



Summary of the Revelation

Introduction

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, given to him by God, to reveal what is yet to come. In this chapter, scripture reveals the writer of revelation to be the apostle John who, while in exile on the island of Patmos is called by God while in the Spirit, to write down what he sees in a book and send it to seven churches that are in the Roman Province of Asia.

Although there are some commentators who believe the revelation was received prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, Irenæus records that it occurred towards the end of the reign of Domitian and therefore dates it in the mid-90's.

Although there is evidence of the traditional letter writing style, the main genres of the book are revelation and prophecy, given both to encourage and warn believers of the persecution that would increasingly come against the church and the need to persevere despite the hardships that they may face. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus had conquered the evil one but his influence remains and will grow in the world until the time is right for Jesus to return in judgement and restore of all things. In the meantime, Jesus is present with his church on earth through his Holy Spirit.

The revelation is clear that, although the church and the world face growing threats, God is in control. Just as he restrains his wrath in the face of apostasy, he also restrains the growing evil that opposes his church. In the meantime, the church continues its witness to Christ in order to allow more people to be reconciled to God through the Gospel.

At the end of the age, the church's opponents will intensify their persecution, but Jesus, the triumphant Word of God, will defeat and destroy all his enemies; the old heaven and earth, stained by sin and suffering, will be replaced by the new heaven and earth; and the church will be presented as a bride in luminous purity to her husband, the Lamb of God. Come, Lord Jesus.

Chapter One

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, given to him by God, to reveal what is yet to come. In this chapter, scripture reveals the writer of revelation to be the apostle John who, while in exile on the island of Patmos is called by God, while in the Spirit to write down what he sees in a book and send it to seven churches that are in the Roman Province of Asia.

When John looked to see who was speaking to him he saw seven golden lampstands, which represent these seven churches. In the midst of the seven lampstands he saw the Christ, who was clothed with a long robe with a golden sash around his chest. John provides a description of Jesus that symbolises him as High Priest and Righteous Judge.

In his right hand he held seven stars which represent the seven angels or messengers of the seven churches. From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, representing divine judgment. His face was like the sun shining in full strength, representing God's glory.

Chapter Two

It is now time for John is to begin to write what he sees in a book and send it to the seven churches. These churches are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. In this chapter only the first four churches are addressed.

The first letter is to the church in Ephesus which is commended by Christ for its labour, patience, intolerance of evil, and their detection of false teachers, but is condemned for forsaking their first love, i.e. Christ.

The second letter is to the church in Smyrna which is commended by Christ for its faithfulness in trial.

The third letter is to the church in Pergamum which is commended by Christ for holding fast to him, but is condemned because they also held to the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

The fourth letter is to the church in Thyatira which is commended by Christ for its works, faith and love, but are condemned for tolerating the woman Jezebel who teaches fornication and sacrifice to idols.

Chapter Three

This chapter concludes the writings to the seven churches. In it the church in Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea are addressed. The fifth edict is to the church in Sardis who is condemned by Christ for acting alive but being dead.

The sixth edict is to the church in Philadelphia who is commended and promised great victory. Last, is the message to the church in Laodicea who is condemned for their spiritual blindness and warned to repent or face judgment.

Chapter Four

In Chapter Four, the scene is in heaven. Here John sees a throne and one seated on the throne whose appearance was that of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. The one who was seated on the throne here is God the Father.

Surrounding the throne were twenty four thrones with twenty four elders seated in them. Before the throne were seven burning torches of fire, which were the seven Spirits of God, i.e. the Holy Spirit. Then all around the throne, on each side were four living creatures who day or night never stop singing 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!'

Chapter Five

This chapter is full of emotion as there is a search of the universe for one who is worthy to open a scroll that is sealed with seven seals. Initially it appears to John that no one is worthy so he begins to weep. Then one of the elders tells him not to worry because the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David can open the scroll and its seven seals because he has conquered.

Then John sees a lamb that appears to have been slain, he has seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent into all the earth. The lamb takes the scroll from the one who is seated on the throne and then immediately the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fall down to sing a new song. Additionally, thousands of angels and every living creature join in on this praise of the Lamb who is worthy, i.e. Jesus.

Chapter Six

The Lamb begins to open the seven seals. The first seal was opened and John saw a white horse with a rider who had a bow, and a crown that was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

The second seal was opened and he saw another horse, bright red in colour. The rider of this horse was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another, and he was given a great sword representing war.

When the lamb opened the third seal John saw a black horse whose rider had a pair of scales in his hands. He also heard a voice which said 'A quart of wheat for a day's pay, and three quarts of barley for a day's pay, but do not damage the olive oil and the wine!', representing famine.

Then, with the opening of the fourth seal, John saw a pale horse and its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him, representing death and pestilence. They were given authority over a quarter of the earth to kill.

When the fifth seal was opened, John saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God and for their witness. They cried out for the Lord to avenge their blood on those who dwell on earth but were given white robes and told to wait a little longer.

At the opening of the sixth seal a great earthquake took place, and the sun became black, and the moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell. After this everyone on earth hid themselves in caves and called to the mountains and rocks to fall on them to hide them from God.

Chapter Seven

After the opening of six of the seven seals John saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back four winds, so that no wind would blow. He then saw another angel who called out with a loud voice to the four angels not to harm the earth, sea or trees until God's servants had been sealed on their foreheads. Those sealed were 12,000 of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Then John saw a great multitude of every nation that no one could number standing before the throne and before the Lamb. These are believers who came out of the great tribulation.

Chapter Eight

This chapter begins with the opening of the seventh seal. When it was opened by the Lamb there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. John saw seven angels standing before God and seven trumpets were given to them. Then he saw another great angel who offered the prayers of the saints before God. That angel took a censer, filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there was thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. This is then followed by a series of trumpet blasts that bring about judgement on various aspects of creation.

The first angel then blew his trumpet which brought about hail and fire, mixed with blood, and it was thrown upon the earth. This burned up a third of the earth, trees, and all of the green grass. Next the second angel blew his trumpet and something like a great mountain which was burning with fire was thrown into the sea turning a third of the sea to blood, killing a third of the living creatures in the sea, and destroying a third of the ships.

The third angel blew his trumpet and a great star named Wormwood fell from heaven on to a third of the rivers and on the springs of water causing great distress because it turned the drinking water bitter. The fourth angel blew his trumpet and a third of the sun, moon, and stars were struck so that their light would be darkened. Then John heard an eagle warning of the severity of the final three trumpets which have yet to sound.

Chapter Nine

Judgement continues with the sounding of the fifth trumpet. When the angel sounded the fifth trumpet John saw a star fall from heaven to earth, and it was given a key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. The fallen star is probably Satan who opened the bottomless pit and released locusts that were given power, not to kill, but only to torment for five months those without the seal of God on their foreheads.

Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet and four angels who were bound at the great river Euphrates were released to kill a third of mankind. Thousands of

troops were released to kill a third of mankind by their fire, smoke and sulphur. Even after all of this those who were not killed refused to repent.

Chapter Ten

Chapter Ten begins with the introduction of a mighty angel who held an open scroll in his hand. A voice from heaven told John to go and take the scroll from this angel, so he did. The angel then said to John 'Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth'. So John took the scroll and ate it and it was as the angel told him it would be. The scroll represents the Word of God.

Chapter Eleven

John is now told of two witnesses, thought by many to be Elijah and Moses, who will have authority and will prophesy for three and a half years. They will be given power to pour fire out of their mouths, and to control rainfall during the days of their prophesying. They will also have the power to turn water into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague.

When their work is finished they will be killed by the beast in the same place where the Lord was crucified, i.e. the earthly Jerusalem. Their lifeless bodies will be on public display for three days and the people of the world will rejoice over their death. Then at the end of the three days, the breath of life from God will enter them causing them to stand on their feet. At that moment they were called and snatched up to heaven in a cloud. After this, there will be a great earthquake causing a tenth of the city to fall and seven thousand people to be killed. Those who survive will be terrified and give glory to God after witnessing these dramatic events.

Following this, the seventh trumpet will be blown and there will be tremendous worship in heaven following the declaration of God's reign over the kingdom of the world. God's temple in heaven will then be opened and the Ark of the Covenant revealed, and there will be flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

Chapter Twelve

This chapter begins with John seeing a great sign in heaven. He saw a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of stars. She was pregnant and gave birth to a male child, who is to rule all the nations. This child was caught up to God and the woman fled to a place prepared by God where she will be taken care of for three and a half years. The male child is Christ and the woman is thought to be the nation Israel.

There was a war in heaven between Michael and his angels, and the dragon, or Satan, and his angels. Satan and his angels were defeated, then thrown down to earth and those in heaven rejoiced. When Satan saw that he had been thrown down to earth he went after the woman who gave birth to the male child, but could not capture her so he became furious and went away to make war with the rest of her offspring, i.e. the church.

Chapter Thirteen

At this time John saw two beasts. The first one rose out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns, and blasphemous names on its heads. On one of its heads it had a mortal wound that had been healed. He had been given great power and authority from the dragon and the whole earth followed him and worshipped the dragon because of this. This beast was allowed to use this authority for forty-two months. During this period God's name was blasphemed and the saints were persecuted.

The second beast had come out of the earth and it had two horns like a lamb but spoke like a dragon. It also had the same authority as the first beast and led the people of the earth to worship the first beast. This beast performed many great signs by which he deceived the people of earth and forced all to be marked on their right hand or forehead with the mark of the beast, the number of its name is 666, so that no one could buy or sell unless they had this mark. This beast is known as the False Prophet.

Chapter Fourteen

John saw the Lamb with the 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. They were redeemed as the first fruits for God and they were seen as blameless. Then he saw an angel who said to those on earth: 'Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgement has come'. Then a second angel said 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication'. A third angel said, 'Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, 10 they will also drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb'.

Then John saw one like a Son of Man seated on a white cloud, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. Another angel came out and called with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud to reap the harvest of the earth and throw it into the winepress of the wrath of God.

Chapter Fifteen

John is shown seven angels with seven plagues. They are clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. They were given seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power. No one was permitted to enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were all finished.

Chapter Sixteen

John then heard from a voice in the temple giving instruction that the seven bowls of the wrath of God should be poured out on the earth. The first angel then poured out his bowl and sores were placed on those who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing in the sea died as a result. The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the

springs of water, and they became blood. The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness and people gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed God. The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

John was then shown three unclean or demonic spirits like frogs which came out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. These spirits went to the kings of the world to gather them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. The place that they gathered for war is called Harmagedon or Armageddon.

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, which said: 'It is done!' This caused dramatic cosmic disturbances and great storms on earth that had never previously been witnessed in history.

Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Seventeen begins with John being shown the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.

When John saw the woman she was seated on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names. The beast had seven heads and ten horns and was arrayed in purple and scarlet. The woman was adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. On her head was written 'Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations'. This woman was drunk with the blood of the saints.

Chapter Eighteen

Now, John sees the fall of Babylon the Great. In just one hour she was laid to waste. The reaction to her fall is that of weeping and mourning by the merchants of the earth because there would be no one to buy their goods anymore. Then a mighty angel picked up a large stone and threw it into the sea, saying, 'With such violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down, and will be found no more'.

Chapter Nineteen

This chapter begins with the marriage of the Lamb to his bride, the church who has made herself ready and was clothed in fine linen, representing the righteous deeds of the saints. After the marriage, John saw heaven open and then saw a white horse with its rider who was called Faithful and True, i.e. Christ, who comes in righteousness to judge and make war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and his robe is dipped in blood. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the

nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron. Following him were the armies of heaven, also on white horses.

Then an angel called to all the birds flying overhead to come and gather to eat the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, small and great. Then the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies came together to war against Christ and his army. The first and second beast were captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire. Those left were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse.

Chapter Twenty

Then John saw an angel come down from heaven with a key and a great chain to the bottomless pit in his hand. This angel captured Satan, bound him, and threw him into the pit for a thousand years. After the thousand years, he will be released for a little while to deceive. This was followed by the first resurrection, where those who did not receive the mark of the beast or worship him or his image came to life and reigned with Christ in his millennial Kingdom.

After the thousand years were ended, Satan was released to deceive the nations whose number is like the sand of the sea. Those deceived surrounded the camp of the saints to battle but God sent fire down from heaven to consume them, and the Devil was thrown into the lake of fire to join the beast and the false prophet to be tormented forever.

Then John saw the great white throne and the final judgment take place. This is where the dead were judged according to what they had done. After this judgment those judged, whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, will be thrown into the lake of fire which is the second death.

Chapter Twenty One

The next revelation to John was a new heaven, a new earth, and a New Jerusalem. He heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them'.

Then an angel came to John and carried him away in the Spirit and showed him the great city, which came down from heaven. John saw no temple there because it was not necessary as the temple is the Lord and he was with the people of the great city. There was also no sun or moon because the glory of God gives the city its light and its lamp is the Lamb. John saw gates to the city which will never be shut by day and there will be no night. Only those written in the Lamb's book of life will ever enter the city.

Chapter Twenty Two

In this final chapter of Revelation, scripture reveals that there will no longer be anything accursed. God and the Lamb will be with their servants and they will worship them. They will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads and they will reign forever with him.

The message is clear: be ready, Christ is coming soon and blessed is anyone who keeps the words of this prophecy. John is then told not to seal up the words of this prophecy because Jesus has sent his angel to John to testify to him about these things for the churches.

The letter concludes with a warning telling all who hear the words of this prophecy that if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are also described in this book.