

- *Other early 'apocalypses' or revelations*

- *Modelled on the book of Daniel*

- *This Revelation also a book of prophecy and a circular letter*

From the second century BC onwards various books in the ancient world claimed to be 'revelations' or 'apocalypses'. They modelled themselves on the characteristics of the book of Daniel, using a lot of symbolism and focusing their attention on the end of the world. The 'apocalypses' also made much use of visions and messages from angels. John's book, which we call 'the book of Revelation', in some ways resembles Daniel, and it also resembles the many 'apocalypses' of the period around the first century AD. It also can be called a book of prophecy<sup>□1</sup> or a circular letter to seven churches<sup>□2</sup>; and it also contains seven letters in chapters 2:1–3:22. John wrote down the visions which he saw. <sup>4</sup>*John to the seven churches that are in Asia*. As he was told to do, he made the visions into a book and sent it as a circular letter to the Roman province of Asia. As in any letter, John's letter contains a greeting. *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, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

□1 see 1:3  
□2 see 1:4

*Grace and peace – two blessings from God*

- *We need them!*

- *From the Father who knows the past and the future*

**He speaks of two blessings that come from God.** 'Grace to you and peace . . .' We need God's grace – more than anything! We live and depend on his graciousness to us. If he ever were to give us what we deserve, we would be in bad trouble. Then we need God's peace – the sense that we have that we are right with him. We are in trouble if we lose this sense of peace.

He speaks of the triune God from whom these blessings come. God's grace and peace come from **the Father**. 'Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come . . .' God is the everlasting God. He is present throughout all time, backwards and forwards. His years are throughout all generations<sup>□1</sup>. He is the King eternal<sup>□2</sup>. It is encouraging to think that God knows where we have come from, and that he knows the future. God knows where he is taking us. He knows the end from the beginning. He is Lord over time. He inhabits eternity and yet he dwells with the contrite person and the one who is lowly<sup>□3</sup>. It is amazing to think that the one who 'inhabits eternity' is also willing to dwell with us!

□1 Psalm 102:24  
□2 1 Timothy 1:17

□3 Isaiah 57:15

- *From the Holy Spirit who brings to pass the Father's will*

God's grace and peace come from **the Holy Spirit**. The 'seven spirits who are before his throne' is surely the Holy Spirit. This is a piece of symbolical language taken from Isaiah 11:2 (note how seven times the Spirit is said to be the Spirit 'of' something). The Holy Spirit is before the throne of God. He is the Spirit of the Lord, and brings to pass the Father's will. He gives gifts of wisdom and understanding. He gives counsel, power and knowledge, and works in us the fear of the Lord.

- *From the Lord Jesus Christ the faithful witness who reveals his plans*

God's grace and peace come from **the Lord Jesus Christ**<sup>□1</sup>. Jesus is mentioned third because John plans to say more about Jesus<sup>□2</sup>. He is the faithful witness – the One who will faithfully reveal himself and his plans in this book. He is the firstborn of the dead – the head and chief of the total number of those who will be raised from the dead. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth. The persecutors who were opposing Christians might think that they have

□1 1:5a  
□2 in 1:5b-7

power, but Jesus has power over them.

**A 'doxology'**

*A short burst of praise summing up salvation*

• *Frees us from the guilt, pollution and power of sin*

• *By shedding His blood*

• *Making us a new people - a kingdom and priests*

**Next John has a 'doxology'**, a word of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ. *To him who loved us and freed us from our sins by his blood,<sup>6</sup> and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* This verse-and-a-half is a compact description of salvation. It begins with God's love. In the Lord Jesus Christ the Father has drawn up a loving plan of salvation.

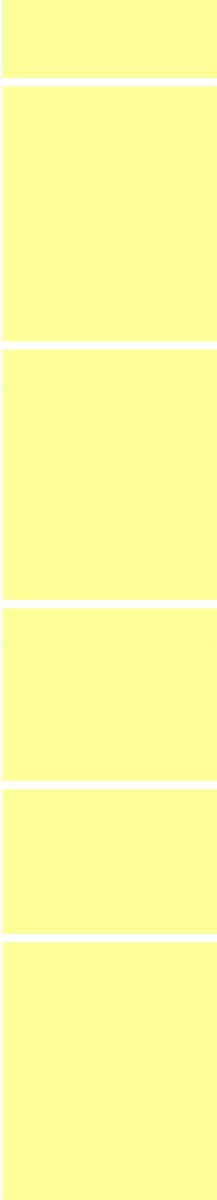
Jesus frees us from our sins. He takes away the guilt of sin, giving us pardon and forgiveness. He takes away the punishment of sin, assuring us that he has no plans to let the eternal consequences of our sins fall upon us. He takes away the pollution of sin, cleansing our lives and purifying our conscience. He delivers us from the dominion of sin, releasing us from slavery. The price that had to be paid for this sin-cleansing was his blood-shedding on the cross.

Then Jesus makes us into new people altogether. He makes us a kingdom, people who are under his kingship. He makes us to be priests, people who have access to God. He makes us to be people who serve God.

All of this John gathers up into this short burst of praise to God. He ends: 'to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever'. What John wants is to see God ruling over this world and getting honour for himself and his righteousness

**The theme: He is coming!**

Lastly John puts before us the theme of the book of Revelation. <sup>7</sup>*Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him. Those who pierced him will see him, and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. Yes! Amen!* <sup>8</sup>*'I am Alpha and Omega,' says the Lord God, he who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.* Jesus will one day come. It is this theme that our book will develop at length.



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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