



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

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"Heptad-itis"
 (1:4-8)

Heptad means *a group or series of sevens*. Scholars talk about the heptadic structure of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It means there are a lot of groupings of 'sevens' in the book. In all there are at least fifty-two 'sevens' in the book, such as:

- Seven Churches (1:4,11,20; 2; 3).
- Seven Seals (5; 6).
- Seven Trumpets (8; 9).
- Seven Bowls (15; 16; 17:1; 21:9).
- Seven Lampstands (1:12, 13, 20; 2:1).
- Seven Spirits (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).
- Seven Stars (1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1).

- Seven Lamps (4; 5).
- Seven Promises to the Overcomer (2;3).
- Seven Horns (5:6).
- Seven Eyes (5:6).
- Seven Angels (8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1;21:9).
- Seven Thunders (10:3, 4).
- Seven Thousand (11:13).
- Seven Heads (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7; 9).
- Seven Crowns (12:3).
- Seven Plagues (15:1, 6, 8; 21:9).
- Seven Mountains (17:9).
- Seven Kings (17:10,11).

There are seven blessings, or beatitudes:

1. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear and keep those things... (1:3).
2. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (14:13).
3. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments (16:15).
4. Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9).
5. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection (20:6).
6. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book (22:7)
7. Blessed are they that wash their robes (22:14).

There are seven **I AM** statements made by Jesus. Four times He calls Himself the Alpha and the Omega (1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13). The other three **I AM** statements are:

Revelation 1:17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "**Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.**"

Revelation 1:18 **I am** He who lives, and was dead, and behold, **I am alive forevermore...**

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. **I am the Root and the Offspring of David**, the Bright and Morning Star."

Seven is the number of completion. God created the Heavens and the earth in six days then rested on the seventh day because His work was completed.

It is appropriate that sevens are prominent in the Revelation because it is the book that gives us the completion of God's plan for the human race. Everything that began in Genesis consummates in the Revelation.

The first heptad is the **seven churches**:

Revelation 1:4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia...

These **seven churches** were all in the region we know as modern Turkey. In chapters two and three we will learn the identity of these seven churches. Notice that this is one letter written to *all* of the seven churches. It's a clue that there is more going on than Jesus simply addressing seven local churches.

Another clue is that these were not even prominent churches. You'd expect Him to write to Jerusalem; or to Antioch.

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We are to see the heptad of letters as representing something far greater, something far more complete.

The letters have at least four levels of meaning:

1. They had a provincial application: These seven were actual churches existing in John's day which Jesus wrote to for *correction and/or commendation*.
2. The letters always have a present application: These seven were representative of characteristics in all churches in the first century and every subsequent century. At the end of each letter is the exhortation to hear what the Spirit says **to the churches** - notice the plural. Though each letter is written to a church, each is to *all* the churches.

3. The letters always have personal application to every Christian in every age. They each say, **he that hath an ear...**
4. The letters have a prophetic application: These seven, taken in the order Jesus put them, are representative of successive periods of church history. They lay out the entire history of the church from the first century until the Second Coming of Jesus.

Revelation 1:4 John, to the seven churches which 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,

Grace to you and peace are so common a greeting we may not think about how remarkable it is to be able to say it!

1. **Grace to you** should take me back to the understanding I am totally undeserving of saving – a sinner by nature and by choice. But God has saved me by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
2. **Peace** is what I can therefore experience as a human being. I am at **peace with** God and I can have the supernatural **peace of** God as my companion in the turmoil of life.

John then tells you that each Person of the trinity greets you. God the Father is presented as **Him who is and who was and who is to come**. We immediately think of this as describing Jesus because it mentions a coming. But a Jew would immediately and correctly understand this to refer to YHWH. It's a statement of God the Father's eternal existence as the great I AM. Plus you're told in the next phrase that He is seated on **His throne**. Though co-equal in deity, the Father sits on His throne and Jesus sits at His right hand. So this first greeting is from our Dad!

Next we are greeted by **the seven spirits who are before His throne**. This does not refer to seven different beings. Remember that 'seven' is the number of completion. The **seven spirits** refers to the fullness of God the Holy Spirit.

Again a grasp of how the Jews read their Scriptures would help us. When describing the Holy Spirit's effects upon the Messiah, Isaiah wrote,

Isaiah 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.

It is a seven-fold description of the one Person of the Holy Spirit. He's the **Spirit of the Lord** (1), **wisdom** (2), **understanding** (3), **counsel** (4), **might** (5), **knowledge** (6), and **the fear of the Lord** (7).

By the way... These are the things we need to live a balanced, victorious life. Seek them from the Comforter – not professionals!

Next the Lord, Jesus Christ, is described:

Revelation 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth...

We see Jesus in His past, present, and future ministries:

1. **Faithful witness** looks to Jesus' past. **Witness** is martyr. Jesus came and was **faithful** to accomplish His **witness** on the Cross for the human race.
2. **Firstborn** is a word of preeminence. It means Jesus rose from the dead as the first and preeminent Person to never die again. It means others will follow and rise as a result of His resurrection. We live presently in the power of His resurrection as we await His return.
3. In the future the Lord Jesus will be the literal **ruler over the kings of the earth**. It's what this book describes as soon coming upon the earth.

Revelation 1:5 ...To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

We rightfully tell people, *Jesus loves you!* It would be more meaningful to say, **Jesus loved you!** He **loved** you while you were yet a sinner and He proved His love on the Cross by dying for you. That is why I can say, **Jesus loves you**. His love does not depend upon your behavior and it can never change.

He **washed us from our sins in His own blood**. **Washed** can be translated *loosed* and is better understood that way. This is another

Jew-point – something we don't fully comprehend at first. The Temple priest applied the blood of bulls and goats to temporarily loose you from your sins. He didn't and couldn't apply his own blood. Jesus could and He did and we are loosed once-for-all from sin. We are declared righteous by His activity on the Cross.

Want a good definition of what it means to be a Christian? You were and always will be **loved** by Jesus and are **loosed** from the penalty and power of your sins. One day soon, either through death or at the Rapture, we will be loosed from the presence of sin.

Revelation 1:6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

This seems to be in a prophetic tense. It is understood to be presently true because it will surely come to pass when, in His Second Coming, we return with Jesus as **kings and priests**.

We will minister with the Lord **to His God and Father**. Think of it this way: Jesus delights to do the will of His Father. **He will bring us into that same position of serving our Dad.**

To Him will be **glory** when He is fully revealed at His Second Coming. Then He will have **dominion forever and ever** from that time forward.

Revelation 1:7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Clouds isn't referring to the weather on the day of the Second Coming! It means at least three things:

1. It reminds us of His ascension into the **clouds** and the testimony of the two men Jesus would return in like manner. This is a real, physical return – not some mystical or spiritual return.
2. A cloud of glory, called the *shekinah*, always shone around God. At His return there will be an amazing light-show!
3. In the book of Hebrews the saints of God are described as a great cloud of witnesses. Many saints will be returning with the Lord.

While saints return from Heaven with the Lord, many will be on the earth – survivors of the Great Tribulation. Among **every eye** who sees Jesus will be **they who pierced Him**. It's a quote from Zechariah 12:10. It's a specific reference to the surviving Jews on earth. It's a way of letting us know that the Lord will return to the nation that once rejected Him but are then readied by the Great Tribulation to receive Him as their Messiah and King.

Why will **all the Gentile tribes of the earth mourn because of Him**? **All** can mean *every manner of* or *as many as*. It might mean that Gentiles from *every manner of* tribe will **mourn** – *as many as*



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but this would clue-in a Jewish reader that the Lord, Jesus Christ, was and is God.

Almighty is used ten times in the New Testament and nine of those uses are in the Revelation. It is the Greek word *pantokrater* and means something like *the one who had his hand on everything*. It's a word of controlled oversight.

Speaking of sevens... Some scholars point out that we are getting close to the end of six-thousand years of recorded human history. By their calculations it would have been about 4004BC on the calendar when Adam was created. Add the two-thousand or so years from the birth of Jesus to now and you're at 6000 years. We know that the kingdom Jesus is coming to establish will last one-thousand years.

We've been on earth for six-thousand years... The kingdom will last another one-thousand years... That's a total of seven-thousand years! If seven is indeed the number of completion we would expect eternity to begin after seven-thousand years of human history.

Are we nearing the heptadic end? Maybe; maybe not! Either way Jesus' coming to Rapture His church is always imminent.

Calvary Hanford
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