

Revelation

Given to Christ by God the Father to Show His Servants the Things that Must Take Place

I. The Author and Time of Writing

- A. 96 A.D.
- B. Apostle John (Revelation 1:2).
 - 1. John was a disciple of John the Baptizer (John 1:35).
 - 2. John followed Christ after John the Baptizer declared He was the Lamb of God (John 1:36).
 - 3. Christ called him to follow Him (Matthew 4:18–22).
 - 4. John and His brother James were partners with Peter (Luke 5:10).
 - 5. In the gospel, the Apostle wrote, he refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23).
 - 6. Jesus informs Peter that John will live to an old age (John 21:21–23).
 - 7. John was the last of the Apostles to die (98-100 A.D.).

II. The Purpose of the Revelation

- A. The Revelation was given to Christ by the Father to show to His servants (Revelation 1:1).
 - 1. To show what makes take place.
 - 2. It was signified by His messenger to John.
- B. John bore witness of the word of God (Revelation 1:2).
- C. Happy are those who read (Revelation 1:3).
 - 1. Christians are not to fear the things in the book of Revelation.
 - 2. The Church is not appointed unto any quality of wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

III. John Received the Message on the Island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9)

- A. He was exiled because of his testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:9).
- B. Likely during the reign of Domitian (AD 81–96).
 - 1. Titus Flavius Domitianus (AD 51–96).
 - 2. Eusebius describes Domitian as the second emperor after Nero.
 - 3. He was the last ruler of the Flavian dynasty.
 - 4. He persecuted the Christians because of their refusal to honor him as lord and god.
 - 5. He was assassinated in a palace conspiracy.
- C. Eusebius records John's release and return to Ephesus following Domitian's death in AD 96.

IV. A Revelation from Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1–3)

- A. Christ received the revelation from God the Father.
- B. The revelation is for the servants of Christ.
- C. The revelation indicates the things that must take place.
 - 1. The term “Shortly” may indicate time or speed.
 - 2. These things are necessary to come to be (Revelation 1:1).

3. The message was given to John (Revelation 1:1–2).
 - a) John bore witness of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.
 - b) John wrote down the things he saw.
- D. Happy are those who read and guard what is in the revelation.
 1. The Church is not appointed to this time (1 Thessalonians 5:9).
 2. The words of the prophecy bring a sense of contentment to the reader who guards them.
- V. **Written to the Seven Churches (Revelation 1:4–5)**
 - A. God—The One who was, Who is, and Who is to come (Revelation 1:4).
 1. God is referring to God the Son
 2. Christ existed as God before His incarnation (John 1:1).
 3. Christ is alive today, having been resurrected from the dead (Hebrews 7:25).
 4. Christ will return (Acts 1:11).
 - B. The Seven Spirits Before the Throne (Revelation 1:4).
 1. Represent the seven ministries of the Holy Spirit
 2. Christ possesses the seven Spirits (Revelation 3:1).
 3. The seven Spirits are the seven lamps burning before the throne (Revelation 4:5).
 4. The eyes on the Lamb that was slain are the seven Spirits (Revelation 5:6).
 5. The Seven Spirits' relationship to Christ and the Church indicates it is referring to the Holy Spirit.
 6. Grace and Peace never come from angels (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 3; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2).
 7. The Seven Spirits are included in the salutation with God.
 8. The Seven Titles of the Holy Spirit Related to His Ministries to the Church (Revelation 1:4).
 - a) The Spirit of Holiness (Romans 1:4).
 - b) The Spirit of the Life (Romans 8:2).
 - c) The Holy Spirit of the Promise (Ephesians 1:13).
 - d) The Spirit of the Truth (1 John 4:6; John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).
 - e) The Spirit of the Grace (Hebrews 10:29).
 - f) The Spirit of the Glory (1 Peter 4:14)
 - g) The Spirit of the Prophecy (Revelation 19:10).
 - C. From Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:5).
 1. The faithful witness (Hebrews 2:17; 3:5)
 2. Firstborn from the dead
 - a) Christ is the first of those resurrected from the dead (Colossians 1:18).
 - b) Firstborn relates to position, not creation (Hebrews 1:6).
 - c) The Church is the assembly of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23).
 - d) Christ is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29).
 3. The ruler of the kings of the earth
 - a) The Father placed Christ above the principalities and authorities (Ephesians 1:21;

- Colossians 2:10).
- b) In Christ's resurrection, the principalities and authorities were disarmed (Colossians 2:15).
- c) He is King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16).
- 4. Jesus loved us and washed us from our sins with His own blood (Revelation 1:5).
 - a) The one who is washed (John 13:10).
 - b) He washed the Church (Ephesians 5:26).
 - c) The washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).
 - d) Those who have washed their robes (Revelation 7:14).
 - e) Textual Variance:
 - (1) Washed or Loosed.
 - (2) Loosed is not used in Scripture related to sin.
 - (3) Washed directly relates to sin in Scripture.
- D. We are made kingdom of priest (Revelation 1:6).
 - 1. The Church is a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).
 - 2. The Church is being built up as a holy (set apart) priesthood (1 Peter 2:5).
 - 3. Our priesthood relates to spiritual things, not physical things (1 Peter 2:5).
 - a) Presenting Your Body as a Living Sacrifice, which is our reasonable religious service, Romans 12:1–2).
 - b) Praise—the fruit of our lips confessing his name, Hebrews 13:15
 - c) Doing Good, Hebrews 13:16
 - d) Fellowshiping with other saints, Hebrews 13:16
 - e) Giving financial support to the ministry, Philippians 4:18 (2 Corinthians 9:7)
 - f) Faith – taking God at His Word, Philippians 2:17 (Hebrews 11:1)
 - 4. In heaven, the church will be directly involved in priestly service (Revelation 5:8).
- E. Christ is coming with clouds of saints (Revelation 1:7).
 - 1. Enoch testified of this event (Jude 14).
 - 2. When Christ returns, the resurrected Church will be with Him.
 - 3. These are not water clouds, but clouds of people (Hebrews 12:1).
- F. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8).
 - 1. He knows the beginning from the ending (Isaiah 46:10).
 - 2. All things are brought together in Christ (Ephesians 1:10).

VI. **John Receives the Revelation from the Lord (Revelation 1:9–20)**

- A. John was on the island of Patmos when he received the revelation (Revelation 1:9).
 - 1. Patmos is a small volcanic island in the Aegean Sea.
 - 2. Patmos is approximately 37 miles from Miletus (Present day Turkey).
 - 3. Patmos is not specifically names as a penal colony in extra Biblical material.
 - 4. The rugged terrain and isolation made it an ideal place for imposing banishment that did not include lose of citizenship or property).
 - 5. John was on the island because of his testimony of Jesus Christ
- B. John was in spirit on the Lord's day (Revelation 1:10).

1. "In spirit" refers to his human spirit, not the Holy Spirit.
 2. It indicates he was deep in rational thought.
 3. We worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23–24).
 4. The Jew who is circumcised in the heart, in spirit (Romans 2:29).
 5. The restoration of a brother while being in a spirit of objectivity (Galatians 6:1).
 6. The Lord's day is Sunday: the first day of the week (Luke 24:1).
- C. John is instructed to write what he sees (Revelation 1:10–19).
1. He hears aloud voice declaring Himself as God.
 2. John is instructed to write to the seven churches (Revelation 1:11).
 - a) The seven assemblies represent the seven periods of the Church on earth.
 - b) The seven golden lampstands represent each assembly (Revelation 1:12).
 - c) John describes the One speaking to Him (Revelation 1:13–15).
 - d) The One speaking to John is holding seven stars: the seven pastors of the seven assemblies (Revelation 1:16).
 - e) John falls before the One speaking to him (Revelation 1:17).
 - f) The One speaking to John is Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:18).
 - (1) Jesus now possesses the keys of Hades and death.
 - (2) Through Jesus' death, Satan's authority over death was stripped from him (Hebrews 2:14).
 - g) John is instructed to write (Revelation 1:19).
 3. The Mystery of the Seven stars and the seven lampstands (Revelation 1:20).
 - a) The seven stars are the messengers of the seven assemblies.
 - b) The seven lampstands are the seven assemblies.

VII. **The Seven Periods of the Church on Earth (Revelation 2:1–3:22).**

- A. Each of these assemblies represents the predominate condition of the Church on earth at different periods of its existence.
1. All of the assemblies already exist.
 2. The only assembly that no longer exists today is the Ephesus assembly (Revelation 2:5).
 3. The history of the Church reveals that these assemblies are referring to seven periods.
 4. These time periods begin shortly after the Apostolic period.
- B. The Ephesus Assembly (Revelation 2:1–7)
1. The Churches belong to God (Revelation 2:1).
 2. Paul taught the saints in Ephesus the entire counsel of God (Acts 20:27).
 3. Paul warned the assembly what would happen when he was gone (Acts 20:28).
 4. John writes to the pastor of the assembly (Revelation 2:1).
 5. Christ knows their works, labor, and patience (Revelation 2:2).
 6. This assembly does not tolerate wrong (Revelation 2:2).
 7. After the twelve apostles, many false ones came. This assembly exposed them for being liars (Revelation 2:2).
 - a) Their testing was to cause these false apostles to fail (Revelation 2:2).
 - b) The requirements for an Apostle.

- (1) Chosen by Christ, Himself (John 15:16).
 - (2) Had to have seen Christ while He was on earth (Acts 1:21–22).
 - (3) Had to have witnessed the resurrection; seen Christ after His resurrection (Acts 1:22; 1 Corinthians 15:8).
 - (4) There are only twelve Apostles for the lamb (Revelation 21:14).
 - (5) Paul is the twelfth (1 Corinthians 15:8–9).
8. They tolerated and had patience, laboring because of Christ's name (Revelation 2:3).
 9. They lost their first love (Revelation 2:4).
 - a) This is the love of fellow saints (John 13:34; 1 John 4:21).
 - b) Their focus was on dealing with false apostles, not loving the brethren.
 - c) This loss of love is manifested in an indifference for fellow saints (1 John 4:20).
 10. They are instructed to return from where they have fallen (Revelation 2:5).
 - a) Their first work is to love the brethren.
 - b) Without love, there is no value to their works (1 Corinthians 13:1–3).
 - c) If they do not change their mind, Christ will remove their lamp stand from its place (Revelation 2:5).
 - (1) This is the only assembly that is removed.
 - (2) Due to their failure to change their mind, this assembly is no longer present on the earth.
 11. They were indifferent to the works of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6).
 - a) The Nicolaitans are those who seek victory over the people.
 - b) The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is the separation of the clergy from the assembly.
 12. The reward for those in the assembly who are overcomers (Revelation 2:7).
 - a) The overcomer is the one who believes the gospel for salvation (1 Corinthians 15:3–4; 1 John 5:4–5).
 - b) They will partake of the fruit of the tree of life in the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7).
 - (1) Paradise is at the edge of the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2–4).
 - (2) The Church saints who have passed away reside in the third heaven in the presence of God (2 Corinthians 5:8).
 - (3) These saints will have access to the tree of life to sustain their physical bodies.
 - (4) They do not possess a resurrected body or save soul
 - (a) All church saints will be resurrected at the same time (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17).
 - (b) The soul is last part to be saved (1 Peter 1:9).
 - (c) When we see Christ, we will be like Him (1 John 3:2).
 13. This assembly represents the predominate condition of the Church from AD 96 to 170.
 - a) The Church as a whole was being impacted by false apostles.
 - b) Even during the Apostolic Period many false apostles were present (2 Corinthians 11:5—they called themselves the eminent apostles).
 - c) Paul taught for two years at the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus (Acts 19:8–9).
 - d) Paul remained in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31).

- e) Timothy was sent by Paul to oversee the assembly to charge them concerning those who were bringing in different teachings (1 Timothy 1:3).
 - f) Church history indicates John resided in Ephesus after his return from Patmos.
 - g) By AD 614 the Christian community was no longer present in the city.
 - h) Under Onesimus they began to dimension.
 - (1) Ignatius of Antioch wrote about the assembly under Onesimus.
 - (2) Under Onesimus, the assembly focused on orderly conduct, truthfulness, and freedom from heresy.
 - i) By the early second century under Polycrates, the assembly was completely lost.
 - (1) He was known for defending the tradition of observing the Passover on the fourteenth day of Nisan; rather than on the following Sunday.
 - (2) He resisted the western influence of Rome on the Church.
- C. The Smyrna Assembly (Revelation 2:8–11).
1. Christ is the one who first and last; having died, he now lives (Revelation 2:8).
 2. They are financially poor, but wealthy in doctrine (Revelation 2:9).
 3. The synagogue of Satan (Revelation 2:9).
 - a) Satan is mimicking Christianity (2 Corinthians 11:15).
 - b) The synagogue of Satan are those who claim to take the place of the Jews.
 4. This assembly faces severe persecution (Revelation 2:10).
 - a) Nero AD 64–68.
 - (1) Persecution on the Church was triggered by a great fire in Rome.
 - (2) It is recorded that he used Christians to light his garden.
 - (3) Peter and Paul were killed during Nero's reign.
 - (4) The Roman historian Tacitus provides the political context and the clear motive (scapegoating).
 - (5) The historian Suetonius provides corroboration of the state's hostile policy.
 - (6) Clement of Rome's writing in AD 95–96 provides the internal, eyewitness-adjacent verification of the suffering endured by the Christian community in Rome.
 - b) Domitian AD 81–96.
 - (1) The Church was persecuted because of their rejection of Domitian's claim of deity.
 - (2) Domitian's enforcement was centralized and aimed at consolidating absolute autocratic control.
 - c) Trajan AD 112–117.
 - (1) Trajan provided a legal framework for the treatment of Christians, moving localized violence towards a formalized administrative stance.
 - (2) The persecution of Christian became a legal matter. Thus, explicit charges had to be stated, rejecting the commonly used anonymous accusations previously accepted.
 - (3) To demonstrate their rejection of Christianity, the accused had to make a sacrifice to the Roman gods.

- (4) It was the refusal of Christians to submit to the traditional way of the ancestors in public ritual of state worship that constituted a crime worthy of death in the eyes of the Roman law.
- (5) Trajan institutionalized the reality that being a Christian in the Roman Empire was an act of civil disobedience.
- (6) Trajan began legal warfare against the Church.
- d) Marcus Aurelius AD 161—180.
 - (1) During Marcus' reign, the Roman empire faced many catastrophes, which the local magistrates used to increase persecution on the Christians in an attempt to please their gods.
 - (2) The most noted instance of state-sanctioned bloodshed during the reign of Marcus occurred in Gaul.
 - (a) Local authorities explicitly encouraged popular violence, torturing and executing the Christian community.
 - (b) The Emperor's response to the governor of Gaul seeking guidance was effectively a death warrant for Christians.
 - (c) He ordered that those who confessed to being Christians should be executed, while those who recanted should be released.
 - (d) This legalized the mob type of action against Christians and ensured that the "confession" itself was a capital offense.
 - (3) Marcus Aurelius's actions did not necessarily stem from an obsessive personal crusade against a specific theological sect, but rather from a cold, pragmatic commitment to the integrity of the Roman state.
 - (a) Marcus Aurelius viewed Christianity as a destabilizing force that threatened the fragile cohesion of an empire already on the brink of collapse.
 - (b) Marcus Aurelius set a dangerous precedent concerning when the state feels its existence is threatened.
- e) Septimius Severus AD 202–210.
 - (1) Septimius Severus persecuted the Church out of hatred.
 - (2) Septimius Severus issued a decree that specifically forbade conversion to either Judaism or Christianity.
 - (3) Since the Christian faith refused to intermingle with the Roman polytheistic system, the state aimed to isolate the Church to stop its growth.
 - (4) Under Septimius Severus, the state moved from simply executing "obstinate" individuals to implementing proactive policies designed to stop the organizational expansion of the Church.
 - (5) The state's attempt to criminalize instruction and conversion only served to strengthen the internal resolve and theology of the Church.
 - (6) Under Septimius Severus the states persecution of the Church turned from legal to military.
- f) Maximinus the Thracian AD 235–238.

- (1) His actions against the Church were designed to consolidate power.
 - (2) Maximinus Thrax was a soldier-emperor who rose through the ranks of the military.
 - (a) His reign was characterized by brutal purges of the Roman elite and a desperate need to secure the loyalty of the traditional Roman priesthoods.
 - (b) His policy against the Church was not a codified, empire-wide law like the later edicts of Decius or Valerian, but rather a direct order to persecute the leaders of the Christian movement.
 - (3) Maximinus Thrax primarily focused on the clergy, systematically attempting to execute or exile the heads of the major Christian centers, aiming to cause a collapse of leadership and, consequently, the disintegration of the local congregations..
- g) Decius AD 250–251.
- (1) Decius instituted the first empire-wide systematic attempt to eradicate the Church through forced apostasy.
 - (2) In early 250 AD, Decius issued an edict mandating that all Roman citizens perform a public sacrifice to the gods in the presence of a commission of local officials to receive a certificate (libellus) as proof of loyalty.
 - (3) Decius aimed to break the Church’s internal cohesion and force them back into the Roman religious fold by forcing Christians to perform public acts of idolatry.
 - (4) The libellus turned every citizen into a potential agent of state enforcement.
 - (a) The Covid era of 2021 mimicked this type of citizen enforcement.
 - (b) Adherence to the government was forced by certification of immunization that was in contrast to religious beliefs.
 - (c) There was a strong attempt by the state to eradicate religious exemption.
 - (d) The Covid era is not similar in persecution, only in the method of control.
 - (5) The leadership of the Church was targeted in an attempt to disintegrate the assemblies.
 - (6) When the threat of death did not yield compliance, the state employed sophisticated, rhythmic torture meant to break the resolve of the individual without immediately killing them, hoping to secure a public renunciation of Christ.
 - (7) Decius further moved the state from a legal persecution of Christians for local civil disobedience to an issue of war for the foundational identity of the empire itself.
- h) Valerian AD 257–259.
- (1) Valerian (reigned 253–260 AD) accelerated the transition of the Roman state from an engine of sporadic legal harassment into a systematic program of state-sponsored dismantling of the Church as an institution.
 - (2) Following the shock of the Decian persecution, Valerian initially appeared tolerant, but his policy shifted drastically in 257–258 AD due to mounting pressure from the Persian threat and internal economic crises.
 - (3) The Edict of 257 AD was intended to decapitate the Church’s organization by

- attacking the leadership.
- (a) Bishops, priests, and deacons were forced to offer sacrifice to the Roman gods or face exile.
 - (b) Christian assemblies were forbidden, and the use of cemeteries for gatherings was prohibited.
- (4) The Edict of 258 AD brought total war on the Church.
- (a) Bishops, priests, and deacons were to be executed immediately upon refusing the sacrifice.
 - (b) Christians of high social rank were stripped of their honors and property, even facing execution if they persisted in their faith.
 - (c) High-ranking women were to be stripped of their property and sent into exile.
- (5) Valerian's policy was uniquely focused on the Church as a property-owning, organized entity.
- (a) He understood that to kill the Church, one had to strike at its hierarchy and its holdings.
 - (b) By confiscating the property of the nobility and the burial grounds, the Roman state attempted to render Christianity homeless and impoverished.
- i) Aurelian AD 270–275.
- (1) Aurelian's primary religious objective was to establish the cult of Sol Invictus (the Unconquered Sun) as the supreme state religion.
 - (2) Aurelian was not interested in reviving the traditional, fractured pagan pantheon, which he saw as insufficient for imperial unity.
 - (3) Aurelian sought to create a state-sponsored "solar" monotheism.
 - (4) Since the Church also presented a coherent, universal, and "monotheistic" structure, Aurelian's state cult was effectively competing for the same ideological space that Christianity occupied.
 - (5) Initially, Aurelian was relatively indifferent to the Church, maintaining the status quo of the "Little Peace" that followed the collapse of Valerian's persecutions.
 - (6) Aurelian's attitude toward Christianity changed toward the end of his reign when he directly intervened in the politics of the Church.
 - (a) The pivotal moment for Aurelian's involvement in church affairs was a result of Paul of Samosata, the Bishop of Antioch, who had been deposed by a synod of bishops for heresy.
 - (b) Paul refused to vacate the church building, appealing to Aurelian to decide between the two factions.
 - (c) Aurelian deferred the decision to the bishops in communion with the See of Rome, which socked the Roman Administration.
 - (d) By involving himself in the case of Paul of Samosata, he established a precedent where the Roman state could act as an enforcer of Church discipline.
 - (7) The persuasion of the Church transitions from military might to administrative oversight and influence.

- j) Diocletian and Galerius AD 303–324.
 - (1) The persecution under Diocletian and his Caesar, Galerius, known as the “Great Persecution” (303–311 AD), was the final, largest, and most systemic attempt by the Roman Empire to eradicate Christianity.
 - (2) It was a concerted effort by the Tetrarchy (rule by four) to re-establish the absolute, divine authority of the Roman state by purging the “Christian infection” from its ranks, military, and institutions.
 - (3) In the First Edict, Churches were to be demolished, and all Christian scriptures and liturgical books were to be surrendered and burned.
 - (4) In the Second Edict, all Christian clergy were to be arrested and imprisoned.
 - (5) In the Third Edict a general amnesty was offered to clergy who were willing to offer sacrifice to the Roman gods, but those who refused faced brutal torture.
 - (6) The Fourth Edict was the most radical step.
 - (a) It mandated that every citizen in the empire, regardless of sex or social status, must publicly offer sacrifice to the Roman gods.
 - (b) Failure to perform a sacrifice resulted in execution, forced labor in mines, or mutilation.
- 5. This was the predominate condition of the Church from AD 170 to 312.
 - a) The majority of the Church was killed by persecution.
 - b) Persecution also brought strength in doctrinal matters.