

## STUDYING THE BOOK OF REVELATION THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST (2)



### REVELATION 1 THE LETTERS OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

#### Revelation 1:4-8 King James Version (KJV)

*4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia:  
Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is,  
and which was, and which is to come; and from the  
seven Spirits which are before his throne;*

*5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness,  
and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of  
the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and  
washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

*6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for  
ever and ever. Amen.*

*7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him:  
and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*

*8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was,  
and which is to come, the Almighty.*

## Interpretation

**BACKGROUND AND DATE.** Evidence within Revelation indicates that it was written during a period of extreme persecution of Christians, which possibly was that begun by Nero after the great fire that nearly destroyed Rome in July of A.D. 64 and continued until his suicide in June of A.D. 68. In this view, the book thus was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in September of A.D. 70, and is an authentic prophecy concerning the continuing suffering and persecution of Christians, which would become even more intense and severe in the years ahead. On the basis of isolated statements by the early church fathers, some interpreters date the book near the end of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96), after John had fled to Ephesus.

- ❖ **1.5 Witness.** One who testifies to the truth he has experienced a witness, one who has knowledge of a fact and can give information concerning it. The word in itself does not imply death, but many of the first-century witnesses did give their lives, with the result that the word came to denote a martyr, one who witnesses for Christ by his death (*Acts 22:20, Rev. 2:13, 17:6*).

**Jesus** is presented in terms of His redeeming sacrifice, His resurrection, and His eternal reign. Jesus as Messiah-King is a major theme in Revelation.

- ❖ **1.6** The sacrifice of Jesus has given to all believers the privileges that had belonged to ancient Israel (see *Ex. 19:6, 29:1-9; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10*). **Hath made us kings and priests** is clearly a present tense reference to the believer's function now, in witness and in worship.
- ❖ **1.7** The Lord's return will be actual, personal, and visible (see *Acts 1:9-11*), **Clouds** (*Dan. 7:13*) symbolize God's presence protection, and leadership. However, the emphasis here is on the Lord's coming in judgment (see *Zach. 12:10; Matt. 24:30*).
- ❖ **1.8** God seals the prophecy with the authority of His name **Alpha and Omega**, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, declare that God is everything from A to Z, thus in control of all history (see *Is.44:6*). As the **Almighty One** God's power is absolute.
- ❖ **The Seven Churches of the Apocalypse.** The churches of seven cities were recipients of an apocalyptic letter from the Lord through John. By commendation, rebuke, and warning, the people of God were exhorted to remain faithful in adversity. These churches held significant roles in the Christian experience of Asia Minor as a result of their location within a transportation network linking different parts of the region.

## KINGDOM DYNAMICS

### Revelation 1: 5,6 – Worship and Praise. **WORSHIP AND THE KINGDOM.**

In the opening of Rev., John introduces himself as a brother and companion in the struggle we all face (v.9). His words "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" point to the dual facts of Christ's present kingdom triumph and the ongoing presence of evil and warfare that exact the patience of the church in the kingdom advances among and through us. In prefacing the broad arenas of prophecy about to be unfolded, John addresses two very important **present** truths.

1. We, Christ's redeemed are loved and are washed from our sins- a present state (v.6).
2. We through His glorious dominion, have been designated "*kings and priests*" to God- also a present calling. Thus, these dual offices give perspective on our authority and duty and how we most effectively may advance the kingdom of God.

First, we are said to be kings in the sense that under the King of kings we are the new breed – the reborn, to whom God has delegated authority to extend and administrate the powers of His rule. Of course, this involves faithful witness to the gospel in the power of the Spirit and loving service to humanity in the love of God. But it also involves confrontation with dark powers of hell, assertive prayer warfare, and an expectation of the miraculous works of God (*2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Cor. 2:4*). However, this authority is only fully accomplished in the spirit of praiseful worship as we exercise the office of "*priests*". Some translations read, "*a kingdom of priest*," which emphasizes that the rule is only effective when the priestly mission is faithfully attended. Worship is foundational to kingdom advance. The power of the believer before God's throne, worshipping the Lamb and exalting in the Holy Spirit of praise, is mightily confounding to the Adversary.

- ❖ **1:5,6 Blood Royal.** THE BLOOD. As John greets his intended audience he extends salutations from the resurrected Lord to the saints whom Jesus loved and forgave by pouring out His life (v.5). The consequence of this sacrificial death is the gracious elevation of bloodwashed believers to the status of royal priests (v.6). Such a designation identifies these believers as the true Israel of God. After Israel's arrival at Mt. Sinai. God called Moses into the mountain as a prelude to giving him the Law (Ex. 20). Moses was told that if the Israelites would live in faithfulness to covenant stipulations they would be God's unique possession as well as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 20: 5, 6). These kingly priests undoubtedly are intended to be a corporate body of ministers who witness to God's saving and succoring power. They are to manifest praise to God continually for His gracious elevation of them (*1 Peter 2:9*). Christ's blood made this possible for all..... *to be cont'd.*



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