

Student Guide for Revelation 1

I. Revelation 1:1–3

The Prologue: What This Book Is and How It Communicates

A. “The revelation” as unveiling (1:1)

1. Apokalypsis (ἀποκάλυψις) means an uncovering, a pulling back of the curtain. Revelation is less about satisfying _____ and more about exposing ultimate _____: who truly rules, what evil truly is, and what faithful witness truly requires.
2. Revelation announces from the first line that the source is _____, mediated through _____, delivered by an _____, and recorded by _____. The chain of transmission is meant to build trust in the authority of the message.

B. Revelation’s default mode is symbolic “_____ language” (1:1–2)

1. John says the message was “made known” using the verb *sēmainō* (σημαίνω), which carries the idea of communicating by _____. One prominent line of interpretation is that the book signals from the start that it will communicate primarily through _____ and _____, not straightforward prose prediction. As one puts it, the symbolic use of *sēmainō* sets the expectation for “symbolic communication” as Revelation’s normal method.
2. This helps set expectations: Revelation is not “_____ true” because it is symbolic. Instead, it is intentionally _____ so that it can reshape the imagination of believers living under pressure.

C. John’s role is witness, not puzzle-master (1:2)

1. John “_____” (*emartyrēsen*, ἐμαρτύρησεν) to “the word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” The vocabulary of testimony and witness will matter for the entire book, because the church is repeatedly called to endure as a _____ people.

D. The first beatitude frames the goal of the whole book: hearing and keeping (1:3)

1. “_____” (*makarios*, μακάριος) is not mainly a feeling. It describes God’s favor on the person whose life is aligned with God’s will.
2. Revelation assumes it will be read aloud to a gathered community: “the one who reads aloud” and “those who hear.”

3. The key ethical verb is “_____” (tēreō, τηρέω). In Scripture, to “keep” is to guard, observe, and live out what God has said.

E. A controlling posture for prophecy: clarity often comes _____ fulfillment (principle for the study)

1. Scripture itself shows that God’s people often understand prophecy best in _____ (for example, the suffering Messiah becomes clear after the cross and resurrection).
2. A historically important statement of this posture comes from Isaac Newton’s observations on prophecy: God gave prophecies “not to gratify men’s _____,” but so that “after they were _____ they might be interpreted by the event.”
3. Practically, this means we major on what Revelation clearly presses: _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____, while holding more speculative timelines with humility.

II. Revelation 1:4–8

The Greeting and Doxology: A Political and Pastoral Declaration of Who Rules

A. A real letter to real churches (1:4)

1. John writes “to the seven churches that are in Asia.” These are historical congregations in Roman Asia Minor.
2. The number seven also signals _____. Revelation will speak to those churches _____ and to the church _____.

B. “Grace” and “peace” as covenant language (1:4)

1. “_____” (charis, χάρις) is God’s undeserved favor that creates a new reality for sinners.
2. “_____” (eirēnē, εἰρήνη) echoes the Hebrew concept of shalom: wholeness, stability, and well-being rooted in God’s presence.

C. The divine identity in time: “who is and who was and who is to come” (1:4)

1. The phrasing echoes Old Testament ways of speaking about God as the _____ One, Lord over past, present, and future. Revelation will repeatedly confront the church with the truth that God is not trapped in the empire’s timeline.

D. “The seven spirits before his throne” (1:4)

1. Many interpreters connect this to the fullness of the Holy Spirit, often linked conceptually with Old Testament imagery of the Spirit’s complete work. At minimum, it points to heaven’s throne room reality behind earth’s turmoil.

- E. Jesus' three titles function as a direct challenge to imperial claims (1:5)**
1. "_____ witness" (ho martys ho pistos, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός): Jesus is the true witness who did not bend under threat.
 2. "_____ from the dead" (prōtotokos, πρωτότοκος): he is the pioneer of resurrection life.
 3. "_____ of the kings of the earth" (archōn, ἄρχων): this is a deliberately political confession. Rome claims ultimate sovereignty, but John places Jesus above all rulers.
- F. The doxology centers salvation and identity (1:5–6)**
1. Jesus "_____" (agapaō, ἀγαπάω) and "_____" (lyō, λύω, in many manuscripts) believers from sins by his blood.
 2. Believers are made "a _____" and "_____" echoing Exodus 19:6. Revelation treats the church as a worshiping people with priestly vocation, representing God to the world and the world to God in prayer and witness.
- G. Revelation is a rival symbolic world meant to re-form perception (why the imagery is so intense)**
1. Revelation's pictures are meant to out-teach and out-form the images of empire. One influential explanation is that dominant cultures "_____ the world for us" through their ideals and images, and Revelation aims to "_____" that ideological construction and form a people who resist it.
 2. This is why the book uses spectacle. As Richard Hays is quoted in one discussion of Revelation's imagery, interpreters have strained with its "phantasmagoric imagery," precisely because it is designed to move beyond flat _____ into formative _____.
- H. "He is coming with the clouds" is Old Testament courtroom and kingship language (1:7)**
1. The line echoes Daniel 7:13 and also draws on themes like Zechariah 12:10 (mourning, pierced one) and prophetic visions of the Lord's decisive intervention.
 2. The point is not merely movement through the sky. It is public _____ of Jesus and public _____ of all false power.
- I. Alpha and Omega: God frames the story from beginning to end (1:8)**
1. "Alpha and Omega" draws on Old Testament claims of God as first and last (Isaiah 44:6; 48:12).
 2. "The Almighty" (pantokratōr, παντοκράτωρ) communicates God as the One who holds all power, not _____.
- J. A concrete imperial contrast (why this would land sharply in Roman Asia)**

1. Roman political theology regularly used divine language for _____ and demanded acts of loyalty. Suetonius records Domitian’s arrogance in having official communications begin, “Our Master and our God bids that this be done.”
2. Revelation’s opening doxology answers that world with a higher confession: Jesus is the true ruler of earth’s kings.

III. Revelation 1:9–11

John’s Setting and the Church’s Shared Condition: Pressure, Kingdom, Endurance

A. John’s solidarity with suffering believers (1:9)

1. John calls himself a “brother” and “partner” in “_____,” “_____,” and “patient _____.”
2. The trio matters: suffering is not accidental, the kingdom is real even when the church is marginalized, and endurance is the church’s active calling.

B. The word “endurance” as active _____ (1:9)

1. The key term is hypomonē (ὑπομονή). It is more than passive patience. A scholarly argument made in a focused study of the term in Revelation is that hypomonē in this book describes “enduring nonviolent resistance” to the evils and seductions of empire through _____ and _____.
2. That fits Revelation’s repeated call: overcome not by violent takeover, but by _____ testimony, _____ loyalty, and worship of God alone.

C. Patmos as exclusion and constraint (1:9)

1. John is on Patmos “because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” Whatever the precise legal mechanism, the point is clear: the witness of Jesus has _____ consequences.

D. “In the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (1:10)

1. John’s experience is prophetic and worship-oriented. Revelation is not written from a detached study. It comes from a worship setting saturated in the Spirit’s presence.

E. The command is simple: write and send (1:11)

1. John is told to put the vision into a book and deliver it to the seven churches. Revelation is meant to _____, be _____, and form _____.

IV. Revelation 1:12–16

The Vision of the Risen Christ: Priest, King, Judge, and Present Lord Among His Churches

A. Lampstands and presence: Christ walks among the churches (1:12–13)

1. John sees seven golden lampstands, then “one like a son of man” among them. The image is pastoral and confrontational: Jesus is not distant. He is _____, _____, _____, and calling to _____.

B. “One like a son of man” is Daniel-shaped identity (1:13)

1. The phrase echoes Daniel 7. It identifies Jesus with the figure who receives authority and dominion. Revelation’s Christology is not merely inspirational. It is _____ language.

C. Robes and sash: priestly and royal resonance (1:13)

1. The long robe and golden sash evoke _____ and _____ service. Revelation regularly merges priesthood and kingship in Jesus, then extends that priestly identity to the church (1:6).

D. White hair and blazing eyes: divine purity and penetrating judgment (1:14)

1. The white hair echoes the Ancient of Days imagery (Daniel 7), linking Jesus with _____ glory.
2. Eyes “like a flame of fire” signal that nothing is hidden. In Revelation, Jesus sees through appearances, including church appearances.

E. Feet like refined bronze: stability and irresistible strength (1:15)

1. The unusual term for the metal points to brilliance and strength. The image communicates _____. The church may feel small, but its Lord is _____.

F. Voice like many waters: overwhelming authority (1:15)

1. The sound-image communicates majesty that cannot be _____. Empires speak loudly, but Christ’s voice is louder.

G. Stars, sword, and shining face: rule, judgment, and glory (1:16)

1. The sword from his mouth pictures judgment by _____, the power of his word.
2. The shining face recalls biblical theophany patterns, where divine presence is _____ in brightness.

V. Revelation 1:17–20

Comfort, Commission, and an Interpretive Key

A. John collapses, Jesus commissions (1:17)

1. John falls “as though dead,” a typical response to divine _____ in Scripture.
 2. Jesus lays a hand on him and says, “Do not fear.” Revelation is not meant to _____ faithful believers into paralysis. It is meant to _____ them into courage.
- B. “The First and the Last” places Jesus in God’s identity space (1:17)**
1. The title echoes Old Testament descriptions of the Lord as the first and last. Revelation presents Jesus not as a _____ figure but as the divine Lord who frames history.
- C. Resurrection and authority over death (1:18)**
1. “I died, and behold I am alive forevermore.”
 2. “Keys of Death and Hades” means Jesus possesses authority over the grave and the unseen realm. The empire can _____, but it cannot _____.
- D. A framework verse for the rest of the book (1:19)**
1. John is told to write what he has seen, what is, and what will take place. At minimum, this signals that Revelation speaks to John’s present churches and also opens forward into God’s future acts.
- E. The first explicit interpretation: lampstands and stars (1:20)**
1. The lampstands are the seven _____.
 2. The stars are the “_____” of the churches. Interpretations vary: some see _____ representatives, others see _____ messengers or leaders. The safe takeaway for a first pass is that each congregation is accountable to Christ and under his watchful presence.

VI. Chapter 1 Summary for the Whole Study

- A. Revelation begins with worship, not speculation**
1. The opening chapter insists that the book’s first job is to _____ Jesus as reigning Lord, present among his churches.
- B. The church’s calling is faithful witness under pressure**
1. John models solidarity in _____, _____, and _____.
- C. The symbols are not decoration; they are discipleship**
1. Revelation’s imagery is designed to form a counter-imagination that resists the seductive story of _____.
- D. Prophecy aims at endurance and obedience, and often becomes clearest in hindsight**
1. The posture is humble _____: we keep what is written, and we trust God to make the meaning plain as his purposes unfold.