

# “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”

## Revelation 1:1-20


### Revelation 1:1-6

<sup>1</sup> The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near.

<sup>4</sup> 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, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup>and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 

**E**ven people who haven't seen the *Star Wars* movies know that they are science fiction and not history. Well, the Book of Revelation is another example of a work that should be approached with a basic understanding of its style and purpose. The Book of Revelation is prophecy, not prediction.

Just as *Star Wars* doesn't really depict what happened “a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away,” so Revelation doesn't depict exactly what will happen a long time from now, when heaven comes to earth. Rather, it represents a type of literature called “apocalyptic,” which was especially popular from around 200 B.C. to A.D. 200.

Using symbolic images and language, the Book of Revelation is meant to point to truths about God’s judgment at the end of human history and about what is needed for salvation.

What are the conditions for salvation? Above all, do not abandon your fervor and devotion for God, your “first love” (see Revelation 2:4). Think of the love between newlyweds. The effort to set up a household, adjust to one another’s habits, and develop a new work schedule often occurs under difficult situations, yet “first love” causes the couple to remember these early times with humor and tenderness.

Don’t we all know “religious” people who seem burdened and grim as they try to please God? Perhaps they have lost some of that first love that brings joy into even difficult tasks. Perhaps they need to make some adjustments in the way they live, in order to renew and nurture their love for God.

What about you? Are there moments when you can pause and allow Jesus’ presence to fill your heart? It might be a reflective moment after Mass, or a brief moment of quiet that gives you a chance to rest in the Lord’s loving embrace. Is there a sin that calls for repentance? Seek forgiveness, and know the energy that comes from a heart made light by Jesus’ love. Be attentive to the Spirit, and come back to your first love!

“Lord of my salvation, perfect lover, gladden me with more of your love and presence. May I never forget that you are the source of life.”

## **Revelation 1:7-11**


<sup>7</sup> Look! He is coming with the clouds;  
every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him;

and on his account all the tribes  
of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

<sup>8</sup> “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

<sup>9</sup> I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

<sup>10</sup>I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup>saying, “Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” 

If you were to list the top three blessings you would want to ask from the Lord, would one of those blessings be endurance? How about fortitude or patience? We know we would need such gifts if we were going to face suffering or trials. But it’s not something we like to think about. We’d rather ask for health, wealth, and happiness. In other words, we’d rather avoid suffering than ask for the gifts we need to face it gracefully.

But the truth is that no matter how hard we try to avoid them, difficulties have a way of finding us. They are simply a part of life on this earth. So rather than try to run away from the inevitable, perhaps we would do better to ask what would bring us the most hope, strength, and comfort when suffering does come our way.

John tells us that he is our brother in tribulation, and that he shares in our patient endurance. Evidently, he has found a way to deal with his own difficult life—a life of exile and deprivation on the island of Patmos. So what was it that helped him? Nothing more than the firm conviction that Jesus was going to come back! Jesus Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the almighty and everlasting one, will be revealed to all the nations, even those who have

rejected him and his followers. No matter what he may face, John knows that this hope will never change.

Let's face it: daily life can be a grind. It's not hard to feel worn down by all of our responsibilities, overwhelmed by worries, or agitated by injustices. As a result, we can forget that our lives are enfolded in Christ. We are not alone, trudging through life's difficulties with no one to help us. We are in the midst of God's eternal plan. Jesus is with us, and his Holy Spirit is working in and through us! Because Christ really is coming again, our lives have a purpose and a goal beyond simply making it to the end of a day or completing all the items on our to-do list.


When you pray today, lift your eyes heavenward. Ask Jesus to give you a vision of the end, when his promises will be fulfilled and you will see him face to face. Imagine what it will be like when everyone sees him, and everything is put right. Let this heavenly vision inspire you and give you hope; let it strengthen you to endure patiently and even joyfully whatever may come your way today. After all, you know the end of the story!

“Jesus, let me never forget that you are coming back. Fill my heart today, so that the vision of your heavenly glory will lift me up and give me a new perspective. Come, Lord, and give me fortitude, patience, and joy!”

## **Revelation 1:12-20**

<sup>12</sup> Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. <sup>14</sup>His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, <sup>15</sup>his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his

voice was like the sound of many waters. <sup>16</sup>In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.

<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup>and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. <sup>19</sup>Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this. <sup>20</sup>As for the mystery of the seven stars that 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. 

One of the goals of apocalyptic writings like the Book of Revelation is to encourage believers in times of trial. But sometimes it can be hard to understand how we are to be encouraged by the bizarre or even frightening images painted by John in this book: a dragon with seven heads, a beast rising out of the sea, the sun disappearing while the moon turns to blood. Likewise, it can be intimidating to imagine Jesus with burning eyes, a voice like the ocean, and a sword coming from his mouth. This is not your typical shepherd carrying a little lost lamb on his shoulders!

It’s important, as we read this passage, to remember that this description of Jesus is not intended to be a portrait of him, as one might think about the *Mona Lisa* or a photograph of the president. This description is meant to paint a word picture of various attributes of Christ—attributes that we would do well to remember when we face difficulties or confusion.

It’s also helpful to know that the imagery that John used to describe Jesus in this passage was well known by the readers of his time. Much of it, in fact, bore striking similarities to popular writings from the Hebrew Bible: the Book of Daniel, for instance, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. These images are meant to evoke Jesus’ power,

authority, and divinity. They are meant to communicate his greatness, so that those who have given their lives to him will know that he is with them and will protect them.

The encouraging point for us is that John sees Jesus in all his power and glory—and we can see him as well! In our prayer, when we go to Mass, or when we read the Scriptures, we can go beyond the mental exercise of affirming our faith in Jesus’ victory. When we turn to him, he will reveal himself to us and fill our hearts as well as our minds.

What will we see? Maybe we will experience the sword of his word exposing and cutting away our sin. Maybe we will feel the piercing gaze of his look of love. Perhaps we will hear his voice calling us with the strength of the ocean. We might be impressed by his purity and his desire to make us pure as well. Perhaps we will be overwhelmed by his kingly authority over our every anxiety. Jesus knows what we need in each particular moment of our lives, and he is eager to reveal himself to us and care for us.

When you pray today, expect Jesus to show himself to you. He wants you to know him. He wants you to take strength in the fact that he who is all powerful is standing with you no matter what you may be going through.

“Jesus, I turn toward you to gaze on your beauty and your glory. Reveal yourself to me, Lord, so that I will come to know you and love you with all my heart.”