ⇄ seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the ⇄ seven churches.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ▲ The Revelation of Jesus Christ
- **v1** ◷ things which must shortly come to pass
- **v2** ⇄ the testimony of Jesus Christ *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** ★ Blessed is he that readeth
- **v3** ▮▮ keep those things which are written
- **v4** ⇄ seven churches *(every occurrence)*
- **v4** ▲ the seven Spirits
- **v5** ▲ the faithful witness
- **v5** ▲ the first begotten of the dead
- **v5** ▲ the prince of the kings of the earth
- **v5** ★ washed us from our sins in his own blood
- **v6** ★ kings and priests unto God
- **v7** ◷ he cometh with clouds
- **v7** ⚠ every eye shall see him
- **v8** ▲ I am Alpha and Omega
- **v8** ▲ the Almighty
- **v9** ◷ companion in tribulation
- **v9** ◷ the isle that is called Patmos
- **v10** ◷ in the Spirit on the Lord's day
- **v11** ▮▮ write in a book
- **v12** ⇄ seven golden candlesticks
- **v13** ▲ one like unto the Son of man
- **v14** ▲ his eyes were as a flame of fire
- **v16** ▲ a sharp twoedged sword
- **v17** ▮▮ Fear not
- **v17** ▲ I am the first and the last
- **v18** ★ have the keys of hell and of death
- **v20** ◷ the angels of the seven churches

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 1:5 (KJV)

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is ▲ the faithful witness, and ▲ the first begotten of the dead, and ▲ the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and ★ washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Setting

John is an old man, a prisoner on "the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (v9). The churches he loves are under pressure. On "the Lord's day" he hears a voice like a trumpet behind him (v10), turns, and sees the risen Christ. The book opens by telling me whose book it is: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (v1).

Structure

- vv1–3 — **the title and the blessing:** a revelation God gave to Jesus "to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place," sent by an angel to John (v1), who "testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v2). "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near" (v3).
- vv4–8 — **greeting and doxology:** grace and peace "from Him who is and who was and who is to come," from the seven Spirits, and from Jesus Christ, "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth" (vv4–5). "To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood" (v5); "He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (v6). "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him" (v7). "I am the Alpha and the Omega … the Almighty" (v8).
- vv9–11 — **John on Patmos:** "your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus" (v9). "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (v10). "Write in a book what you see," and send it to seven named churches (v11).
- vv12–16 — **the vision of the Son of Man:** among "seven golden lampstands" (v12) stands "one like a son of man" (v13) — robe and golden sash, hair white as wool and snow, "His eyes were like a flame of fire" (v14), feet like burnished bronze, "His voice was like the sound of many waters" (v15). Seven stars in His right hand, "out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength" (v16).
- vv17–20 — **fear removed, task given:** "I fell at His feet like a dead man." He lays His right hand on John: "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (vv17–18). "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things" (v19). The stars are the angels of the churches; the lampstands are the churches (v20).

Repeated words

seven (vv4, 11, 12, 16, 20); churches (vv4, 11, 20); write / written (vv3, 11, 19); lampstands (vv12, 13, 20); testimony (vv2, 9) with witness (v5); behold (vv7, 18); right hand (vv16, 17, 20).

Contrasts

John a prisoner on a rock (v9) ⟷ John "in the Spirit" before the King of kings (v10). "The firstborn of the dead" (v5) ⟷ "I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore" (v18). John falls "like a dead man" (v17) ⟷ the living One lifts him with His right hand (vv17–18). Those who pierced Him (v7) ⟷ those He loves and released by His blood (v5). Emperors on earth ⟷ "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (v5).

Chapter theme (my words)

Before Revelation shows me a single seal or trumpet, it shows me Jesus — risen, robed as priest, blazing as judge, walking among His churches. The man on the prison island isn't forgotten; the One who holds the keys of death lays His hand on him and says, "Do not be afraid."

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 1:1 (KJV)

1 ▲ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants 🕒 things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

Whose book is this? (vv1–3)

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ" works both ways: it comes *from* Jesus and it is *about* Jesus. Guzik: "If we catch everything else, but miss Jesus in the book, we miss the Book of Revelation." The word *apokalypsis* means an unveiling — God is pulling back the curtain, not hiding things in code. "Soon" (*en tachei*) troubles some readers after two thousand years; Walvoord, in Guzik: "The idea is not that the event may occur soon, but that when it does, it will be sudden." Verse 3 is the first of the book's seven beatitudes (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). The blessing is not on the one who decodes it but on the one who reads, hears and *heeds* it.

How to read Revelation

Guzik lays out four approaches. **Preterist** — the book was about John's own day and the Roman persecution. **Historicist** — it traces church history from the first century to the end (many Reformers saw the papacy in the beast). **Poetic/symbolic** (often called idealist) — pictures of the timeless battle between Christ and evil, given to comfort persecuted believers. **Futurist** — from chapter 4 on, it describes events just before Christ returns. Guzik grants each has some truth but holds the futurist view, since the book "must mean something" and plainly claims to predict. I'll keep all four in front of me as I study, and stay humble where godly people differ.

The Triune greeting (vv4–6)

Grace comes from the Father ("who is and who was and who is to come," echoing the divine name of Exod 3:14), from "the seven Spirits" — Guzik takes this as the one Holy Spirit in His fullness (Isa 11:2), not seven spirits — and from Jesus. Jesus is given three titles that answer the three things the churches feared: He is the *faithful witness* (He stayed true under trial), the *firstborn of the dead* (death couldn't keep Him — "firstborn" means first in rank, not first created), and *ruler of the kings of the earth* (Domitian is not in charge). Then the praise turns to what He did: He loves us, released us from our sins by His own blood, and made us a kingdom and priests (Exod 19:6; 1 Pet 2:9). The KJV reads "washed"; the Greek words differ by one letter, and Guzik notes both are true.

He is coming (vv7–8)

Verse 7 joins Daniel 7:13 (coming with the clouds) and Zechariah 12:10 (they will look on Him whom they pierced). His first coming was hidden in Bethlehem; His second will be seen by every eye (Acts 1:9–11; Matt 24:30). Guzik reads "those who pierced Him" especially of Israel coming to faith, though in a sense all of us pierced Him. In v8 the speaker is "the Lord God"; Guzik suspects it is Jesus, since the

same titles are His in 22:13. He is "the Almighty" — *pantokratōr*, the One with His hand on everything; nine of its ten New Testament uses are in Revelation.

Patmos and the Lord's day (vv9–11)

John never pulls rank as an apostle; he is "your brother." Patmos was a Roman penal island — Guzik calls it an Alcatraz — and tradition (Eusebius) places John there under Domitian. "In the Spirit" means he was caught up by the Spirit to receive revelation; "the Lord's day" is Sunday, the day of resurrection, not the Old Testament "day of the Lord." The seven churches lay on a circuit in the Roman province of Asia (western Turkey). Seiss, in Guzik: "The churches of all time are comprehended in seven."

The Son of Man among the lampstands (vv12–16)

John turns to see a voice and sees a Person. The lampstands recall the tabernacle menorah, but now there are seven separate stands — one for each local church. Clarke, in Guzik: "A lamp is not light in itself, it is only the instrument of dispensing light." "One like a son of man" is Daniel 7:13; the white hair is Daniel 7:9's Ancient of Days — Jesus bears the marks of deity. The long robe and sash are priestly: He is the High Priest trimming His lamps. Eyes of fire see through everything; bronze feet speak of judgment and strength; His voice drowns every other sound. The sword is the *rhomphaia*, the large broadsword — His word (Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17). Spurgeon: "The Word of Christ, somehow or other, is all edge." His face shines as at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:2). Guzik notes this is the only physical description of Jesus given in the Bible — no soft, pale figure here.

"Do not be afraid" (vv17–20)

John had leaned on this same Jesus at the Last Supper (John 13:23); now he falls like a dead man. Spurgeon: "We are never so much alive as when we are dead at his feet." But the same right hand that holds the stars rests on John. Jesus holds "the keys of death and of Hades" — the devil does not hold them, and never did. Verse 19 gives the book's own outline, which Guzik follows: what John has seen (ch. 1), the things which are (chs. 2–3, the churches), and what will take place after these things (chs. 4–22). The "angels" of the churches may be pastors (*angelos* means messenger), guardian angels, or the spirit of each congregation; Guzik concludes they in some way represent each church. Either way, even the struggling churches of chapters 2–3 are held in His right hand.

Word study (Greek)

- **revelation — *apokalypsis* (G602):** an uncovering, unveiling.
- **soon — *tachos* (G5034):** speed, quickness; *en tachei*, "with speed."
- **blessed — *makarios* (G3107):** happy, favored by God — the first of seven beatitudes.
- **testimony — *martyria* (G3141):** witness given; John's whole charge (vv2, 9).
- **witness — *martys* (G3144):** one who testifies; became our word "martyr."
- **firstborn — *prōtotokos* (G4416):** first-born; first in rank and privilege.
- **released — *lyō* (G3089):** to loose, set free; KJV follows *louō* (G3068), "to wash."
- **Almighty — *pantokratōr* (G3841):** ruler of all, the all-powerful.
- **tribulation — *thlipsis* (G2347):** pressure, affliction, crushing trouble.
- **perseverance — *hypomonē* (G5281):** steadfast endurance; staying under the load.

- **Lord's — *kyriakos* (G2960):** belonging to the Lord; used elsewhere only of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20).
- **lampstand — *lychnia* (G3087):** a stand that holds a lamp.
- **sword — *rhomphaia* (G4501):** a large, broad sword.
- **keys — *kleis* (G2807):** a key; authority to open and shut.
- **Hades — *hadēs* (G86):** the realm of the dead.
- **angel — *angelos* (G32):** messenger, whether human or heavenly.

Cross-references

Exod 3:14; Exod 19:6; Isa 11:2; Isa 44:6; Isa 48:12; Dan 7:9–14; Dan 10:5–9; Zech 12:10; Matt 17:2; Matt 24:30; John 13:23; Acts 1:9–11; Rom 6:9; Col 1:18; Heb 4:12; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 22:7, 12–13.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 1:3 (KJV)

3 ★ Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein : for the time is at hand.

Command to obey — "heed the things which are written in it."

The blessing of v3 is not for the man with the best end-times chart; it's for the one who hears and obeys. I can build Bible-study tools and write books about Revelation and still miss the blessing if I don't do what it says. Today I'll read it out loud and ask one question: what does Jesus want me to keep?

Sin to confess — a small, safe Jesus

I tend to carry around a Jesus I'm comfortable with — gentle, quiet, a little distant. John's Jesus has eyes like fire and a voice like a waterfall. I confess I've made Him smaller than He is, and treated His word as something I can handle rather than a sword that handles me.

Warning to heed — every eye will see Him

He is coming, and no one will miss it — not the scoffer, not the man who pierced Him, not me (v7). The warning is not to fear the timetable but to be found ready, washed and released by His blood, when He comes.

Promise to trust — "I have the keys of death and of Hades."

The men I sit with in recovery and behind prison walls know what it is to be locked in. The jailer has keys; the addiction seems to have keys. But Jesus holds the keys that matter most, and He has never handed them to the devil. He was dead and is alive forevermore — and He lays His hand on the man who has fallen flat and says, "Do not be afraid."

Example to follow — John on Patmos

John was a prisoner, cut off from his churches, and that is exactly where he saw Jesus most clearly. He called himself "your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation." For a man in a cell, or a man who feels his life has become an island, Patmos is not the end of usefulness. I want to be that kind of brother to the men I disciple — not above them, but beside them in the tribulation and the perseverance.

Worship

He loves us. He released us from our sins by His own blood. He made us a kingdom and priests. "To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (v6). I bow, as John did, before the First and the Last.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Faithful Witness and Firstborn of the dead, open my eyes to see You as You are. Forgive me for shrinking You down to my size. Thank You for releasing me from my sins by Your blood. When I fall at Your feet, lay Your right hand on me and speak Your "Do not be afraid." Use me to carry that word to the men who feel locked in and forgotten. Amen.