

The book of  
**Revelation**  
As It Is

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## Is it a mystery?

The key to understanding the book of Revelation is enclosed in its title. It is a revelation! It reveals things that were unknown, makes them plain and understandable. Consequently, it is not to be regarded as a mystery that needs to be solved, a book with a hidden meaning, that requires experienced scholars to unravel it.

Quite the opposite! It presents itself as the solution to the riddle, revealing how all the major prophecies of the Bible will find their fulfilment, while documenting what happens to our world in its transition to the next stage in human history. It contains exactly what Jesus Christ wants to reveal to us, on a 'need to know' basis. Is he capable of revealing something? Does he require other people to explain to us what he actually meant? Of course not! So let us do something very unusual and try to understand the book of Revelation just as it is!

We are all students of the word, not teachers. Jesus is our teacher. Everything we pretend to know might hold us back from discovering something really new to us. We are all full of assumptions, we have to be, to make sense of our world and also of the book of Revelation, but let us leave all far-fetched assumptions where they came from, and stay close to what Jesus actually tells us, also in our assumptions!

I have been through the book of Revelation many times with this open attitude to see its revelation, and I keep on discovering things. So let me show you what I have already found, and while reading the material you might find some new things of your own, that I haven't seen yet. In this way it is a shared process.

The source of the book of Revelation is Jesus Christ himself. He reveals to John, through his angel, the information that God the Father has given him, to show it to his servants. John writes it down and we read it. That's how direct the line is.

The revelation is given to the servants of Jesus. These do have some foreknowledge on this subject, for when Jesus was on earth he had already spoken to his disciples about this same period that the Revelation describes. For instance in the book of Matthew, chapters 24 and 25 Jesus gives a description from beginning to end of the same events that he reveals in more detail in the book of Revelation.

In Matthew's description we will find some important keys for understanding. So we will use these chapters to enhance our understanding of the revelation. We will need no other sources than Jesus himself.

Some of the rather mysterious sounding things that the apostle Paul wrote about, are clearly revealed in the book of Revelation. We can see how these things will be fulfilled. We will require no other books of the Bible, nor assume knowledge of them with the reader, to understand the book of Revelation. It is a revelation that must be clear in itself if Jesus is its author and wants us to understand what it says.

So join me in my exploration of '*the book of Revelation As It Is*' and be as surprised as I still am, about the clarity and simplicity of the story and its marvellous conclusion. Be ready to experience this Revelation as you have never experienced it before. For that which it reveals is magnificent beyond our comprehension!

# All we need to know

We, as the readers of this Revelation by Jesus, are welcomed with a blessing if we keep the things that are written therein. For the time is at hand. That statement may seem a bit stretched since almost 2000 years have past since these words were written down, yet it indicates that everything is in place for these things to happen.

It is not like it was with the prophet Daniel who saw similar visions and had to seal his book to the time of the end (*Dan 12:4*). In Daniels case that most important event of the coming of the Christ and his sacrificial death still had to occur before anything substantial could happen. Today nothing stands between us and the realisation of the visions of the Revelation, the time is at hand!

Like people in the ages before us, we want good things to happen within our lifetime and we don't want to wait. Almost all early interpreters of the book of Revelation projected its fulfilment on their own era, but it didn't happen in their days. Do we make the same mistake if we expect it all to happen any time soon? Jesus has given many signs to show us when these days will be near. He did not give them for nothing, nor would he give a sign that would be unrecognisable. So if we examine the signs and avoid far-fetched assumptions, we might honestly discover if these things are about to happen in our time, but more about that later.

From Jesus point of view, what he reveals 'must shortly come to pass', that is what we know. When Jesus gives the revelation to John, nothing else has to happen first before it can occur. So there is no hidden meaning to be found, nor a message

that needs to be revealed first, before the book of Revelation can be understood. This is an important clue for understanding the story. It is all already here, for anyone to understand, as long as we don't mess up things ourselves!

## Three key elements in our approach

Assuming that Jesus is the one revealing to us what we need to know, and that he is very capable of doing so, there are three things we need to keep in mind in order for us to stay with him during the story, and not wander off.

1. Respect the deliberate sequential nature of the story.
2. Do not try to fill in the details where Jesus doesn't provide any.
3. Only make assumptions that stay as close to the context as possible.

### *The sequential nature of the story*

If there has ever been a text that indicates that it should be read and understood in its obvious sequential structure, than this is the one! There is so much emphasis on the sequence of events, as you won't often see. After the wake-up call to the seven churches we see a book with seven seals, opened one by one. With the opening of each seal there are specific events taking place.

Then, as a fulfilment of the seventh seal, seven trumpets are shown that will be sounded one by one. And at the sounding of the seventh trumpet we see seven bowls to be poured out on the earth, again, each with its own corresponding event.



This is the main structure of the book, and is very important to follow, if we want to understand the message.

It is a very special structure as well. The seventh seal consists of seven trumpets, the seventh trumpet consists of seven bowls. So when the seventh bowl is poured out on the earth, not only is the pouring out of the seven bowls completed, but in that moment also the sounding of the seven trumpets, and with that, the opening of the seven seals! So there is a massive build-up towards the outpouring of that seventh bowl! As we may expect, it turns out to signify a very crucial and fundamental event!

Now here is the remarkable thing. Open any commentary on the book of Revelation and you will notice the violation of this sequence of events when you look for it. *I have not found any commentary that respects the sequence of events to gain a proper understanding of what is happening.* And that turns out to be one of the key stumbling blocks that make the book such a mystery in the eyes of most readers! None of them adheres to the sequence that Jesus gave! Interesting, isn't it?

Reading the book 'as it is' also means that this is not the moment to question the truth of any statement in it, for we want to follow the writer, who in his turn follows the revelation of Jesus. We want to know the story from his point of view. Afterwards we may classify the story as truth or fiction, or whatever the reader wants, but while we are reading it we want to find out what it actually says. So we will read it, not from our personal frame of reference, but from that of the writer, so no friction from our personal opinions will be in the way of understanding what the story has to say. This may also be a new way of reading the book of Revelation.

So why would all these writers of commentaries immediately make the book look like a mystery and throw around the sequence of things? If something so clearly sequential is so commonly not treated as such, we may be confronted with a deliberate attempt to hide the meaning of the book from the reader. Not by Jesus, who wants us all to understand; and not by the various commentators, who only wanted to give it their best shot. In line with the book itself it may well be 'the dragon who misleads the entire inhabited earth and wages war against the followers of Jesus'.

Remember, you may not believe in the existence of the Devil in our world, in the book of Revelation he is prominently featured, and that is our context now! We venture into that world where the dragon is the representation of a very powerful angel who is co-starring in this story as Jesus' adversary, so sit tight and come along as the story evolves.

In this book we will follow the sequence of events as Jesus presents them, and that in itself will solve some of the things that have up to now been a mystery to most. What would you say if the deadly wound of the beast and the number of his name would become clear, just from the sequential context?

### *Not losing ourselves in detail*

Imagine reading a well written adventure book with a captivating storyline and a rich level of detail that gives you that feeling of much more going on than the story is telling you right now. As the story unfolds it will all just fall into place. If you would try to ponder each and every detail, without the context to interpret it right, you would soon lose the flow of the story, and your understanding of the unfolding of it.

This is exactly what has happened time and again in commentaries on the book of Revelation. Apart from being influenced by the world situation of their own time, the natural urge of commentators has been to explain every single detail of the book, while they had no correct picture of the whole story.

So inevitably the filling in of the details was according to the overall incomplete or wrong picture they had, with the effect that details and total picture started to strengthen each other, to make wrong assumptions seem right. Next step was that these wrong assumptions started to become truths in the minds of the followers of that specific view on the book of Revelation. It all seemed to fit so nicely together. But it all proved to be wrong.

So, let's keep reading it as an adventure book. Read each chapter in your Bible if you can, before you start with the comments on that chapter in this book. I promise we will not lose ourselves in detail but we will keep the story going so that the captivating effect will hold our minds firmly on the story, to grasp it.

### *Make only direct assumptions*

We will see that the direct assumptions that emerge from the text itself are the ones that give meaning to what we read and fill it with power that we can experience. They make sense, and that is what we will not only understand but also feel. And very important, they don't require a clever mind from outside, they follow logically from the most clever mind of all who has dictated the story.

## The Bible version used in this book

Throughout this book I will be using the American Standard Version of the Bible for quotes. You may find the English it uses is rather outdated, but for study purposes I highly prefer its correct rendering of the meaning of the original texts, above modern translations, that tend to take much more liberty and include much more interpretation in their English rendering of the scriptures, with the purpose of appealing to the modern reader, at the cost of accuracy.

## The preparation



*(read Revelation chapter 1)*

John opens with greetings to the seven churches, or congregations [Greek: ekklesiais], in Asia, the seven that Jesus directs him to send his message to. He wishes them grace and peace from God and Jesus and then sums up some important characteristics of Jesus, the one who is going to address them through this revelation:

- The faithful witness
- The firstborn of the dead
- The ruler of the kings of the earth
- He loves us

- He loosed us from our sins by his blood
- He made us to be a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father
- To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever
- He will come with the clouds and every eye shall see him
- All the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him.

Well, that's quite a lot for an introduction. It is almost a preview of all that is to come in this revelation. It makes a firm statement though that this is a message to them that can see him in this light. If you see Jesus in real life as 'just' an enlightened man, let go of that idea for a while, and for the duration of this story, assign to him the attributes just stated by John.

# Letters to the seven churches

*(read Revelation chapters 2 and 3)*

When I started to read the book of Revelation 'as it is', I knew I had to read it many times, in order to get accustomed to its structure, to be able to know roughly what happens when, but also to rid myself of all the preconceived ideas that had been installed in me by all the things I had previously read about it.

In the course of that continued reading I noticed that I had a tendency to want to skip the first four chapters and start with chapter 5 where the 'real action' of the visions starts with the introduction of the book with the seven seals. But I knew that in doing so I would probably skip some important information that I might need, to understand the following chapters properly. So I did go through the first four chapters again and again and indeed learned a lot from it. So let's investigate what they teach us.

Now John hears about the seven named churches that he is to send his letters to, and as he turns around he sees seven golden candle sticks, and in the midst of these a vision of Jesus with in his right hand seven stars and a sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of his mouth.

And again Jesus gives us some important details of what he represents. He says 'I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades . . . The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.'

The text does not reveal why these specific churches or congregations in Asia are involved. There were definitely many

more congregations at the time that John received the vision, so we must assume that the seven in fact represent all of the disciples of Jesus. To each of the seven churches Jesus has a different message, in which he praises them for that which is strong, and warns them for the things in which they are weak, that will cause them to stumble if they do not correct them. We have seen that John directs the complete revelation to all seven churches, so every reader gets to read all seven of the letters.

In this respect the seven letters represent seven warnings that prepare every individual reader for the things to come, in order to heed the warnings they contain and be ready when the day comes. The number seven is often used in things pertaining to God and the completeness of that thing. Seven is to God a bit like ten is to us. Jesus knows what he is going to reveal, that it will become difficult for his followers, that some will stand and others will fall. He wants all to stand, so he prepares them to be as strong as possible. *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches”* Jesus says in each of these seven messages.

### *The parallel with Matthew 24 and 25*

One interesting parallel is that in Matthew 24 and 25 Jesus uses seven parables to prepare his followers. They illustrate one and the same thing, as he expresses in Mat 24:42: *Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh.*

These seven parables are:

1. The days of Noah
2. Two men in the field
3. Two women at the mill
4. The house master and the thief



5. The faithful and evil servant
6. The wise and foolish virgins
7. The parable of the talents

Each of these parables emphasises our individual responsibility to stay awake, watch and be prepared for what is to come suddenly, as het states in Mat 24:44: *Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

Seen in this light the seven letters to the seven churches show us a similar message: It is not one church that is all good and another that is totally rejected, although there are differences in their state of spiritual health. Each of the seven churches has both people who are accepted and those who are rejected, so none of their members can sit back and think that they are safe because they are part of the church of Christ.

Each individual has to evaluate their own position in regard to the things stated in the letters. *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches”* is clearly directed at each individual member, whichever of the seven churches they belonged to, just as these words are directed at us, the readers of this revelation, and we can directly apply them to our own situation and circumstance.

So if we assume that these seven letters help us seven times over to be ready and awake when we see the things happening that are written in the book of Revelation it will be of great advantage to us to study these letters carefully. In this story we will not just be readers, we will be personally involved, by the choices we make in our own lives. For the overview in this book I will briefly summarise the core messages and the results that come with giving heed to them.

### *The seven messages*

1. Ephesus: Do not leave thy first love. To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.
2. Smyrna: In tribulation be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.
3. Pergamum: Repent from false teachings, idols and fornication. To him that overcometh will I give of the hidden manna, and a white stone, upon the stone a new name, which only he knoweth that receiveth it.
4. Thyatira: Do not suffer the woman Jezebel, who seduces my servants to fornication and idols. Know not the deep things of Satan, that which ye have, hold fast till I come. He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and I will give him the morning star.
5. Sardis: Remember how thou hast received and didst hear, and keep it, and repent. If thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. He that overcometh shall be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.
6. Philadelphia: Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, which is to come upon the whole world. Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. He that

overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.

7. Laodicea: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich, and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes that thou mayest see. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.

There is a lot of information here, that will all be addressed as the story unfolds. Remember the revelation was given to the servants of Jesus Christ. This is what they should know. They should stay awake and not fall into the many traps they will encounter on their path. Every church represents different challenges that can come to each of the servants of Jesus, especially as the big events of the book of Revelation unfold.

Here it is previewed already where they will be if they succeed. From these seven previews it is evident that if they overcome all the challenges they will be kings with Christ and live forever. But just wait and see what it is they will have to undergo before that will be accomplished!

# The heavenly vision



*(read Revelation chapter 4)*

John sees a door opened in heaven and is invited to come up, to see the things that must come to pass hereafter.

And he sees a throne set in heaven and one sitting upon the throne. Round about the throne were 24 other thrones where he saw 24 elders sitting, arrayed in white garments, with a crown of gold on their heads. Nobody tells John who these 24 elders are.

The Greek word used here is [*presbyterous*], which stands for older men. The word in itself doesn't refer to any special position, just to the fact that these individuals are aged. (See 1

Timothy 5: 1 and 2, where Paul tells Timothy to treat older men [*presbyteroo*] as fathers and older women [*presbyteras*] as mothers.

So at this point in the story we cannot determine who or what these 24 elders stand for or symbolise. Every interpretation has to be far-fetched. Many commentators have tried anyway, and often refer to the 24 department of the Levites in the Hebrew arrangement, or to two times twelve, pointing at the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of Jesus.

But all of these interpretations do not really explain anything or give support to the reader. This is a first example where we can say 'If Jesus wanted us to know who these 24 elders represent he would have told us. If he doesn't tell us, we do not need to know at this point and we can just get on with the story to stay in the flow'.

Next, John describes the splendid 4 living creatures, rather a description than a name, they are so unique. They have six wings and are full of eyes and they have no rest day and night, constantly declaring the holiness of God.

The 24 elders prostrate themselves before the throne and join the 4 living creatures in their worship of God. This is what they declare:

*Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.*

If we understand that this chapter describes the seat of the holy one who created all things that are, if we understand the awe that is related to this scene, then for now we are ready to go to the next chapter.

# The book with the seven seals

*(read Revelation chapter 5)*

Now, in this glorious chapter 5, we get to the heart of the story-line, the book with the seven seals. In the right hand of the one on the throne John sees a book, a scroll, written within and without, sealed with seven seals.

Now notice this scene: *Who is worthy to open the book and to loose its seals?* And nothing happens, no one is able to open the book, not in heaven, nor on earth, nor anywhere. John feels a great sadness as he witnesses this.

Then one of the elders tells him not to weep, for the Lion of the tribe of Judah has overcome to open the book and its seven seals. And John sees a lamb, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

What a powerful way to express that no one, in heaven or on earth, is able or worthy to open the book, no one except the lion of the tribe of Judah, who is also the lamb that has been slain, the lamb of God, who gave his life to save mankind. He has overcome all and can now fulfil this all important role in Gods plan to take us forward and open the book. No one could have done that but him.

Then he takes the book, the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders fall down before the lamb and sing a new song: (vs 9 and 10)

*Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou was slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and*