

- Approach with great humility

1. 'A revelation of Jesus Christ'

- The Lord Jesus Christ is its theme

- Jesus is the One who gives this revelation

- Jesus both originator and content

2. Comes down a line of communicators

- God
- Jesus
- The angel
- John
- The servants of God
- And to us

So high above us

3. Uses a lot of symbolism

- Key to the symbolism generally the Old Testament

- Numbers symbolic

- 'Seven spirits' 'Alpha and Omega'

The book of Revelation is a deeply mysterious prophecy written to encourage persecuted Christians. Although it is a controversial book, it should never be the ground of division or conflict or hostility among fellow Christians. We must approach it with great humility.

1. **The book claims to be 'a revelation of Jesus Christ'**¹. This implies, first, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the theme of the book of Revelation. The one thing you should see in this book is the glory of Jesus. In Revelation 1:1–3:22 Jesus is seen as the glorified Saviour in the midst of his churches. In Revelation 4:1–8:1 Jesus is the Lord of history, the one who opens the seven scrolls. In Revelation 8:2–11:18 Jesus reigns amidst the judgements coming on the world, being announced by the trumpets of judgement. In Revelation 11:19–15:4 Jesus is victorious over the dragon. In Revelation 15:5–16:21 Jesus is the one who expresses the anger of God against the unrepentant and he pours out bowls of wrath upon them. In Revelation 17:1–19:10 Jesus is the destroyer of godless Babylon. In Revelation 19:11–22:21 Jesus is Victor over sin and Satan and the One who brings the new heavens and new earth.

It also means that Jesus is the One who gives this revelation. It is 'a revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him . . .' Jesus is the One revealed. And Jesus is the Revealer. The churches of Roman Asia were being severely persecuted. John the apostle has been exiled from Ephesus to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea near Greece. John was given a vision of the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ. It was both given by Jesus and was a revelation of Jesus. Jesus was its originator and its content.

2. **This 'revelation of Jesus Christ' comes down a line of communicators.** It is ¹*A revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place. And he signified it, sending it through his angel to his servant John.* ²*John testified to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ. He testified to all the things that he saw.* See how this revelation came from **God** to Jesus, from **Jesus** to his angel, from **the angel** to John, from **John** to the servants of God at that time, and from **the servants of God** at that time to us now who read the document that they passed down to us.

Why does this revelation come down a channel of communicators? Sometimes – and this is relevant here – the line of communicators is because the revelation is so great, so mysterious, so high above us. This long line of mediators shows how great above us is this revelation.

3. **This 'revelation' makes use of a lot of symbolism.** I take it that this is quite certain; the book of Revelation is highly symbolic. The word 'signified' is deliberately chosen¹. This book is packed tight with signs of various kinds. The key to the symbolism is generally to be found in the Old Testament. The entire book of Revelation is saturated in the language of the Old Testament. I take it that most of the numbers are symbolical in the book of Revelation. The few times when the number is literal, it is symbolic as well! There really were seven churches in Roman Asia Minor – and probably more. Yet John chose seven of them to be symbolic and representative of churches everywhere. Even the literal seven is symbolic as well!

Consider the symbolism in chapter 1. The number seven is symbolical (even in 1:4). The 'seven spirits' is a piece of symbolism. 'Signs' are used when Jesus is called 'the Alpha and the Omega'. The candlestick, the robe,

¹ 1:1

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- *Candlestick*

- 144,000

4. The author calls himself John

- *John the apostle who lived in Ephesus and was exiled to Patmos*

5. The most inspired and reliable vision that there ever was

6. There is a special blessing attached to this book

- *To those who read it aloud and take notice of its message*

the sash, the white hair, the bronze feet, the stars, the sword, the sun, the keys. This is all picture language. We must be ready to find symbolism everywhere. The 144,000 is not literal (especially since it is 'a multitude that no one can number').

4. **The author calls himself 'John'**¹. The only 'John' that everyone would know as simply 'John' is John the apostle. Early Christian tradition claims to know that the apostle John spent his later years in Ephesus, and from there he was exiled to Patmos. Almost certainly the book was written by the apostle John at the end of the first century AD. Yet the style of Greek is strange and rather different from the Greek of John's Gospel and John's letters. It is written in a very Hebraic Greek, as if John were thinking in Hebrew but writing in Greek. The precise reason for this is uncertain; it may have something to do with his expressing, in Greek, words that were given to him in Hebrew or Aramaic and which he wished to portray as literally as possible in another language. Certainly John's characteristic language is found in Revelation ('witness', 'glory', 'lamb', and other typical vocabulary of John).

5. **This 'revelation' is the most inspired, the most reliable vision that there ever was.** Many people have had dreams and visions and revelations of one kind or another. Most of them are weird and peculiar and totally unreliable. This one is the reliable one! The word of the Lord came to John as it came to the Old Testament prophets¹. This is 'the testimony of Jesus Christ'. This is law-court language. Jesus gives his testimony in the law-court of God's world. He is a faithful witness and gives a faithful testimony.

6. **There is a special blessing attached to this book.** ³*Blessed is the person who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those people who hear it and who take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.* Blessing comes upon those who read this letter aloud to other Christians, those who take notice, and those who respond to what they are told. In a difficult book such as this, it is encouraging to have a promise of blessing from the very beginning. Its theme is the nearness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you facing opposition or persecution? You need a 'revelation'. You need to see that Jesus is close to you, walking around in the midst of his churches.

¹ 1:1, 4, 9;22:8

¹ see Jeremiah 1:2



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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