



What is The Book of Revelation?

David DePra

Preface

Of all of the books of the Bible, The Book of Revelation is perhaps the most misunderstood. Many people believe it to be impossible to understand. But the term, "apocalypse," means, "uncovering," and not, "hidden." This book is exactly what the first verse states: The Revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ.

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Chapter 1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

In order to understand the Book of Revelation – what it is and what it means – we need only read the first verse. It says, “The revelation of Jesus Christ...” The Book of Revelation is THE REVELATION OF THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST. More specifically, it is the revelation of Jesus Christ in His people through His redemptive work. Included is the impact of that upon all humanity -- and really upon all of creation.

A Revelation

Note that word: Revelation. The Greek word is, “apocalypse.” It means to, “uncover, expose, to make manifest.” Yet most people would tell you that the Book of Revelation is the most mysterious, hidden, and difficult to understand book that God inspired in the Bible. But if God inspired this book -- and it is called, “an uncovering of Jesus Christ” -- then how is it that this, “uncovering,” or, “revelation,” seems to be the exact opposite?

There are, of course, many popular interpretations of this book. For example, there are many people, especially in the last one hundred twenty years or so, who have taken the Book of Revelation and turned it into a prophecy chart of future world events. You have probably heard many interpretations of this book along that line. People feel that they have it all figured out as to when future world events are going to

happen — the Great Tribulation, the millennium, when Russia is going to invade Israel, etc. — and they find verses in this book to supposedly prove these claims.

But is it possible that none of these common interpretations of the Book of Revelation hit the target? Again, the first sentence of this book tells us what the Book of Revelation is: The Book of Revelation is not a prophecy chart of events taking place in this physical world. It is a revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ, and of all the spiritual Truth found in Him -- and His impact upon humanity and all of creation through His Redemptive work. Is that what we find in the common interpretations of this book? Not usually. In fact, that very purpose is rarely acknowledged. It gives way to turning this book into a prophecy chart of future events.

Well, how about future world events? There will be an impact upon world events. But the focus of this book is not world events. The focus is the PERSON of Jesus Christ. His impact upon all of creation, including world events, is secondary.

Both the Giver and the Subject

We need to take seriously the words of the apostle John in the first chapter of this book — because they define the rest of the book. For instance:

The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show unto His servants -- things which must shortly come to pass --

which He signified by His angel unto his servant, John. (Rev. 1:1)

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. (Rev. 1:10)

The Book of Revelation is a VISION (see Rev. 1:10) – it is a vision that God gave OF Jesus Christ and THROUGH Jesus Christ -- to the apostle John. In other words, Jesus is the GIVER of the revelation found in this vision. But He is also the SUBJECT. Again, the book is a vision of the Person of Jesus Christ -- and of God's dealings with His people and with all of humanity through Christ.

At first glance, it might appear as if Jesus Christ is merely the GIVER of this revelation. Verse 1 does say, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show unto His servants." But as noted, if we dig a little bit deeper, we will see that Jesus Christ is not just the giver of the revelation -- He IS the revelation. He is the subject of it.

There is no contradiction there – Jesus is easily both the giver of the revelation and the revelation itself. He can be both because Jesus is revealing HIMSELF.

How many realize that God wants to reveal HIMSELF to us and in us? That He does so by revealing in us Jesus Christ? And to the degree that we receive a personal inward revelation of Jesus Christ we will be able to see all else in HIS light. In short, we must come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ – HE is God's revelation

to us. But if we are coming to know Christ, He will likewise enable us to receive God's revelation on all else.

That Jesus is both the SUBJECT of all revelation – through the spirit – but likewise the GIVER of all revelation – through the spirit – is not only what we find stated in Rev. 1:1, but it is exactly how God always works. For example, Jesus Christ said -- NOT that He merely had some Truth to give -- although He did give plenty of Truth in His teaching and parables -- but more than that, He said, "I AM the Truth." So there you have the same principle again: Jesus Christ IS the Truth. But how many understand that knowing Jesus -- who is THE LIGHT -- will shed light upon everything else? It can hardly be otherwise; you cannot really divorce the two. When you know Jesus Christ, you know the Person who is the Truth – and this opens the Truth about all else.

Paul said essentially the same thing in Colossians 2:3: "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Jesus Christ." They are hid IN Him -- consequently it is only as Jesus Christ is unfolded and revealed to the individual that all that is IN Him -- the treasures of wisdom and knowledge on any number of things you might want to imagine - - it is only in the unfolding of Christ that these things are likewise unfolded.

Likewise, Jesus Christ said, "I AM the light." How can you see anything without the light? If you don't see Jesus -- if He is not your light and you do not know Him -- then you are going to be in the dark about all else as to the mind of God. Again -- ALL the treasures of wisdom and

knowledge; all of the light and Truth of God is found in the Person, Jesus Christ. If you know Him, then you are going to discern the mind of God, and you are going to see things the way that God sees them.

One other scripture that illustrates this very well is Galatians 1:12 -- which has a phrase very similar to the one we are reading here in Rev. 1:1. Rev. 1:1 says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ." But in Galatians 1:12, with regard to the gospel, Paul writes, "For I neither received this gospel of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ." Now what does Paul mean by that statement? Is Paul simply saying that Jesus Christ appeared to him and narrated to him teaching that constituted the gospel? And then told him to go out and parrot that teaching to others? Is that what happened? No, Paul is saying that he had a personal, inward revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ --but that it was because of that revelation of Christ that he was able to understand the gospel.

If you read down through Galatians 1 you will see that this is exactly what he is saying. For example, read Galatians 1:16, where it says, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen." It was the fact that Christ was first revealed IN Paul that he was then able to preach Christ; preach the gospel. It is evermore so with all of us: We must first receive a revelation of Christ before Christ -- through the spirit -- can reveal to us the Truth on any matter, including the gospel. Christ is the SUBJECT of all of God's revelation. But He is

likewise the GIVER of all revelation that proceeds from out of Himself.

Paul, in another place, called the gospel, "the gospel concerning His Son." The gospel is a message of the good news of Jesus Christ. But I think it is more accurate to say that the gospel IS Jesus Christ. Everything God is doing is concerning His Son. So, when Paul received a revelation; received Jesus Himself within, he came to have a revelation, not only of Jesus, the Person -- but Christ revealed in Paul also brought the revelation to him of the Truth of the gospel.

Can we see that it would be nonsense to preach, "the gospel concerning His Son," if we did not personally have a revelation of that Son? For if that is what I am doing the gospel I preach will eventually be exposed as a product, not of Christ, but of natural, religious man.

So this Book of Revelation is a revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ. But it is also a revelation of so much more that is made possible by receiving that revelation of Christ Himself. He is the Truth – so it is by knowing Him that we know the Truth. He is the Light – so it is by knowing Him that all is illuminated. He is both the SUBJECT of the revelation in this book – but likewise the giver of all else as it is related to Him.

Chapter 2

Jesus Christ is God's Revelation

Contrary to the thinking of some, God Almighty does not speak to people in their head every five minutes, giving specific directions to do this or that. Not that He would never lead a person or speak to them. But if you have walked with Christ for very long, you have discovered that even during seasons of stress, when you may be crying out to God for Him to tell you what to do or asking Him to show you His will – you have likely discovered that your prayers and cries are often met with SILENCE. Why?

Aside from the possibility that God is actually being silent to you for some purpose He has in your life – the silence in these matters is usually NOT because God is not speaking. Rather, the silence is usually because we may not, “have ears to hear,” what God IS speaking. We are listening for one thing and God is speaking another. We may be listening for INFORMATION. God may be speaking REVELATION. We may be listening for God to tell us what to do. But God may be speaking to us the Person of Jesus Christ.

What God wants to do is speak Jesus Christ. This is, in fact, what God is speaking in the Book of Revelation: He is speaking Christ. Read Hebrews 1:1. That verse begins by saying, “God, who at different times and different manners spoke in time PAST unto the Fathers by the prophets...” We know that God DID speak in the Old Testament to the patriarchs and to the nation of Israel through many different prophets – prophetic utterance

and words from God was the way in which God spoke in those day. But Heb. 1:1 says that this was the way that God spoke in TIME PAST. But in verse two, in contrast, we are told what God speaks TODAY: "God, in these last days has spoken unto us IN A SON"

Now, if you look more deeply into the Greek, what it really says there is that God is speaking to us SON-WISE. In other words, Jesus is the, "language," that God is speaking INTO His people. But God is not merely speaking words or teaching about Jesus. No. Rather, God is revealing His Son IN His people.

To begin his gospel, John writes, "In the beginning was the WORD." That term, "word," is translated from the Greek, "logos." LOGOS means, "the spoken word" – but also the mind and intent behind the spoken word. Thus, if the Person of Jesus Christ is THE WORD OF GOD then HE IS what God has to say. Wrapped up in the Person of God's Son is the entire thought, intent, and mind of God. Sure. Jesus is God's Son – He is the revelation of God in human form. Jesus is the Word that God's speaks – He is God's revelation of Himself. And how does God, "speak to us Son-wise?" Not through audible words, or necessarily through some word of knowledge. Primarily, God speaks Christ by revealing Christ IN US – by bringing us into an inward realization of His Son.

So, Jesus Christ is the Word that God is speaking. Indeed, Jesus Christ is God's revelation – He is what God is speaking in this Book of Revelation.

We could have all the theological teaching in the world -- and many of us have plenty of it. We could be a Bible expert, quoting book and verse, and know all the doctrines -- even memorize this Book of Revelation -- you could do all of that but at the end of the day you still might not know Christ Himself. The only way to know Jesus Christ is to first receive Him. But then God has to progressively reveal Him to you in an inward way.

This was Paul's great travail for the church: That we might come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. He said he travailed that, "Christ be formed," in us. (Gal. 4:19) The word, 'formed', there means, "to become inwardly realized and expressed." God wants us to inwardly realize His Son -- such that His Son is expressed to us in an inward way -- which ultimately translates into the renewing of our minds -- and into a Christian life that is lived under that realization of Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the Word that God is speaking. He is the LOGOS. Jesus is the revelation that God speaks, not merely TO US, but IN US. Thus, rather than continue asking God for information, leadings, and that He might tell us what to do, we ought to be asking that God would reveal Christ in us. It is amazing how the knowledge of God's will comes along with an inward realization of the Word of God Himself, Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3

God's Purpose Fulfilled

There are a couple of other things from out of Rev. 1:1 that are important to establish. First of all, it says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show to His servants things which must shortly come to pass."

That can be a little bit misleading because it almost does sound like the content of this revelation are historical events – but more so – it sounds like this revelation that God gave consists of historical events that were going to happen shortly after John wrote the Book of Revelation in 95 A.D. But even if you are one who demands that the Book of Revelation is a prophecy of future world events you must admit that most of those events have not yet happened -- even in our time. So unless you want to say that the Book of Revelation is a chronicle of PAST historical events that happened shortly after John wrote, you have a problem with this verse because it promises that the revelation in this book, "must shortly come to pass."

But if you look into the Greek, it actually means, ".... which must quickly be entirely fulfilled." So, the promise is NOT that what is revealed will shortly happen – but that when they do happen they will QUICKLY happen. That does not tie the revelation in this book to a certain time frame. It just means that when God unfolds what is in this book that He will do so QUICKLY.

This makes perfect sense once we realize that the revelation found in this book is that of the Person of Jesus Christ, rather than merely future events. God is simply promising that the revelation of Jesus Christ in His people – and the fulfillment of His Redemption – is going to begin to be QUICKLY realized. Indeed, it had already begun to be realized. God's revelation of Jesus Christ IN His people began in Acts 2 and will continue until Jesus returns – indeed, will extend throughout the eternal ages. This is how the revelation in this book – the revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ – “will be quickly and entirely fulfilled.”

The, “things which must quickly be fulfilled,” are Jesus Christ in His people – and all of the impact of His Redemptive work upon all of creation, including the realm of darkness. God has a purpose through His Son and He is promising that that purpose has begun to be fulfilled in its entirety, starting with Christ in His people.

Spiritual Language

As noted earlier, rather than a prophecy chart of world events, the Book of Revelation is a VISION that John was given of the Person of Christ -- in His redemptive work -- including all of His impact upon creation. Take note that this is SPIRITUAL VISION. John said in verse 10: “I was in the spirit.” Thus, all of these things in the Book of Revelation are descriptions of what John saw IN THE SPIRIT. They are spiritual pictures of the impact of Jesus Christ upon creation.

It is at this point that we will either realize that we are reading a description – through the use of types and figures – of a spiritual vision --or we will try to interpret this book literally and never be able to see the Truth in it. There should be no confusion. The Book of Revelation is a spiritual vision of the Person of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work – using types, figures, symbols, and parabolic language. We could even say that it is one large PARABLE. In this book God uses almost everything under creation to convey to us spiritual Truth. But just as the disciples of Jesus tried to interpret His parables literally – and could not grasp them -- so do many of us try to interpret the Book of Revelation literally. And in doing so, we do not see a revelation of Jesus Christ – but end up with a faulty prophecy chart.

Chapter 4

A Spiritual Vision

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His saints the things which must quickly be entirely fulfilled, and He sent and signified it by His angel, unto His servant, John." (Rev. 1:1) Then verse two, which is speaking of John:

Who bore record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things which he saw. (Rev. 1:2)

Note that the Book of Revelation is John's testimony of all the things John SAW. This affirms that this book is a description of a spiritual VISION. John SAW this revelation in a VISION and the book records that vision.

God must have some means of conveying spiritual Truth – otherwise there could be no way that any of us could understand it, let alone apply it. In this vision that He gave to John, the means of conveying spiritual Truth is types, figurative language, physical objects, situations, people, animals, indeed, almost everything under the sun. But these are not intended by God to be understood literally. Rather, they are picturing spiritual Truth. They are unfolding to us the Person of Jesus Christ and all that He means.

In verse 2, we are told that there are three things to which John is bearing record. In that vision, we are being told, John SAW the word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ, and many other things. In fact, verse 2 is really a promise – John

is bearing witness, or a record – that what we are going to read in this Book is the absolute Truth.

Now if you read verse 2 you will note that we are being told that what John saw in this spiritual vision was, among other things, of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. This brings us right back to the fact that this vision was a revelation of the Person of Christ – Who IS the Word of God. Likewise, the very presence of Jesus Christ in His people is the evidence or testimony of God. (see I John 5:9-13) Everything that John saw had to do with the Living Christ.

The Meaning of Prophecy

Now, verse three contains some interesting things -- it says there, "Blessed is he who reads and they who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand." Let's look at this. First of all, let's look at the word, "prophecy." We usually think of prophecy as the foretelling of future events -- and as I noted -- this is what the Book of Revelation has been turned into -- a list of future events out here in the world. But, in the Bible, prophecy is more than that -- although it could include that -- but in the Bible, "prophecy," is first and foremost a preaching of the Truth. It is a preaching forth of the word or Truth – it is the unfolding of Jesus Christ. "Prophecy," can include ALL that is the Word of God.

Take note that in this verse that this VISION is called, "this prophecy." Sure. The vision of John that constitutes the Book of Revelation is the

revelation of THE WORD OF GOD, Jesus Christ. HE is God's prophecy – He is the testimony of God. We should never separate any part of the Word of God from the Person of Christ, or any prophecy from the Person of Christ. No. God is speaking to us His Son – all Truth that God reveals of Christ. HE IS THE TRUTH.

You will also note that it also says, "Blessed are those who KEEP the things which are written therein." Isn't that interesting? You don't read a lot of interpretations of The Book of Revelation that discuss things to KEEP. So what does John mean, "Blessed are those who KEEP the things which are written therein?" Well, "to KEEP," in the sense he means it is, "to revere, hold, preserve. Not watered down." If someone gives you TRUTH, "to keep," how do you KEEP it? Well, you repeat it in Truth -- hold to it and revere it. You BEAR RECORD to it as revealed – which is exactly what John was doing, and now admonishes US to do. "Blessed is he who reads, hears and he who KEEPS those things which are written, for the time is at hand."

Now here again we have another phase, "for the time is at hand." The meaning is similar to what we saw about the phrase, "quickly be fulfilled." "For the time is at hand," is a phrase that we know is used in the gospels -- when John the Baptist came on the scene and then later by Jesus. They both said, "the kingdom of God is at hand, so repent and believe the gospel." They meant that the time is upon us when these things would begin to be unfolded and fulfilled – not fulfilled all at once – but begin to be fulfilled.

The Book of Revelation is a vision of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work – and we are being promised that what John saw was EVEN THEN being fulfilled. It was not going to be fulfilled someday – it was a vision of reality in Jesus Christ both THEN and NOW. Jesus Christ finished His redemption -- but then He ascended and came back down via the Spirit of God in order to, “quickly fulfill,” IN US all that He finished in His redemption. This fulfillment is the Kingdom of God – it is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” And so, “For the time is at hand...,” it is all now beginning to be fulfilled. It began to be in Acts 2.

Chapter 5

Christ In You

The Book of Revelation is a spiritual vision of the Person of Jesus Christ – and more specifically – Jesus Christ in His people. It is a vision of the restoration of all things under Jesus Christ as Lord. If you read the 22nd chapter of this book you will see a picture of the Redemption fulfilled through Jesus Christ in His people:

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (Rev. 22:3)

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. (Rev. 22:22-23)

This is the vision that John saw of the new Jerusalem. But the new Jerusalem is NOT a literal city. Rather, it is specifically stated that the new Jerusalem is the body of Christ; the bride of Christ. The body of Christ is figuratively pictured as descending down from heaven as part of, "the new heavens and the new earth." But this is NOT a vision of merely the future. No. Rather, it is a vision of spiritual reality in Christ NOW. The body of Christ consists of those who have been born from above, that is, have received life from above – it is not a life that is of this earthly realm. It is Jesus Christ

Himself. And when we are born from above we are made a new creation – in Christ we are born into a new realm; a new heavens and new earth.

This is not to negate any possible ultimate fulfillment of a new heavens and new earth. But all of these things must be brought to pass through the Person of Jesus Christ in His people. In other words, believers cannot populate a new heavens and new earth unless the Person who is the embodiment of all that is from above; all that is new; dwells in them NOW.

Read the second passage above from Rev. 22:22-23. Right NOW Jesus Christ is our temple. He is our dwelling place spiritually. Right NOW Jesus Christ is our LIGHT. This vision is picturing the believers full redemption and experiencing of Christ now. What is happening in believers NOW through Christ is going to all be gathered together at the end of the age.

Jesus Christ is in the believer NOW. We are joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him NOW. That reality is for this age – but it is how God's full redemptive purpose in Christ has begun to be fulfilled NOW. It is how the promises of God are being QUICKY FULFILLED NOW.

Paul, the apostle, states outright that CHRIST IN US during this age is the fulfillment of the Word of God. This does not mean that there is not much yet to be worked out in this age, but CHRIST IN US is the basis – God is building all things upon His Son, the Rock – and has chosen to do so upon Christ in His people. In Col. 1:24, he writes, "I am filling up that which is behind in

the afflictions of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the church, whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you to **fulfill the word of God.**"

So Paul is talking about that which FULFILLS THE WORD OF GOD. So, what fulfills the word of God? Paul says, "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." That is what fulfills the Word of God – this MYSTERY that had been hidden, but NOW, in his time, had been revealed. What is this mystery that fulfills the Word of God; the purpose of God? Well, before we read the answer, note that this mystery had been HIDDEN, but now was being REVEALED. Does this not correspond exactly to the purpose of the Book of Revelation – a book which is a REVELATION or UNCOVERING of Jesus Christ? Sure. And so does Paul's answer as to what constituted this great mystery that fulfills the Word of God. He says this mystery is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:24)

And so we have these parallels: Paul states that the great mystery that had been hidden, but now was being revealed – the mystery that fulfills the Word of God – is CHRIST IN US. The Person of Jesus Christ in His people fulfills the Word of God. But then we have the Book of Revelation which is likewise a revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ to His people, and in His people. It is a revelation of Christ that was necessary because Christ had not been revealed to generations and ages past – but was NOW being revealed. Thus, the Book of Revelation, which is

a revelation of the Person of Christ, corresponds to the fact that CHRIST IN US was a great mystery and reality that God had now begun to reveal through the coming of Jesus Christ to dwell in His people.

In this age, Jesus Christ not only joins us to Himself in spirit, but it is the purpose of God to reveal Christ in us. Everything God is doing is based upon an inward realization of Jesus Christ. He is the Rock upon which God's people are to be built. This is the subject matter of the book of Revelation – Christ in His people; the restoration of all things under Jesus Christ as Lord.

Chapter 6

The Seven Churches

The entire Book of Revelation is addressed to the seven churches. He says in Rev. 1:4, "John, to the seven churches..." It is true that God individually addresses each of the seven churches, but even those specific messages are intended for ALL. That is why at the end of each message to each church He says, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the CHURCHES." In other words, if ANYONE has an ear to hear, let them hear what Christ is saying to EACH church. This Book of Revelation of Jesus Christ is intended by God for ALL who are in Christ – just as God's revelation of Christ today through any means is intended by God for ALL.

What are the seven churches? It is mistake to look at the number seven -- really to look at any number in the Book of Revelation -- and to make that number to refer merely to an AMOUNT. The numbers in this book, including the number seven for the seven churches, is not primarily about an amount. It is about what the number symbolizes. We know that numbers in the Bible symbolize things. For example, the number three means completion. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection; ten is the number of order; two is the number of witness, and also division; six is the number of man, and so on. This is not just some crazy numerology which someone invented. This is truly how the Bible uses these numbers. As noted, seven is the number of spiritual perfection or spiritual completion. The seven churches, therefore, are not seven physical churches, and not seven church eras -- as some

people like to interpret -- but the seven churches of Revelation are representative of the entirety of the Body of Christ – a complete picture of the spiritual people of God. Indeed, as representative of the whole Body of Christ, each of these churches represents a possible spiritual condition that any believer could have at any time.

But there are seven messages here to seven named churches. Doesn't that prove that these messages were intended only for those actual churches? No, even though they were real churches. Again – God often uses the physical to represent something spiritual. And such is the case with these seven churches. Each of the seven churches represents an actual spiritual condition that any believer can be in at any time.

Let me give an example. Jesus points out that the church at Ephesus had, "left their first love." Likewise, each of the seven churches represent a spiritual condition which you I could have – some good and some not so good. But if I have the problem that Christ points out to the church of Ephesus, then I, at that point, am, a "member," of that church. Jesus' admonition then applies specifically to ME. In addition, to each church, or spiritual condition, Jesus reveals some dimension of HIMSELF that will set us free, "if we have ears to hear."

So we must get away from this idea of seven as a number. No, seven indicates a complete spiritual picture. And if you read the messages to the seven churches, every possible spiritual problem

and condition is mentioned – as is all of the solution found in Jesus Christ.

Sure. That is why the messages to the churches begin with Jesus saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” -- not things, not messages, not theology, not stuff — but, “I AM.” The Revelation of Jesus Christ in God’s people is the answer to every spiritual problem in the body of Christ. Thus, it should not be surprising that this is the approach taken in this Book of Revelation, which is the revelation of the Person of Christ. Indeed, what is said to each church is representative of how God works with His people: Conviction, and then edification and freedom through the revelation of the Person of Christ.

A Vision in the Spirit

As I mentioned earlier, Rev. 1:10 says that John was, “in the spirit on the Lord’s Day.” He was in the spirit when he had this VISION. That is why all through this book John records, “Then I saw... then I heard...there appeared...” and so forth. The entire book is a spiritual vision given to the Apostle John of the Person of Jesus Christ - - and more specifically, the Person of Jesus Christ as He is revealed in His people – extending out to all of creation. He says it clearly: “I was in the spirit on the Lord’s Day.”

Verse 4 continues, “John, to the seven churches which are in Asia.” Now, somebody is going to say, “Wait a minute. It is saying right here that these churches are in Asia. So how can this be a spiritual vision that is being described in

figurative language?" But here again we need to understand God's use of type and shadow and figurative language. Why does God do that?

God uses this tool all through scripture. So much of the OT is a type and shadow of Jesus Christ. Jesus continually spoke in parables. And in some of Paul's epistles, he openly states that he is writing, "in a figure." Why? Because that is often the only way that spiritual Truth can be conveyed. It is also God's way of taking spiritual Truth and revealing it in a way that can be viewed and understood from a variety of angles. The tabernacle in the wilderness is a good example. It is a type of Christ in His people. But it is described in great detail. And each of those details is a part of the revelation therein – which could not be seen without the physical representation.

The seven churches were seven actual churches in Asia having the names which are listed here in Revelation 2 and 3. If you get an ancient map of these churches during that time, you will find, and history verifies this, that mail was delivered on a route in the order according to the way that these churches are listed in chapters two and three. And yet the messages to the churches are not about mail delivery. Some other people have pointed out that the messages to these seven churches – in the order given -- symbolize the church eras – and so what Jesus is saying is addresses only to the body of Christ during each of those eras. Now, it is true that these churches existed back then, and they were on a mail route – and there is a rough correspondence to each church to the various church eras down through

the last two thousand years. But those are only figurative representations of what God is revealing.

Think about it for a second. Do we really believe that God inspired the Book of Revelation, chapters two and three, indeed, the entire book, in order to give it only to a literal seven churches in Asia at the end of the first century? That it was only intended for them and does not apply to anyone else since then? Do we really believe that? No. God never does things that way. Not only would that be a very limited audience, but it would practically be no audience at all. Those churches existed for only a short period of time. Rather, what is written to each church is written to each believer in ANY church during ANY era of the last two thousand years. That is why each message concludes with the proclamation, "He that has an ear to hear, let him hear what the spirit is saying to the churches." These messages, indeed, this entire book, is intended for ALL who have an ear to hear to each of the churches.

Again – the seven churches of Revelation represent the various spiritual conditions that any believer can have at any time, indeed, any believer can have more than one of these spiritual conditions at one time. But along with each possible spiritual condition Jesus points to a revelation of Himself that will either set the believer free from a wrong condition, or will build upon a good condition.

Chapter 7

God's Redemptive Purpose in Christ

Christianity is CHRIST IN YOU. He is our salvation. But God has saved us for an eternal purpose in His Son. The Christian life is a matter of the believer coming into an inward realization of Christ – with the intent of bringing us on into His purpose of full inheritance and dominion in Christ. That is what is described in the messages to these churches; indeed, it is the primary subject matter of the Book of Revelation as a whole.

It is written in Rev. 1:4, "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace be unto you and peace from Him Who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before His throne." Note that: Seven spirits? But we know that there is only ONE spirit. (Eph. 4:4) But again, don't think of the number seven as an amount. No, it depicts the spiritual nature and character of something -- we are reading language which emerged from a spiritual vision.

If we begin to interpret these things literally from the Book of Revelation, we are going to come up with some of the most absurd things imaginable. For example, remember that in Rev. 8:10-11 that it says that a star fell from heaven and hit the earth? If that was to be taken literally, the earth would be annihilated at that point. But it is not. And so we need to understand that we are reading a description of what John saw in a vision – he saw physical objects which represented spiritual reality.

The seven spirits which are before the throne of God are the ONE Spirit – “seven,” showing that the ONE spirit is spiritually perfect. Sure. Seven is the number used in the Bible to most often refer to God, Jesus Christ, or some dimension of God’s character. Here it is used in reference to the character of God’s spirit.

The Alpha and the Omega

Four times in the Book of Revelation Jesus refers to Himself as, “The Alpha and the Omega,” or, “The first and the last; the beginning and the end.” (Rev. 1:8, 1:11, 21:6, 22:13) It is not without significance that we read this twice in the first chapter, and twice towards the end of the book. These are phrases that reveal that Jesus Christ is ALL. That in HIM, and in HIM alone, is all that God has to give humanity, and that it is only in HIM that God intends to bring to pass His full purpose.

In these words, in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, the stage is being set to uncover Jesus Christ as ALL. Jesus Christ is all for the believer. He is our life. Jesus Christ is the way, the Truth and the life. Jesus Christ is the resurrection, He is the door, He is the good shepherd, He is the living bread; Jesus Christ is Lord. I could go on and on with this, but the fact of the matter is, that the emphasis of the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, is the Person of Jesus Christ, as all. And by the time we reach the end of this Book of Revelation we find Jesus Christ above all literally and truly. The full purpose of God in the Redemptive is accomplished

– humanity is restored back to God and all of creation is brought back under Jesus as Lord of all.

Chapter 8

God's Way of Revealing Spiritual Truth

Why is the book of Revelation named as it is? And why is it sometimes referred to as, "The Apocalypse?" In a prior chapter, we saw that the very word, "revelation," or as the Greek calls it, "apocalypse," means an uncovering, — a bringing out into the light. As the English translation rightly says, it is a REVELATION. It is not a covering up or a hiding of anything -- but is an uncovering.

We read in the very first verse of this book that this vision which God gave to the apostle John is a revelation or an uncovering of the Person of Jesus Christ. In a larger sense, the Book of Revelation is a spiritual vision which God gave to the Apostle John of the Person of Jesus Christ -- in His redemptive work -- and of that redemptive work's impact in His people, upon the world, upon all creation, and upon the realms of darkness. The end result is Jesus Christ as Lord, under the Father, over all creation.

Now, of course, in order to convey such truth in a spiritual vision, God uses many things as symbols or representations of spiritual truth. This is a common tool God uses all through the Old Testament, in the parables of Jesus, and off and on in the New Testament. When God wants to convey spiritual truth to people, He will often use physical representations.

But herein is the problem -- and often where we get confused: When God uses physical representations to reveal spiritual truth, there is a tendency for Christian people, because we like to use our natural minds, to take the physical representations literally. Thus, we miss and lay aside the spiritual Truth which God intends to bring us into.

People even do this with the parables of Jesus, although Jesus Himself said that they were parables and not to be taken literally in those cases. Some of the interpretations that Jesus Himself gave of His own parables, to the disciples, tell us point blank that they are not to be taken literally -- but that what He is saying is meant to explain spiritual truth using physical objects.

Christian people, from the beginning have been reading this vision, which John had in the Spirit, containing the symbolism and physical objects which God gave to represent spiritual truth, and taking those things literally and as physical objects have missed out, therefore, on the spiritual truth which is behind them.

Now, this ought not to be surprising because isn't this what we try to do in Christian living? Isn't this one of our biggest mistakes, as we walk with Jesus Christ -- to attempt to walk with him in the natural -- in a religious fashion? We try to live a soulish, natural Christianity, and in doing so we are blinded to the reality of Jesus Christ in us.

So we must ask again: If the book of Revelation is exactly what the word, "apocalypse," means,

and if it is exactly what the introduction to this book says – a revelation – then why is this book the most difficult of all books of the Bible to understand?

I would submit that the reason is that we do not know Jesus. Just as Paul said that in generations and ages past, the mystery of, “Christ in us,” was hidden, so it is with the Book of Revelation. You and I will spend a lifetime in vain trying to think our way through this book, trying to figure out what this or that means. But it would seem that the key to understanding this book is to grow to know the Person of Jesus Christ. Knowing Him will reveal to us the book that reveals Him.

Spans Eternity

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass...
(Rev. 1:1)*

The English translation skews the intended meaning here. Jesus is not simply revealing FUTURE world events. Rather, he is revealing ETERNAL things – realities that are as good as finished in the spiritual realm. In other words, John’s vision is one of the spiritual realm – Jesus is going to show him the spiritual realm in this vision – and He is going to show us what will unfold in this earthly realm as the spiritual realm is brought to bear upon it.

All that God does and will do begins in the spiritual realm. What we see in the earthly realm is already finished there – or is in the process of

being worked out. But the earthly realm does not impact the spiritual realm. The spiritual realm impacts the earthly realm. That is why we are told that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. It is why we are told that believers are citizens of the heavenlies – seated with Christ in the heavenlies. And so it is in this Book of Revelation. It is a revelation of the spiritual realm – with Jesus Christ as central – and its impact upon all else.

Chapter 9

The Testimony of Jesus Christ

*... and he sent and signified [it] by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.
(Rev. 1:1-2)*

The testimony of Jesus Christ is, "CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory." In the NT, the English words, "testimony," "witness," and, "evidence," are all the same Greek word. Jesus Christ is the FAITHFUL WITNESS. But Jesus Christ dwells in His people – and by manifesting Himself through His people those people are to be HIS witnesses.

The Evidence of God

You will recall that on the Mt. of Olives, when Jesus spoke directly to His disciples before He ascended, He said to them, "You shall receive power from on high.." You are going to receive power because the Holy Ghost comes upon you, "...and you shall BE my witnesses." The word, "witnesses," there in Acts 1, is exactly the same root word as we find here in the phrase, "TESTIMONY of Jesus Christ."

To be a witness of Jesus Christ is to be living evidence of Him. Of course, to become a witness for Jesus Christ means that you have been buried with Him by baptism into His death, and are united with Him in His resurrection -- and then He is seen and expressed through us. But the only reason we can become the evidence of God –

become evidence of the Risen Christ – is if Christ Himself, who IS the Living evidence is IN US.

Note how clearly John teaches this in his epistle:

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (I John 5:9-11)

God is Speaking Christ

These two terms, "the Word of God," and the, "testimony of Jesus Christ," are closely related. Jesus Christ is the Word of God. In fact, Jesus is the Word which God Almighty is speaking. Hebrews 1:1 states this directly:

God, who at different times and in different manners, spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, but in these last days has spoken unto us in a Son.

The Greek there reads, "has spoken to us Son-wise." Jesus is what God is speaking. In other words, Jesus is the language that God is speaking. Again, not just words, but God is revealing Christ IN His people -- and as He does - - that is a revelation of the Word of God. He is speaking Christ in us, unfolding Christ TO us, and IN us by means of the Spirit.

Is Jesus Christ not the Word that God, by His spirit, is speaking to the churches? Again and again we read in Revelation – at the end of what Jesus says to each church -- “He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.” Believers **MUST** hear Christ – which means that we need to come into an inward realization of Him.

This agrees completely with what Jesus said throughout John 14, 15, and 16. He said directly that the Spirit of God would testify to Him, would reveal and uncover Him, would show Him to be all that He is — our life, our truth. So, what the Spirit is doing and speaking to the churches, is in fact the Person of Jesus Christ. God, by His spirit, is uncovering Christ.

But is this not embodied in the Book of Revelation? This revelation is the apocalypse; the uncovering of a Person named Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation **IS** this. It is a vision which pictures that as an uncovering of Jesus Christ in His people and all that it means with all of its impact upon all of God’s creation. This is exactly what God is doing in His people today by means of His Spirit.

God is speaking Jesus Christ – Jesus is **THE WORD** that God is speaking. This is why Jesus is called **THE LOGOS**. The term, “Logos” -- which is often used in the New Testament Greek -- not only means the spoken word, but also means the mind, heart and intent behind that spoken word. To put it another way, a logos is the full mind expressed through the spoken word. Thus, the

full heart of God is expressed through His Son, the Logos, Jesus Christ. Jesus IS the Living Word. And Jesus IS the testimony – He is that in His people.

This term, “the testimony of Jesus Christ,” occurs seven times in one way or another in this Book of Revelation. The word, “testimony,” means witness -- and it means evidence. So what is the testimony of Jesus Christ? It is Christ as the very life in His people. For example, we will read about saints in the Book of Revelation, who have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This is not just saying that they give their witness and talk about the fact that they are saved. No, is speaking of, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) Christ Himself is in His people as evidence.

The Spirit of Prophecy

We also read in the Book of Revelation that the testimony of Jesus Christ is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev. 19:10) But in the NT the term prophecy is not limited to the foretelling of future events. It really means to proclaim the Truth – thus it can also refer to preaching.

According to what it says in the book of Revelation, which matches what Paul says in the epistles, all preaching or utterances of the Word of God is prophecy. And if you have Christ in you, then you have the testimony of God in you – meaning that you have the spirit of prophecy in you – because all preaching that is of God is going to come out from Him as the source, through the one preaching. Jesus Christ is the testimony and He is the Word – He is the spirit of

prophecy. Thus when we preach Christ we are preaching from out of the spirit of prophecy.

Can we see how the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ go hand in hand? God speaks to us His Son -- we might even say that God speaks INTO us His Son. Well, what is the impact of this? It builds upon, if I can put it that way, the life of Christ in us. That is what edification is. So, it is through what the Spirit is saying to the churches — Christ — that the testimony of Jesus Christ in a person is edified and built. If you have the testimony of Jesus Christ, you received it by the Word of God. It is received from above, from God, through His Spirit, as is all revelation and unfolding of Christ.

You and I cannot think our way into revelation. We cannot pound on a chair, do cartwheels, calisthenics or fight and struggle our way into revelation. What we must do is give ourselves to God:

Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:1-2)

Do you want your mind to be renewed whereby you know the will of God? How do you do that? You present your body, a living sacrifice. If you want to know God, there is only one way and that way is to give yourself to Him. He gave Himself to you. You have to absolutely relinquish

yourself. You have to lose your life, in order to find life in Christ. If you find His life -- that is His testimony. If you find His life, then you find light, because, "in Him was life and that life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

A Blessing Pronounced

John goes on to say:

Blessed is he who reads and they who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand." (Rev. 1:3)

This verse would not make a whole lot of sense if all that it meant was to academically and mechanically read the Book of Revelation. But John is talking about reading it and coming into the revelation that it holds -- the revelation of the Son. When you come into the revelation of Jesus, of course you will be blessed. "The time is at hand," is ANY time during this age – God has been revealing Jesus Christ from beginning to the end.

So, this is the Testimony of Jesus Christ. It is Christ, Himself, in the believer and manifested through that believer to the extent that the believer is coming into a realization of Christ.

Chapter 10

The Vision of Jesus Christ

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. (Rev. 1:10-11)

John actually saw Jesus Christ. But you will note that when he saw Christ he was, "in the spirit." Consequently, this is not merely a description of the physical Christ that John saw with his physical eyes. No. This is Jesus as John saw Him, "in the spirit." This is OTHER THAN can be accounted for with the natural mind, or with mere words.

Perhaps the best comparison we could make is a personal experience that Paul shared:

And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. (I Cor. 12:3-4)

Paul is not saying that there was a law or command of God that forbade him from sharing what he saw. Rather, he is saying that there is no human means by which he can fully convey what he saw in the spirit. So it is with John. Therefore, what John does do, under the inspiration of God by His spirit, is to convey what he saw IN THE SPIRIT by using physical objects and creatures that are of this natural realm. In other words, we must take what John writes – not

in the literal sense – but take what he says as representing reality that he saw IN THE SPIRIT.

I noted earlier that his is more than obvious in John's description of Christ. Jesus was not standing there with a sword coming out of His mouth. No. But that description aptly describes the impact of the Truth that Jesus does speak: It cuts right through error, confusion, and doubt. And since ALL of the Book of Revelation is what John saw IN THE SPIRIT, we must realize that God is revealing is spiritual reality in Christ – the things, creatures, events, and objects that HE uses are not intended to be taken literally.

It is when Christian people bypass the spiritual and take the Book of Revelation literally that we lose the meaning. That is why it has been turned into a prophecy chart instead of a spiritual unfolding of Christ in His Redemption. Yet ironically, even those who take it literally cannot come to any meaning unless they also bypass the literal to some degree.

Christ is All

What thou seest, write in a book, and send [it] unto the 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. (Rev. 1:11)

Even in these early verses the churches are introduced – this verse clearly states that this Book of Revelation is written to the SEVEN CHURCHES. We will not repeat what we have

shared in the first chapter of this book. But because this book is written to the seven churches – and the seven churches represent the body of Christ for ALL TIME -- we can see why within this Book of Revelation it is repeated, "He that has an ear to hear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches." No portion of what is written in the Book of Revelation is written ONLY to a portion of the Body of Christ. No. Rather, there are spiritual principles in ALL that is written that apply to each member of the body of Christ all through this age.

And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 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. His head and [his] hairs [were] white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes [were] as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and his countenance [was] as the sun shines in his strength.

As noted, what John describes using physical terms are merely representations of the Living Christ – as John saw Him, "in the spirit." One of the things which stands out is that Jesus is in the MIDST of the seven candlesticks – which are the seven churches. This shows the centrality of Jesus Christ. He is not off to the side. He is not, "off center." He is THE center – He is ALL.

Indeed, when Jesus later says to one of the churches that they no longer have Him as all, He removes their candlestick to reflect the Truth that He is no longer central to THEM. He, on the other hand, never moves, changes, or becomes less in reality. And He admonishes them to return to the Truth.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I [am] he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; 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.

If there is one Truth that is shown in this passage it is that Jesus Christ is ALL -- and He is Lord. If you read this description of Jesus of Himself there is really nothing over which He has no victory, and nothing over which He is not Lord.

In this passage, Jesus is telling us WHO He is to us. He is our Alpha and Omega; our beginning and end; and He is the One which is and was and is to come. In other words, we need look no further. Jesus Christ is all.

God, in His Son, has given all that He has to give humanity. God has not given us His Son and then

in addition to Him, a whole bunch of other stuff. God has not given us His Son, only to leave us lacking so that we need to go out and get a second and third experience, a second blessing. No, God, Almighty has given us all things freely in His Son. (Romans 8:32) He has wrapped everything up in Christ that He has to give and He has left nothing aside. Paul writes that Christ is made to be unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. (1Corinthians 1:30)

Jesus Christ as ALL is emphasized all through this first chapter. Think about that for a second: This is THE introductory chapter of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Do you think that maybe God is trying to tell us something? Do you think maybe He is trying to emphasize something which governs the entirety of this Book? I believe so. He is trying to emphasize what I just stated — Jesus Christ is all — and also emphasizing the fact that this is what this book is going to reveal. — Jesus Christ is all for the believer — and ultimately will be Lord of all in all for all eternity.