

## APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

### Session 7: Prologue (Revelation 1:1-11)

#### REVIEW

- A. The Hellenistic Letter Form in Revelation: sender, recipients, prescript (greeting), proem (thanks and praise), introductory formula, main body, greetings, benediction in author's hand
- B. Structure of John's Revelation:

“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.” (Rev 1:19)

“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’” (Rev 4:1)

“The angel said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.’” (Rev 22:6)

1. Prologue (Rev. 1:1-20)
2. Part I: The Revelation of “what is “now” (PRESENT) (Rev. 2:1-3:22)
3. Part II: The Revelation of “what must take place after this” (FUTURE) (Rev. 4:1-22:6)  
Introduction: John's Heavenly Vantage Point (Rev. 4:1-5:14)
  - a. First Vision of the Future (Rev. 6:1-8:1)
  - b. Second Vision of the Future (Rev. 8:2-11:19)
  - c. Third Vision of the Future (Rev. 12:1-22:6)
4. Epilogue (Rev. 22:7-21)

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHECY (REVELATION 1:1-3)

<sup>1</sup>The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup>Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

A. “The revelation of Jesus Christ (*apocalypsis Iésou Christou*)...the words of this prophecy”:

B. Chain of Revelation:

C. “He made it known” (verb *sémainō*, noun *sémeiōn*):

D. “The word of God” (“Performance Language”—see Genesis 1:3; Isaiah 55:10-11):

E. The Blessing (and the Warning):

### **SENDER, RECIPIENTS, PRESCRIPT AND PROEM (REVELATION 1:4-6)**

<sup>1</sup>John,

**To the seven churches in the province of Asia:**

**Grace (*charis*) and peace (*eiréné*) to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.**

**To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup>and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”**

A. Recipients (1:4b): “To the seven churches in the province of Asia”

B. Prescript (1:4c-5a):

1. “and from the seven spirits before his throne”:

Compare (imagery from Zechariah 4):

“Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.” (Rev 4:5; cf. 3:1)

“Then I saw a Lamb...He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” (Rev 5:6)

Regarding “horns,” see, for example, 1 Samuel 2:10 and Lamentations 2:3.

2. “from him who is, and who was, and who is to come”:

Compare:

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty (*pantokrator*).’” (Rev 1:8)

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (Rev 22:13; cf. 21:6)

“Grace (*charis*) and peace (*eiréné*) to you”:

3. “and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth” (imagery from Psalm 89):

Psalm 89

- a. “I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him.” (v. 20)
- b. “I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.” (v. 27)
- c. “Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness—and I will not lie to David—that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.” (vv. 35-37; cf. 2 Samuel 7:1-16)

Revelation 1:5

- a. “Jesus Christ”
- b. “the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth”

Compare:

“King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 19:16; cf. 17:14)

“the firstborn from among the dead” (Colossians 1:18)

“the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20)

- c. “the faithful witness (*martyrs*)”

### **PROEM (REVELATION 1:5b-6)**

<sup>5b</sup>To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup>and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”

### **PROPHETIC PRONOUNCEMENT (REVELATION 1:7)**

(a combination of Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10, found also in Matthew 24:30)

<sup>7</sup>Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

### **THE LORD'S SELF-INTRODUCTION (REVELATION 1:8)**

<sup>8</sup>"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (see above under Revelation 1:4-6)

### **CIRCUMSTANCES OF JOHN'S VISION (REVELATION 1:9-11)**

<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup>On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, <sup>11</sup>which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

A. "your companion in suffering (*thlipsis*) and kingdom (*basiléia*) and patient endurance (*hypomoné*):"

1. "Suffering" (*thlipsis*, also appears in Revelation 2:9, 10, 22; 7:14):
2. "Patient Endurance" (*hypomoné*, also appears in Rev 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12):
3. "Kingdom" (*basiléia*):

C. "that are ours in Jesus (*en Iésou*):"

Compare:

<sup>12</sup>This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

<sup>13</sup>Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (*en kyriō*) from now on." (Rev 14:12-13)

### **NEXT: JOHN'S VISION OF CHRIST (REVELATION 1:12-20)**

<sup>12</sup>I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw . . . .