

• *A slow beginning – not a book to be rushed*

In Revelation 1:9 our book really begins! John has been beginning very slowly, with a title^{□1}, a benediction^{□2}, greetings and a doxology^{□3}, and an announcement of the theme of the book^{□4}. Why has John been so slow in starting? It is surely because he does not want us to rush into this book. We are dealing with very mysterious and sacred themes. We should come at it rather slowly. John slows us down deliberately! Now he starts! He introduces himself and tells how he heard Jesus speaking to him^{□5} and saw a vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ^{□6}. It knocked him down like a person who had died^{□7} but then he was lifted up and again he was told to write down the vision that he was seeing^{□8}. Seven letters were given to him by the glorified Lord Jesus Christ for seven of the churches in the Roman province of Asia^{□9}.

□1 1:1-2
 □2 1:3
 □3 1:4-6
 □4 1:7-8
 □5 1:9-11
 □6 1:12-16
 □7 1:17a
 □8 1:17b-20
 □9 2:1-3:22

• *A vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ*

• *In a prophetic trance, John sees a door open in heaven*

All of this takes place in a prophetic trance – an unusual state of mind in which you are intensely aware of what God is saying but are hardly aware of what is happening around you. In Revelation 4:1 John is still in this state of mind when he sees a door open in heaven and (still in prophetic trance) he feels himself going through the door and he sees things that are taking place in heaven. For the moment^{□1} the revelation being given to John is concentrating on Jesus himself and what Jesus has to say about the churches on planet earth.

□1 1:9-3:22

• *At first Jesus Himself and the churches on earth*

John's humility and lowliness

John is an example of humility and lowliness. Although he was (as I believe) an apostle, an eyewitness of the resurrection and 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', yet he speaks of himself only as an ordinary Christian. ⁹*I, John, your brother and your companion in sharing the suffering and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, came to be on the island called Patmos, on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.* Spiritual power is more important than official power. What a person is in reality is more important than titles.

John's patient suffering

John is an example to us of patient suffering. He is in exile. He has been taken away from home and friends and comforts and put on the island of Patmos – 55 kilometres off the coast of Asia Minor, about 12 kilometres long and 7 kilometres wide. He is there because of his preaching the gospel. His friends in Roman Asia Minor are suffering and he is suffering also. As a result he experiences more of the kingdom of God in his life. He is patiently enduring many troubles and hardships.

Special suffering brought special revelation

Special suffering brought special revelation. John says, *I became 'in the Spirit' on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice, like the sound of a trumpet.* Those who go through unusual sufferings for Jesus but patiently endure them are likely to have unusual blessings. God gave John an unusual revelation.

• *A trumpet-like voice*

Christians need to know that Christ speaks to us in a great voice, like the sound of a trumpet. We need to experience guidance coming to us from a trumpet-like voice. Many other voices will come to us, the voice of sin, the voice of false philosophy, the voice of

• Other voices

comfortable living and self-centred ambitions. But we need to experience the voice of Jesus coming to us like a powerful trumpet demanding our attention. In the ancient world trumpets were not used so much in musical orchestras. They were more used in battle. The ancient trumpet sound was not valued for its beauty. It was valued because of its loudness and its ability to be heard by everyone. Many times in the book of Revelation, Jesus will speak to us with the voice of a trumpet. God spoke with trumpet-like power when he spoke on Mount Sinai issuing his law to Israel. Now Jesus speaks with trumpet-like power, but this time his purpose is to draw attention to himself and to reveal his own glory.

• His purpose is to draw attention to Himself and to reveal His own glory

• A trumpet calls people to get ready

One ought to remember also that in the story of Israel there was another occasion when trumpets were sounded. They were sounded when Israel was about to move camp and go another stage forward in the nation's journeyings. The sound of the trumpet called the people to get ready. It summoned them to be prepared to face change and forward-movement in their lives. It told them they were to say farewell to the place where they were camping before they were about to move elsewhere.

• Jesus has something special to say to His churches

John was given a special revelation. He fell into a prophetic trance (which is what 'I became "in the Spirit" ' means). It was a Sunday, the day Christians often met in commemoration of Jesus' resurrection. Suddenly John fell into a trance and heard a voice like the sound of a trumpet¹. God gave John an unusual revelation. The voice had great beauty and majesty. ¹¹*The voice said, 'Write on a scroll what you are seeing and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.'* Jesus has something special to say to his churches. Churches need to get used to the idea that Jesus is always likely to say something unexpected to them. Congregations are not ruled by 'church constitutions' or by business management methods or marketing managers. They are to be ruled by the powerful voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the head of the church. The ultimate voice in the churches will not be that of any ordinary human being. It will be the voice of Jesus.

• Something unexpected

• The ultimate voice is the voice of Jesus

1:10



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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