

The Alpha and Omega

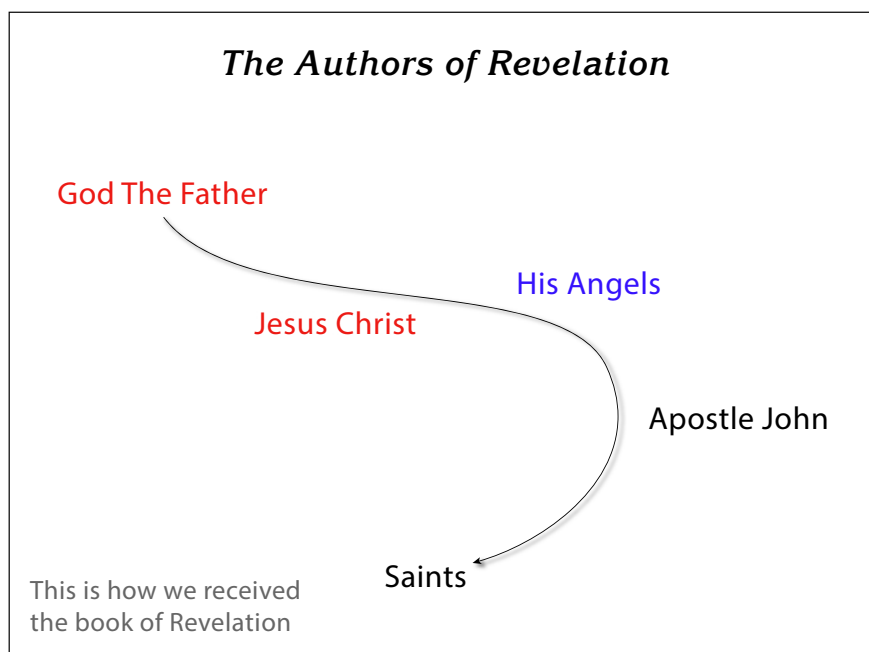
THE VOICE OF JESUS CHRIST is heard in the pages of this unique book called Revelation. It is the only book in the Bible with the promise of a blessing to those who read, hear, and pay attention to it. It is a direct revelation from Jesus to us. In it we see glimpses of Jesus that cannot be found in any other place. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John look back in time and reveal Jesus living on this earth as a man, but the book of Revelation reveals Jesus as God who lives in heaven. Jesus came as the Son of Man who would die and the Son of God who was sinless, but in Revelation we see Jesus as Conqueror, Judge, King of kings, Lord of lords, and our eternal God. In this study we will see Him in His majesty and when He comes again. Revelation is about Jesus Christ - the Alpha and Omega.

UNIQUE BOOK. This book is unique. It is the only book in the New Testament in which we find seven lampstands, seven spirits, seven seals, seven eyes, seven horns, seven angels, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven lamps, seven mountains, seven heads, seven kings, seven bowls, twelve stars, four horns, four angels, 666, 100 pounds of hail, four winds, and 144,000 witnesses. There is also evil: two beasts, a dragon, locusts coming out of smoke, scorpions with power, an angel of the abyss, the Serpent of Old, the Devil, Satan, unclean spirits, and a false prophet. But best of all there is the holy: new heaven and new earth, holy angels, the Root of David, the Lamb, God, the Son of God, and the Alpha and Omega. There is no other book like it in the Bible.

WHO WROTE IT? So who wrote this unusual book? The first verse of Revelation tells us that it was written by invisible and visible authors. The prophecy in this book was given by

God the Father to Jesus Christ. Then it was Jesus' decision to give it to us through His angel who gave it to the Apostle John, who wrote the words we will be reading.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. (NASB) Rev. 1:1-2



In the coming weeks we will hear angels talking with John and telling him about the things to come. Angels have spoken in the pages of scripture before. This happened in Daniel 10-12 when God sent an angel to give Daniel a prophecy about the future. It was an answer to Daniel's prayer. In Acts 7:53

and Gal. 3:19, we are told that angels helped to give Moses the Law, but we do not know how. They are going to do it again in this book. This is no ordinary book, because it was written for a special purpose and a divine reason. The authors are divine, holy, and one is an apostle. Why? Because it was written for you!

WHEN WRITTEN. This revelation was given to the Apostle John about A.D. 95-96. The apostle wrote this book near the end of his life. The early church fathers say that he wrote it while he was exiled on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9) near the end of the reign of Domitian. Domitian was a Roman Caesar who ruled during the time of A.D. 81-96.

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND IT? Before we start our study, it is important to know how we should understand the book. There are four major view points of the book.

There are some who call themselves Preterists. They say that Revelation needs to be understood symbolically. It is all symbols. They say that Revelation is about the conflicts which occurred during early church history, and then add that Revelation 20 is the church's victory over the world.

Others believe that Revelation represents all of church history. Some say it is symbolic of good and evil and add that it was written to encourage the early Christians during their struggles with suffering and death.

But these views are hard to accept. Why? How about a very practical question, "If we say that Revelation is completely symbolic, then how do we decide what the symbols mean?" and "Who decides the meaning of the symbols?" The answer is rather easy. The meaning of the symbols is left to the creative mind of the one explaining the passage. If we cannot understand the symbols literally, then the meaning of the symbols is subjective. Our amillennial friends take this approach when they say the church is the nation of Israel when they come to future things, which includes the book of Revelation. This is dangerous, because you can make symbols mean anything! It is left to the imagination of the teacher.

Yes, Revelation has symbols, but they must be understood as literally as possible; otherwise the meaning is left completely to our imagination. It is also an error to understand the symbols literally. Some men and women have tried that too! We will find that our study in Daniel will be helpful in understanding this book. While the book of Daniel was symbolic, it was also easily understood, because the symbols were explained. We will find that scripture will help us understand the symbols in Revelation too!

REVELATION. The Greek word for Revelation is APOKALUPIS. It means to "take the cover off."

Major Views of Revelation

View	Their Understanding	Description
Preterist	Symbolic	- considers Revelation to be symbolic of early church conflicts. They also believe that Rev. 20 says the church is finally victorious.
Historic	Symbolic	- believes that Revelation is symbolic of church history. This is a panorama of church history.
Good-Evil	Symbolic	- thinks that Revelation wants to encourage us with the fact that good will win.
Futuristic	More Literal	- says that Revelation is more literal. A purely symbolic approach is subject to our creative imagination. The book is historical in Rev. 2-3 but it predicts future events in Rev. 4-22.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ . . . (NASB) Rev. 1:1

That is what Jesus did. He received the divine treasure chest of prophecy from God the Father so that He could share it with His angels, who gave it to His apostle and then to us. Do you think the Apostle John was eager to know about the future? Do you remember how eager Daniel was about our future? All of them were eager to know about our future, and God knows that we are too. But did you know that we have some invisible friends who might be eager to know about the future too just as they wanted to know about Jesus!

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things into which angels long to look. (NASB) 1 Peter 1:12

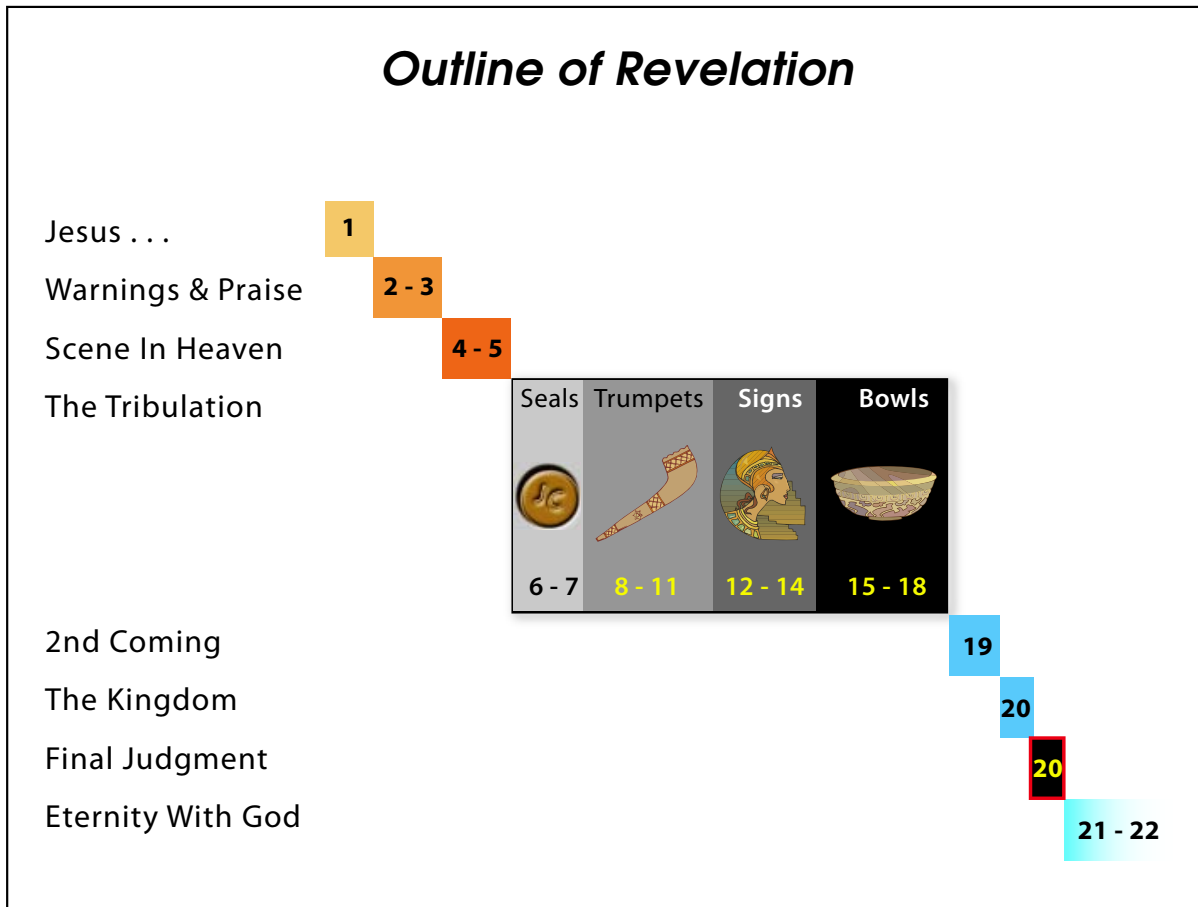
We call them holy angels. Can you imagine how the angels felt when they gave the Apostle John the prophecies that we are going to study? I believe this is an expression of Jesus' love for His angels too!

CONCLUSION. The book of Revelation is the only book in the New Testament with the promise of a blessing to the one who reads, hears, and "heeds" it.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. (NASB) Rev. 1:3

The Greek word for "heed" has the idea of "watch over" or "to keep in view." This means that those who read, hear, and keep this book in view will receive a blessing. Why? Because the time is near! Because He is near. He is coming!

There are six other promises of blessing like this one in Revelation. All of them are promises about escaping from



Promises of Blessings in Revelation

Passage	Blessing
Rev. 14:13	Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!
Rev. 19:9	Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.
Rev. 20:6	Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection . . .
Rev. 22:7	Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.
Rev. 22:14	Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

this life and living with God forever. Why? Well, we know the answer. We know that this life is not fun at times. We know that life has sickness, sadness and sorrow at times and we know that the final days of this planet will be painful when God makes things worse. But the hope, comfort, and blessing for every Christian is that some day we will be able to escape. Some day we will always be happy. Some day we will no longer struggle with sin. Some day we will no longer wonder what He looks like, for we will see His face. Some day we will no longer need to read His Word to know Him, for we will see His glorious face. Some day we will no longer

wonder what His voice sounds like, for we will hear Him say, "I love you." Some day our hearts will no longer long for Jesus for we will be with Him. Glory to God!

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." . . . He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (NASB) Rev. 22:12, 20

