

I. Structure

1. Prologue (1:1-8)—4 Distinct Parts
 - a. Preface (1:1-2)
 - b. Pronounced Blessing (1:3)
 - c. John's Greeting (1:4-5a)
 - d. Theme (1:5b -8)
2. John's Commission (1:9-20)
 - a. First Commission to Write (1:9-11)
 - b. Divine Encounter (1:12-16)
 - c. Restatement and Explanation (1:17-20)

II. Prologue (1:1-8)

- A. Preface (1:1-2) 1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.*
 1. Immediately we are given the purpose statement of the book. First of all this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.
 2. Only the Father knows everything about the end times.
 3. So here, the Father releases a gift to the Son, a glimpse of His plan to culminate this age and reveal His Son as the beautiful Bridegroom, righteous Judge, and King of the ages.
 4. I find it interesting that John is the one whom Jesus chose to share this with. This reveals a powerful principle implied throughout the Bible. Those who develop the most intimacy with God receive the greatest Revelation.
 5. *the things which must soon take place...* 2 ways to deal with this:
 - a. John is referring to the words of Jesus to the seven churches found in chapters 2-3 as taking place soon.
 - b. The greek can be translated *the things which will shortly take place* communicating that the events, once they begin, will happen in rapid succession.
 6. Jesus gave the revelation to an angel that then gave it to John.
 7. *the testimony of Jesus Christ* – The main point of all prophesy, including the Book of Revelation is to testify about Jesus Christ to help us love and fear Him more deeply than before.
- B. The Pronounced Blessing (1:3) 3 *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are in it; for the time is near.*
 1. The book of Revelation is the only book of the Bible that pronounces a blessing for anyone who reads or even just hears it.
 2. 2 groups who do one specific thing.
 - a. The first group is those who read it.
 - b. The second group is those who choose to listen and receive it.
 3. This blessing only sticks if you actually heed the things which are in this book.
- C. John's Greeting (1:4-5a) 4 *John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*
 1. This is where we first see the mentioning of the seven churches. Jesus seems to indicate that the strengths and weaknesses of these 7 congregation represent the church as a whole throughout the ages.
 2. Next John blesses them from the Father and the Son
 - a. John references the Father in this way to give us insight into His ability to bring to pass the activity of the book in its fullness.

- b. The seven spirits?
 - i. One interpretation = Isa 11:2, “The **Spirit of the LORD** shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**, The Spirit of **counsel** and **might**, The Spirit of **knowledge** and of the **fear of the LORD**. “
 - ii. The main problem with this view is that the Spirit of the Lord is the Old Testament term (and a common New Testament one) for the Holy Spirit.
 - iii. The other interpretation = these seven spirits as the seven archangels from Jewish tradition (Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Jeremiel, Raguel, Zerachiel, and Remiel) who minister before God in heaven.
 - iv. My opinion is that the seven spirits refer to seven archangels rather than the “seven-fold” spirit of God. I view John as describing the Father as the One who is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, the One who has the seven spirits before His throne. However, you are more than welcome to your opinion!

3. Next John describes Jesus.

- a. In His earthly ministry, John saw that Jesus faithfully declared the knowledge of the Father to all who came in contact with Him.
- b. However, He then begins to reveal the depth of how affected he was by this new Revelation the Lord had given him of Jesus.
- c. In his next description of Jesus John purposefully refers to one of the most distinct messianic psalms: Psalm 89:27 *Also I will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.* John uses the titles the Father attributed to Messiah in Psalm 89 to make clear that Jesus is the prophetic fulfillment of this psalm.

D. Theme (1:5b-8) *5b To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood – 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father – to Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

1. This section gives us the theme of the book – the revealing of Jesus Christ – in a powerful summary form.
2. The first part is a powerful description of Jesus as being the one who frees and cleanses us from our sins by His blood. New revelation about Jesus strengthens older revelation.
3. He then goes on to summarize the prophetic visions of Revelation by saying that Jesus is coming back in such a way that every person alive at that time will see Him.
4. Two groups of people are listed here as those who see this return.
 - a. The first is “those who pierced Him.” = Jews! See Zech. 12:10.
 - b. The second group is gentiles (everyone else).

III. John’s Commission (1:9-20)

A. First Commission to Write (1:9-11) *9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice (L) like the sound of a trumpet, 11 saying, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”*

1. John goes back to the story line of his letter to the seven churches as he retells the story of how he encountered the Lord and received the Revelation.
2. Imagine what it was like for John to be in a moment of prayer when suddenly he hears the audible voice of God like a trumpet blast from behind him declaring, “I am the Alpha and the Omega...”

3. Here Jesus emphatically commissions John as His prophetic scribe to faithfully record all that he sees and hears and send it to the seven Churches.
- B. The Divine Encounter (1:12-16) *12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like ^[a]a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. 14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.*
1. Lampstands = communities of believers (i.e. churches)
 2. The first of John's descriptions reveal the offices of Jesus.
 - a. Jesus appears before John in the garments worn by the high priest – a long robe coming down to His feet. (Ex 28:4, 29:5, Lev 16:4). Truly Jesus is our High Priest living ever to make intercession for us!
 - b. The golden band upon the garment was also a sign of royalty (1 Sam 18:24, 24:5, 12, Ez 26:16). Zechariah prophesied that Messiah would be a priest upon a throne (Zech 6:12-15). Here Jesus is pictured in just such a manner, as a type of Priest-King – which is ultimately our calling as well – to be kings and priests unto our God!
 3. Physical descriptions of Jesus:
 - a. *“His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow”*-- identifies that Jesus judges with perfect wisdom (Pro 20:29).
 - b. *“His eyes like a flame of fire”*-- Jesus' burning eyes of fire depict two interrelated truths: (1) He is burning with jealousy for His bride and (2) He is burning in vindication, determined to release wrath upon His enemies.
 - c. *“His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace”*-- Jesus will tread the nations in fiery judgment at His second coming.
 - d. *“His voice as the sound of many waters”*-- In His glorified state, Jesus' voice sounds exactly the same as the Eternal Father's. Psalm 29 and Job 37
 - e. *“He had in His right hand seven stars”*-- identified in verse 20 as the seven angels, or messengers, that give leadership over the seven churches that Jesus addresses in chapters 2 and 3.
 - f. *“Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword”*-- Jesus' words cut and reveal truth – a joy for those who love truth and pain for those who do not.
 - g. *“His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength”*-- The Apostle Paul declared that the very glory of the Father shines forth from the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6). When John peered on Jesus' face, shining like the sun, He peered into the glory of God.
- C. Restatement and Explanation (1:17-20) *17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 20 As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*
1. *“Fell at His feet as dead”*-- (Dan 8:27) (Hab 3:16) (Joh 18:6). John, the beloved Apostle, the one so intimate with Jesus that he had lain his head upon His chest, is so overwhelmed by Jesus in the fullness of His glory that he passed out!

2. *“Do not be afraid”*-- Jesus, in perfect tenderness, while manifesting unknown power, reaches down to John and comforts His old friend. He placed His right hand upon him in order to impart strength, enabling John to stand in the glory of His presence.
3. *“I have the keys of Hades and Death”*-- identifies Him as the only One with the power of an indestructible life (Heb 7:16). This proclamation is also a declaration of the surety of Christ’s victory over all the powers of darkness.
4. *“Write the things...”*-- Jesus clarifies the time frames to which the visions relate: John’s past (all that had just happened to him with voice calling from behind and with the seeing Jesus and being overwhelmed), John’s present (the messages of Jesus to the seven churches) and the distant future (the remaining prophecy of the book).
5. The Revelation of Jesus in His Own Words
 - a. First, we must understand that whenever God makes a statement about Himself it is in order to draw men into a greater revelation of the knowledge of Him.
 - b. When He refers to Himself as the “Alpha & Omega,” the “Beginning and the End” and the “First and the Last,” He is making powerful statements about who He is regarding the destiny of man and the whole of creation.
 - i. He is speaking in regard to the entirety of creation, the whole of the universe. He is saying that He is the beginning and end of all things. In Him and through Him and by Him all things consist (Col 1:16-17, Heb 2:10).
 - ii. He is also speaking in regard to the destiny of men. He is saying I am the Alpha and Omega of every individual destiny of every man. “When men find Me, they find their “Genesis” and their “Revelation.” All the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, truth, purpose, and significance are all found in Him (Col 2:3).
 - iii. He is the first in creation. He is the uncreated God. Jesus is the perfect human expression of the Father. The perfect image of the invisible, uncreated God (Col 1:15).
 - iv. He is the first begotten of all creation, the only begotten of the Father (Psalm 2:7, John 1:14, 1 John 4:9). He was “begotten before the worlds were formed” (Nicene Creed). Jesus is begotten of the Father not created but birthed from His being as one who is coequal with Him.
 - v. He is the first born from the dead. He was the first in resurrection to ascend to the throne of God. He led a host of those who had been captive in Hades, Abraham’s bosom, to throne of God (Eph 4:8-10). He is the first born from the dead.
 - vi. He is the Omega, the Last, and the End in that He is the last begotten of the Father. He will be the only One in existence who is begotten of God.
 - i. There will never be another like Him. He is the finality of the expression of God as a man. There is not another. God came as a man one time in His Son. All the fullness of the deity dwells in Jesus (Col 2:9) and there will not be another besides Him (Acts 4:12).
 - ii. He is the finality of all of creation. In other words the boundaries of all creation exist within Him. He is the beginning of creation and the ending of creation. Not the ending in the sense of creation ceasing to exist. But rather that creation cannot exist outside of Him. “In Him all things consist” (Acts 17:28, Col 1:17).