

## Who is Jesus?

We know the story of Jesus, but what about the heavenly resurrected Jesus, the one the disciples glimpsed on the Mount of Transfiguration? This is the Jesus we meet in chapter one.

He is the faithful witness, the one who truly reveals God. He is the firstborn from the dead.. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth. (Verse 5)

Verse 7 draws from Daniel 7:13, the one like a son of man who appears before God and is given an eternal kingdom. It also draws on Zechariah 12:10, a prophecy of Jerusalem's eventual repentance, and applies it to the whole world.

The picture in verses 13 to 16 is drawn from many sources, some biblical, some from the Roman pagan culture. It is there to overwhelm us, more than it is there to be explained. Jesus will tell us not to be afraid, but first we need to see him in his risen glory and fall at his feet. Then we can begin to appreciate that Jesus is the first and the last, the living one, resurrected from the dead, holding the keys of death and Hades (the world of the dead.)

The robe suggests a priest. The sash is around his breasts (the word normally relates to female breasts - this could relate to pagan goddesses.) The white head and hair may go back to the description of God in Daniel 7:9.

He holds the angels of the churches in his hands. He walks among the churches. His voice is a two edged sword (see Isaiah 49:2, Hebrews 4:12) You can no more look at his face than you can look at the sun. This is the Jesus who speaks to his church.

## Revelation - chapter one

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Many people are fascinated by Revelation. They find it exciting, if a bit weird, and they wonder if it will give some clues as to what is happening in the world today.

We are going to look at this amazing book, to see what it meant when it was written and discover the hope it gives us now. Stick with it - you will be inspired!

### What is the book called?

The full title is 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ.'

Note it is 'Revelation,' not 'Revelations.' The word means something revealed that would otherwise be hidden. It is a window to show us what would normally be invisible.

### Who wrote it?

Short answer: John.

Longer answer: Possibly John, one of the 12 apostles. Possibly the author of John's gospel. Second century Christians believed both of these, but we can't be sure.

Important answer: A believer who was in exile because of his faith in Jesus. He has a series of visions and is told to write them down. The 'real' author is the angel who speaks to John.

## What sort of a God?

The book calls itself a 'Prophecy,' a message from God. This God is active in our world now, just as he was in the past and will be in the future. He is the Alpha and Omega (the first and the last.) He offers grace and peace to those who hear the message of the book, and promises that those who take it to heart have a reason to be happy.

This grace and peace also come from Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God. The three always speak together.

## Who are the angels?

The Bible tells us that alongside the visible creation (earth) there is an invisible one (heaven.) The invisible world is linked to ours and present everywhere.

The word 'angel' means 'messenger.' Angels in the Bible are usually heavenly creatures who interact with the visible creation. Revelation is a message given to John via an angel.

## What about the Sevens?

Numbers are important in Revelation. The number seven stands for a complete picture of something. There are four obvious sevens in chapter one - the breaths (spirits) of God, the churches in Asia, the lampstands and the stars. Less obvious 7s are the first of 14 mentions of saints, servants and Jesus and the first of 7 mentions of blessed and Christ.

## Who was it written for?

First of all, the book was written for 7 churches in what was then called Asia (Turkey.) The number 7 tells us that they represent all the churches in the area., and all churches everywhere.

These believers were a small minority in a big powerful Empire, but they were becoming big enough to get noticed. The churches are represented by seven lampstands in the visible world and their invisible messengers (angels) by seven stars. They are there to give light to the world.

These people knew about Jesus. They knew the gospel. They knew about his death and resurrection. Revelation is written to encourage them to stay faithful.

The angel wants these people to know that they are loved, that they are set free by the blood of Jesus, and that they are a royal priesthood, the link between the visible world and the invisible one.. Jesus is walking amongst them.

## What was going on?

Early evidence suggests that the book dates to the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian (81-96.) Emperor worship was part of the culture and this was a big problem to followers of Jesus. There was no systematic persecution of Christians at this time, but it was beginning.

Christians believe that Jesus is the ruler of the kings of this world. These believers were being noticed, and the Romans were beginning to see them as dangerous.