

### Introduction – 1:1-3

- v.1 – Source, purpose, and author
- In v.1 we also have a reference to the fact that this whole book is the “revelation” (ἀποκάλυψις) or “apokalypsis” of Jesus Christ, given to John...what does that fact remind us about the book?
- v.2 - “bore testimony” probably a reference to John's gospel and his other letters (1-3 John).
- The Greek word here (μαρτυρίαν) “martyrian” means “witness” or “testimony” and is where we get our English word “martyr” from.
- v.3 – Encouragement to 1) read, 2) hear, and 3) heed [Luke 11:28]...then 4) the reason why.
- Why include a prologue, if in v.4 John introduces himself again?



### Greetings to the Seven Churches – 1:4-8

- Roman letter form always had the author of the letter introduce himself at the outset, providing 1) identity, 2) any applicable credentials, 3) purpose, and finally 4) audience.
- “Asia” does not refer to the continent, but rather to what we now know as the country of Turkey. This area was known as the Roman province of Asia.
- Seven churches: Note that John (by inspiration) chose to address this letter to 7 churches—the number of the covenant—to signify that this message is from God (3) and for his people on earth (4). It's likely that John had more contacts than these, but since this is a heavily symbolic letter, watch closely for cue numbers like this throughout (and later in this verse...)
- “grace and peace” This is a Christianization of the “normal” greeting used in Graeco-Roman letters. The Greek word “greetings” or “chairete” (χαίρετε) is quite similar to the Greek word for “grace” or “charis” (χάρις), though the two come from totally unrelated roots. The “peace” or “shalom” (שָׁלוֹם) part comes from Hebrew origins, and was the standard greeting and farewell of Jewish people. By combining the two, John is actually making a bit of a confession about the connectedness of the two once-separate groups.
- Two more symbolic numbers appear in these verse...This grace and peace come from:
  - +The **one**, who is, who was, who is to come (1-in-3)
  - +The seven spirits (or sevenfold Spirit<sup>1</sup>) before his throne
  - +**Jesus Christ**, faithful witness, firstborn from the dead, and ruler of the kings. (1-in-3)

<sup>1</sup> The sevenfold Spirit is a reference to Isaiah 11:2, where the Spirit of God (aka the Holy Spirit) is described with 7 different terms: 1) of the LORD, 2) wisdom, 3) understanding, 4) counsel, 5) power, 6) knowledge, 7) fear of the LORD.

## *The Book of Revelation – Chapter 1: The Vision of Christ, the Son of Man*

-V.5b-6 sound a lot like Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

-V.7 is partially a quote from Daniel 7:13 and partially from Zechariah 12:10.

-Alpha (A) is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega (Ω) is the last letter. We would say “A to Z” today. We have those symbols on one set of white paraments used on Thanksgiving, in the seasons of End Time, Christmas, and Epiphany.

NOTE: Jesus employs this picture at the beginning of the letter (here) and at the end (22:13).

-“Who is, and who was, and who is to come” (see v.4 and 5)

### **John on Patmos – 1:9-11**

- “Brother” - close, familial term that is common in early Christian writings (and is still used to this day)

-“Companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance”

-Patmos – Island just off the coast of Ephesus (southwest Turkey).

-“In the spirit” – Used to indicate that we are no longer in the realm of the literal, but are moving into the symbolic (though, we already had that indication “this prophecy” in v.3). Other definite instances of this use include: Ezekiel 37:1, Acts 19:21, 1 Corinthians 5:3, Revelation 4:2, 17:3, 21:10 (others are possible, but not as clear)

-“voice like a trumpet” The closest connection here is to Hebrews 12:19 referring to a voice so loud and glorious that it is hard even to hear it. Matthew 24:31 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 are also likely in the picture, speaking of the trumpet as the instrument that will “wake the dead” on the Last Day. Also possibly a reference to the Day of Atonement [Leviticus 25:9]. More trumpets are found in Revelation 4:1, 8:6-11:19, and 18:22 (negative example).

- Those addressed congregations will be discussed in greater detail (2:1-3:22), but take note that there are seven churches.

### **Vision of the Son of Man – 1:12-16**

-Christ himself explains the golden lampstands as the seven churches (v.20).

- “One like a Son of Man” [Daniel 7:13, Matthew 24:30]

+Robe reaching down to his feet

+Golden sash around his chest

+Head and hair white like wool (snow)

+Eyes like a blazing fire

+Feet like bronze (glowing in a furnace)

+Voice like rushing waters (also a trumpet, v.10)

+Seven stars in his hand (see below)

+Sharp two-edged sword from his mouth

[Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12]

+Face like the sun (shining in all its brilliance)

- Seven stars (in his hand) explained as “angels” (or messengers) of the seven churches. Words of comfort for those in charge of churches struggling with persecution [Isaiah 43:13, John 10:28]

**A Second Command to Write – 1:17-20**

-“Do not be afraid” [Luke 1:13, 30, 2:10]

-First and Last (2:8, 22:13) = Alpha and Omega (v.8, 22:13)

- “the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever!” [1 Corinthians 15]

-“I hold the keys of death and Hades” [Matthew 10:28, Luke 12:5...also Matthew 16:19ff]

-“write” - “The command to 'write' emphasizes both the inspiration of this book and the related concept of revelation. The words 'which are and which will take place' refer either to the visions John was about to see or to the events they symbolized.” (Becker, 40)

-“What you have seen (what was), what is now (what is), and what will take place later (what is to come)” [v.8, 18]

- I'm going to lean on Becker again with an explanation of the “angels”:

“The word 'angel' in Greek (ἄγγελος) means 'messenger.' In modern English the word refers exclusively to a heavenly or spiritual messenger, but the Greek word is much less specific. In 1:1, which speaks of Jesus sending his angel or messenger it is obvious that the messenger is a spirit. But in the light of 2:1, where John is directed to send a letter to the angel of the church at Ephesus, it seems certain we are dealing with an earthly messenger. The messenger of the church is the man who delivers the Lord's message to the church. He is the pastor of the congregation...we can in a very natural way look upon the pastor of each of the seven congregations as the messenger through whom the message intended for each congregation is conveyed from Jesus to the people of God.”

(Becker, 40-41)