

REVELATION 1:1-3

The first three verses of Revelation begin the introduction to the final book in the Bible. These first three verses of Revelation have been called the “prologue”, “preface”, “superscription”, and “introduction”.

We could say, as some interpreters do, that the actual introduction to the book of Revelation is really **chapter 1**. Dr. John Walvoord, for example, includes the entire chapter under His introduction section (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 35-49).

It is true that **verses 1-3** initially launch us into this final Biblical book and from a pure grammatical standpoint, **verses 1-2** form one sentence and **verse 3** is its own sentence.

However, what we are really after is the meaning of every text, not so much our outline. It is the text that is inspired and not our outline of the book. Since this is the last book of the Bible, we may expect that the opening verses will be very special.

As John begins this final book, it is immediately apparent that there are some unusual and important introductory revelatory truths that are revealed to us:

INTRODUCTION REVELATORY TRUTH #1 – God reveals His inspired title to the book.
1:1a

The last book of the Bible begins with its own title. The title of the book is seen in the opening part of **verse 1**, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” or transliterated “The apocalypse of Jesus Christ” (Αποκαλυψις Ιησου Χριστου).

There are five grammatical observations we may make concerning this opening phrase:

(Observation #1) - There is no actual article “the” before the noun Revelation in the original.

Most English translations open the book by adding it - “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (NASV, NIV, KJV). However, the Greek texts (UBS & Textus Receptus) do not actually have an article “the” in their introduction and the text should read “A Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In Greek, when you do not have an article before a noun (anarthrous construction), the emphasis is to the character and quality of something (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 149).

This is significant because what this interpretively means is that **everything in this book of Revelation will reveal things about the character and quality of Jesus Christ. The entire book of Revelation will be a Christ exalting book and His character and quality will be fully and majestically revealed.**

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(Observation #2) - The actual noun “revelation” or “apocalypse” means to reveal or unveil or uncover something that was previously hidden, covered or concealed.

The Greek word “revelation” (apocalypse) occurs only 18 times in the N.T. and **is only used 1 time by the Apostle John**, which is here in **Revelation 1:1**. The other uses are **1 time** by Luke; **13 times** by Paul and **3 times** by Peter (Luke 2:32; Romans 2:5; 8:19; 16:25; I Corinthians 1:7; 14:6,26; II Corinthians 12:1,7; Galatians 1:12; 2:2; Ephesians 1:17; 3:3; II Thessalonians 1:7; I Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13; **Revelation 1:1**).

The actual word “apocalypse” comes from two Greek words: **1)** The preposition “apo” (απο) which refers to motion that moves away from an object; **2)** The verb “calypto” (καλυπτω) which means to veil, conceal or cover something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 47-48 & 22). When these two words are combined to form one word the meaning is to move away (apo) the covered or concealed veil (calypto). Revelation is not to be a book of secret codes; it is to be a book that is clearly understood.

Just the use of the word Revelation (apocalypse) means it is supposed to be clearly understood. God’s purpose for Revelation is not to conceal the future; it is to clearly reveal it. Dr. McGee said that when he heard a Christian say he did not understand the book of Revelation, it made him wonder because this was a book supposed to be clearly understood (Vol. 5, p. 887).

(Observation #3) - The word “revelation” is singular and not plural.

Although we often hear people call this book “Revelations” the grammatical fact is that it is one single “revelation.”

What I understand this to mean is that this is one single prophetic book, which God wants His church to understand as one complete single unit in its entirety.

God expects His church to prophetically understand this whole book. He wants us to understand this prophecy as a unit, flowing out of the end of the Church Age into the Great Tribulation on into the Millennium and then to the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem. This book causes us to realize God has a prophetic plan for the Church, the Nations and Israel.

(Observation #4) - The source and object of the “revelation” is Jesus Christ .

Carefully observe it is The Revelation “of Jesus Christ.” Now the actual Greek construction “of Jesus Christ” is a genitive case construction (Ιησου Χριστου). The exegetical question of this construction is whether or not this means the book of Revelation is all about revealing Jesus Christ (objective genitive = He receives the action) or is it a book in which Jesus Christ is revealing everything that will happen (subjective genitive = He produces the action). **The fact is both are true. Revelation reveals amazing prophetic truth about Jesus Christ and it reveals amazing prophetic things directly from Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:10).**

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In Revelation, there is an unusually high use of the anarthrous (without an article) construction of the name Jesus (1:1, 9, 9; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10, 10; 20:4; 22:16). This fact clearly lends itself to everything in this book reflecting His character and quality.

What we do see from this is that Revelation is not a book that is “the Revelation of the Apocalypse” or “the Revelation of Armageddon” or “the Revelation of the Great Tribulation” or “the Revelation of the Antichrist” or “the Revelation of John,” **it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ!**

This book will uncover and reveal some amazing things about Jesus Christ. He will be seen as Savior. He will be seen as God. He will be seen as Israel’s Messiah. He will be seen as majestic King of Kings. This book is about and from Jesus Christ.

Eugene Peterson said, “The Revelation gives us the last word on Christ and the word is that Christ is center and at the center. Without this controlling center, the Bible is a mere encyclopedia of religion with no more plot than a telephone directory” (Cited from Simon Kiestemaker, *Revelation*, p. 76).

(Observation #5) - The double name order in this opening verse is Jesus Christ and it is **only found in chapter 1 - (1:1, 2, 5).**

This is an important observation to make. When we track the name “Jesus” through the book of Revelation, we discover that John uses the name 14 times (**1:1, 2, 5, 9, 9; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10, 10; 20:4; 22:16, 20, 21**). When we track the name “Christ” through the book of Revelation, we discover that John uses that name 8 times (**1:1, 2, 5; 11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6; 22:21**). When we track the name “Lord Jesus” through the book of Revelation, we discover that John uses this combination 2 times (**22:20, 21**).

However, the only place where the combination “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) is used is in **three verses of chapter 1 - 1:1, 2, 5**. Now the question is why? Why does John open the book with this combination and then never use it again? **The answer is due to a proper chronology and theology in the Christological future program of God.**

The noun “Jesus” refers to the fact that He is the Savior and the noun “Christ” refers to the fact that He is the Jewish Messiah. **The word order means that Jesus Christ is the Savior/Messiah.** The reason why John uses this word order here in **verse 1** is because John is informing the Church that God’s program in the Church Age is primarily aimed at saving and developing Gentiles and then it will swing back to Israel. This is exactly how the book of Revelation unfolds. The Church is gone by chapter four and as Revelation moves on the emphasis moves toward Israel (**i.e. Rev. 7:4-8**). As the book continues to move toward its conclusion, the emphasis is on the noun “Christ” (**11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6**), who is Israel’s Messiah.

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One other point needs to be realized concerning the names of Jesus Christ found in Revelation. According to William Graham Scroggie, in 1522, Martin Luther said one reason he shied away from Revelation was because he felt that it wasn't focused enough on Jesus Christ (*The Great Unveiling*, p. 43). It is truly baffling that Luther could have concluded this because in Revelation, Jesus Christ is magnified by His names as in no other book. For example:

1. The faithful witness. 1:5
2. The firstborn of the dead. 1:5
3. The ruler of the kings of the earth. 1:5
4. The Alpha and the Omega. 1:8
5. The Lord God who is and who was and who is to come. 1:8
6. The Almighty. 1:8
7. The son of man. 1:13
8. The first and the last. 1:17
9. The living One. 1:18
10. The One with the keys of death and hell. 1:18
11. The One who holds the seven angels in His right hand. 2:1 / 1:20
12. The One who walks in the midst of the seven churches. 2:1 / 1:20
13. The One who has a sharp two-edged sword. 2:12
14. The Son of God. 2:18
15. The One who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze. 2:18
16. The One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. 3:1
17. He who is holy. 3:7
18. He who is true. 3:7
19. He who has the key of David and who can open doors no one can shut and shut doors
no one can open. 3:7
20. The Amen. 3:14
21. The faithful and true Witness. 3:14
22. The Beginning of the creation of God. 3:14
23. The Lion of the tribe of Judah. 5:5
24. The Root of David. 5:5; 22:16
25. The Lamb. (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1 and elsewhere 28 times)
26. The Lord, holy and true. 6:10
27. King of nations. 15:3
28. Lord God, the Almighty. 15:3
29. The Word of God. 19:13
30. King of Kings and Lord of Lords. 19:16
31. The bright and morning star. 22:16
32. Lord Jesus. 22:20, 21

The names used for Jesus Christ in Revelation are majestic, as no other book in all of Scripture.

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INTRODUCTION REVELATORY TRUTH #2 – God reveals the process of how we got Revelation. **1:1b**

God not only wants us to know that He gave us this prophetic book, He also wants us to know exactly how we got it. As we carefully examine this **first verse** we see four parts to the process of us getting this book of Revelation:

Process Part #1 - God the Father gave this entire revelation to God the Son, Jesus Christ.
1:1b

Process Part #2 - God the Son, Jesus Christ, gave the entire revelation to one of His angels.
1:1c

- 1) According to **Revelation 22:8-9**, part of the responsibility of this angel was to show all of these prophetic things to John and to other prophets.
- 2) According to **Revelation 22:16**, this was Christ's own Personal angel.

I believe that angels play a key role in the church and all through the program of God. They especially will play a key role in the prophecies of Revelation. I do not believe that revelatory angels are operative today. No revelatory angel has come to reveal things to man after this revelation here.

Process Part #3 - Christ's Personal angel gave the entire revelation to the Apostle John.
1:1d; 22:6, 8

Actually, as we journey through the book there will be times when Jesus Christ will speak directly to John, particularly in chapter 1 (**i.e. 1:11, 17-20**). In these instances, Christ will not show John things via His angel.

It seems to me one reason why His angel becomes so vital in revealing things to John is because once John is able to see prophesy taking place in the future, Jesus Christ is preoccupied with everything that is taking place. For example, it would not seem logical that when John is given the ability to see Jesus Christ open a scroll that begins the judgments of God on earth (5:7; 6:1), that He would stop and take time to ask John if he were getting all of this for his written record. This angel became a vital link to being involved in showing John all of these things.

Process Part #4 - The Apostle John wrote the entire revelation for God's people and God's Churches. **1:1e, 11; Revelation 2-3; 22:16**

Notice carefully and precisely that the **author of the book of Revelation is God, not John, but John is the one singled out by God, from all others, to write Revelation.**

God obviously wants us to understand that every word of this book came from Him via this process. We may also assume that if this book is carefully studied in the church God will powerfully bless it.

INTRODUCTION REVELATORY TRUTH #3 – God reveals His purpose of Revelation.
1:1c-e

God plainly states that the purpose of this book is “to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place.” There are several key points of observation which we need to see:

Observation #1 - It is God’s intent that the book of Revelation be seen and known and understood in its entirety . **1:1c**

The infinitive “to show” comes from a verb (δεικνυμι) which means to show something in the sense of an exhibition of something so it may be clearly seen, known and proved (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 99). The aorist tense of the infinitive means that this was to be one great showing.

What this means is that God certainly does not want this book sealed from understanding, which He says (**Revelation 22:10**). He gave this book to be clearly understood and defended in its entirety. All the prophecies are to be understood as contributing to one entire prophetic book.

Observation #2 - It is God’s intent that the book of Revelation be understood by His servants .
1:1d

Now some have taken the position that the term “bond-servants” (δουλος) refers to a special group of believers like the prophets. However, in view of the fact that it is written to the seven churches and is to be understood in those churches, we believe that Revelation is written for the New Testament believer.

It is clearly not God’s intent that everybody in the world will grasp the book of Revelation, but it is His intent that every true believer and true servant of God understand it. The actual word “bond-servant” is one that means to be subject to someone and bound to them. This book of Revelation will actually move God’s people to be more and more subject to Jesus Christ, recognizing all He has done and all He intends to do.

Observation #3 - It is God’s intent that God’s people realize these things will happen “shortly.” **1:1e**

The Greek word “shortly” is tachei (ταχει) from which we get our English word tachometer. This word may be understood as referring to that which will happen soon, quickly or speedily. This word has to do with two things:

- 1) It has to do with time .
- 2) It has to do with speed .

John specifically uses a form of this word in John 11:29 where he refers to speed of time - “she arose *quickly*, and was coming to Him.”

The controversy surround the word “shortly” is this:

- 1) Did John mean that the events in Revelation would happen quickly? Does he mean, for example, that once the Tribulation begins, events will happen in a rapid-fire sequence and will happen very fast in time?
- 2) Did John mean that the events in Revelation are soon to happen? Time, especially in a book like Revelation, is from God’s perspective.

In all reality both things are true. From God’s apprehension perspective these events are near, and this point teaches us the immanent nature of the predicted events.

INTRODUCTION REVELATORY TRUTH #4 – God reveals the special nature of Revelation. **1:1f**

The word translated “communicated” (σημαίνω) in the NASV, “make known” in the NIV and “signified” in the AV is very important. The word literally means to give a “sign” in order to show something or indicate something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 405). This is very important because it teaches us that much of the information we will receive will be given to us in signs. **Revelation is a very unusual book in that much of the truth will be communicated to us through signs and symbols.**

We will have a legitimate right to look for symbolic events and information in the book of Revelation. Dr. H. A. Ironside wrote, “This book is a book of symbols” (*Revelation*, p. 13). Now we must always keep in our minds that the symbols used in the book are symbols of futuristic reality. Figurative language used in the book of Revelation is figurative of actual futuristic facts. Many times the text will explain the interpretation (**i.e. Revelation 1:16/20**).

Dr. Clarence Larkin said, “There are more signs and symbols in the book of Revelation than any other book of the Bible, but they are explained there or in some other part of Scriptures” (*The Book of Revelation*, p. 3).

INTRODUCTION REVELATORY TRUTH #5 – God reveals the reliability of the writing of Revelation. **1:2**

Fact #1 - Everything John witnesses and writes is the Word of God.

Fact #2 - Everything John witnesses and writes is the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Fact #3 - Everything John witnesses and writes he personally saw .

Now the verbs in this verse “bore witness” and “saw” are both aorist tense (pointed action in past time). This has raised the question as to whether or not John saw everything in this book before he wrote it or whether he wrote everything as he went along and then came back and added **1:1-3** or whether he wrote everything as he went along. We are of the opinion that he wrote everything as he went along for the simple reason that John is writing on a scroll, not on individual sheets of paper. The reason he uses the aorist (epistolary aorist) is because by the time the churches would get this book, it would be new to them but past time to John.

What this verse does clearly communicate is that this book of Revelation is no apocalyptic fairytale; this is a very reliable futuristic inspired reality.

INTRODUCTORY REVELATORY TRUTH #6 – God promises a special blessing in regard to this prophetic book of Revelation. **1:3**

We may carefully observe that Revelation is classified in this verse as a book of “prophecy.” The word “prophecy” (προφητεία) is a word that literally means to say before or to foretell. This book is going to foretell God’s future program.

The word “revelation” (αποκαλυψις) shows up once in the book in **verse 1**. But this word “prophecy” shows up seven times and four of those times are in the final chapter (**1:3; 11:6; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19**). This will be a book that will reveal God’s future.

Now in this **third verse**, there is a key feature which sets this prophecy aside from another and it offers an incentive for those who take this book of Revelation seriously and the feature is promised “blessing.”

The word “blessing” (μακαριος) is one that refers to a deep, inner joy and happiness that can only come from God. Gerhard Kittel, in his massive 10 volume study of Greek words and their theological meaning, observes that this word speaks of a deep joy which occurs when one is on the verge of receiving deliverance or salvation in the program of God (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, pp. 367-368). G. Abbott-Smith adds, one who is blessed is one who is in a happy state because God has made a declaration of blessing on someone (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 275).

Now this verse promises to give a special blessing in three ways:

- 1) Blessed is the one who continually reads this prophetic book of Revelation. This would refer to the one who was responsible to publicly read Revelation in the church. Why is a special blessing promised? Because God knew most would avoid this book.
- 2) Blessed are those who continually hears Revelation. This would refer to the congregation who listens to the book, giving careful attention to listening to it. The present tense of the participle “hear” indicates that this was a continual process, not a one time moment. During the days of the early church, the church, at best, had one copy of the book so people would gather at church for the purpose of carefully listening to the Word, not a band.
- 3) Blessed are those who continually heed and guard this book of Revelation. The word heed (τηρεω) is one that refers to carefully watch over, guard, keep and preserve (*Ibid.*, p. 445). A special blessing of God is promised to those who learn this book and then defend it. The events will happen regardless of what we do, but we will receive a special blessing if we choose to learn it and defend it.

Dr. H. Meyer said one thing is very clear; no matter how difficult this book may appear to be, with words like this we dare not pass over it (*Revelation*, Vol. 11, pp. iii).

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In the book of Revelation there are seven promised blessings:

1) Blessed are those believers who read, hear and heed the words of the prophecy. **1:3**

What we certainly see here is that one could be a believer and miss these promised blessings. There is an active pursuit of understanding God's Word, specifically Revelation, that is demanded.

2) Blessed are those believers who die in the Lord in the Tribulation. **14:13**

3) Blessed are those believers who are righteous when the Lord returns, specifically by identifying and distancing one's self from things demonic. **16:15**

4) Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. **19:9**

5) Blessed are those believers who have part in the first resurrection. **20:6**

6) Blessed are those believers who obey the things found in this book. **22:7**

Naturally the obedience factor will vary depending on the status of the believer. If he is in the Church Age, the obedience factor will be seen specifically in **chapters 2-3**. If the believer is in the Tribulation, there are key obedience factors that will come into play.

7) Blessed are those whose robes have been washed. **22:14**

In this world are many motivational books on a variety of topics which people will purchase and devour. But there is no single book that makes the promise that it can give you the literal blessings of God. Revelation does make that statement.

As we journey through Revelation, we will realize "the time is near." The article "the" before the noun "time" (καιρος) means the specific season of prophetic time is set and it is near (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 226).

The adverb "near" (εγγυς) means this next prophetic time unit is very near, because it is the next time event in the program of God after the Church Age.

REVELATION 1:4-8

Verses 4-5 continue in giving us more introductory data concerning Revelation:

INTRODUCTION REVELATORY TRUTH #7 – God reveals the writer of the book of Revelation. **1:4a**

The apostle that God used to write the book of Revelation was John. At the time John wrote Revelation, he was, as William R. Newell said, the “sole survivor and representative of the apostles” (*Revelation*, p. 8).

He was very familiar with the seven churches to which he wrote and all of the churches knew him. In fact, from the writings of the early centuries of the Christian church, as Robert Thomas observed, “John the apostle spent the last years of his life in this province of Asia, which was in the western part of modern-day Turkey. He apparently left Jerusalem in the late sixties of the first century A.D. ... and went to Asia where he became the recognized leader of the Asian churches” (*Revelation 1-7*, p. 64).

John had been pastor of the church in Ephesus and he was so respected that all he needed to say when penning Revelation was “John” (Ἰωάννης). What we do know is that there were times in his life and ministry when he identified himself, not just as “an elder,” but “the elder” (II John 1; III John 1). We also know from Paul’s statement that John was one of the “pillars” of the church (Galatians 2:9). John was the last living apostle and was highly regarded by all to the point that when he pens Revelation he simply identifies himself as “John.” **One reason why he does name himself is because this writing will be so different from his other writings.** He wanted the people to realize that even though the style was different it was the same Apostle John writing it.

Obviously, one reason why God had specifically kept John alive, when all other apostles were dead, was for the purpose of writing Revelation.

In fact, **twelve times in this book of Revelation the Apostle John is told to “write”** (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). What we see from this is the importance that God puts on His written Word. God sovereignly kept John alive so that he could write the final book of the Bible - Revelation.

Since this book is addressed to churches, we must assume that God demands a careful study of His written Word in the church. A church that neglects to carefully teach the written Scriptures cannot possibly be a church that pleases God and obviously will miss out on many of God’s blessings.

INTRODUCTION REVELATORY TRUTH #8 – God reveals the recipients of the book of Revelation. **1:4b**

The book of Revelation was written “**to the seven churches that are in Asia.**” In the Greek text, this point is very emphatically stated, which means that God expects us to see and understand this point.

The Asia mentioned here is not the Asia we know today, which takes in the entire northeastern portion of the world, from the Pacific Ocean west all the way to Europe and Africa and includes some 48 nations like China, India, Japan just to name a few.

The Asia to which John refers was the Roman province that existed in the first century. This territory was located northeast of the Mediterranean Sea; today it is known as modern day Turkey which is partially in Europe and partially in Asia.

Most of the work of taking the Gospel to Asia and establishing churches had been accomplished by the Apostle Paul. In Acts 19:10 we learn that Paul ministered extensively in Asia on his third missionary journey and had been so intent on communicating God’s Word that “all” had heard. The Greek construction indicates that all kinds of people heard God’s Word, not every single individual.

The Apostle John had a ministry that in its early days was primarily aimed at Jewish people out of Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9). However, now he is writing this final book of the Bible for those who are primarily Gentile people. This is significant. The logical apostolic candidate to write a prophecy for Gentile churches would have been Paul, but God’s choice was John.

By this time in his life, John was respected by all of these Asian churches and obviously his theology had expanded from a Jewish focus to a Gentile focus. God gives His assignments to His choice, not ours. John was chosen by God to write this final book of Revelation.

What this also shows us is that God’s program was by this time primarily focused on Gentile churches and even apostles who had previously been focused on Israel were now zeroed in on the church. This book of Revelation is to be taught and understood in the church for that is precisely the recipients of this writing.

Now we may notice that the recipients of this prophecy have been specifically narrowed down to seven churches. The obvious question is why seven? Why not six or fifteen? Why seven? Why did John write to these seven churches which are all specifically listed in **verse 11?**

It is possible that John is writing to an exclusive and exact number of seven churches; however, it is not Biblically logical that this is what he is doing. The number seven is a very important number in the book of Revelation and is a very important number in the entire Bible.

According to my calculations, there are over 50 references to sevens in Revelation which cannot be a mere coincidence:

- 1) Seven churches. 1:4, 11, 20
- 2) Seven Spirits. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
- 3) Seven golden lampstands. 1:12, 13, 20; 2:1; 4:5
- 4) Seven stars. 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1
- 5) Seven seals. 5:1, 5; 8:1
- 6) Seven horns. 5:6
- 7) Seven angels. 8:2, 6; 15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9
- 8) Seven trumpets. 8:2, 6
- 9) Seven thunders. 10:3, 4
- 10) Seven diadems. 12:3
- 11) Seven heads. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9
- 12) Seven last plagues. 15:1, 6, 8; 21:9
- 13) Seven bowl judgments. 15:7; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9
- 14) Seven mountains. 17:9
- 15) Seven kings. 17:10
- 16) Seven specific promised blessings: 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14

Clearly the number seven is more than an exclusive and exact number.

When we carefully track this number through Scripture, we may observe that **the number seven represents God's completed work**. This numerical fact may be observed in the first book of the Bible - Genesis.

This was true in the matter of God's creation (Gen. 2:2); He completed His work by the seventh day. This was true in the matter of God's judgment (Gen. 7:1-4); seven more days would bring the time to completion for judgment. Later Joseph led Egypt through seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, which again represented what God would completely do in regard to His program with Israel (Gen. 41:14-37).

When we travel through the O.T., we see that Jericho was circled seven times which was the completed number God demands; Naaman, who was a leper, dipped himself in the Jordan seven times which was the completed number for healing;

Clearly the number seven is a critical number of completion. It cannot be a mere coincidence that when Paul writes his letters to churches, he writes to seven churches - Romans; Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians and Thessalonians. **When we come to Revelation, it becomes quite clear that this number seven is a key Biblical number of completion.**

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Because of this, it is our belief that **the seven churches of Revelation are selected because they represent the entire and completed work of God in the Christian Church Age of Grace.**

These were seven literal churches who faced literal problems and pressures, but they also represent the entire scope of the problems and pressures of the completed Church Age. Since they do represent the complete work of God for the entire Church Age, each church must be viewed from four different perspectives:

(Perspective #1) - Each church was a literal, historical church with literal, historical problems.

(Perspective #2) - Each church will be a type of church found in any period of time in the Church Age.

(Perspective #3) - Each church will be a part of the time picture of the completion of the entire Church Age.

(Perspective #4) - Each church will be a picture of individuals who comprise and complete any church.

These seven churches in Revelation will represent the entire and complete work of God in the Church Age. This Age started in Acts 2 at Pentecost and will end at the Rapture.

INTRODUCTION REVELATORY TRUTH #9 – God reveals the introductory greeting.
1:4c

The introductory greeting of “grace” and “peace” is typical of an opening salutation. What is not so typical are the three prepositional phrases that follow and develop the greeting. But when we consider that this is the last book of the Bible, and much of it will have to do with the wrath of God, these two nouns are critical because they guarantee at the outset that no believer will ever experience the wrath of God. It wasn't that the people in these seven churches didn't deserve God's wrath, it was that God's grace had saved them from it.

Grace is the undeserved, unearned, unmerited favor that God freely gives to a mentally and morally bankrupt sinner when He saves him the moment the person believes on Jesus Christ. Peace is the positional and personal tranquility one has knowing one is forever in a right relationship with God.

This book of Revelation is no threat to one who has experienced God's grace; as Dr. J. Vernon McGee said, “We don't need to be frightened as we study this book; we can have the peace of God in our hearts” (*Revelation, Thru the Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 890).

(28)

INTRODUCTORY REVELATORY TRUTH #10 – God reveals the source of the grace and peace that His people have. **1:4d–8**

The following prepositional phrases totally and completely emphasize that **the grace of God that saved believers and brought them into a peaceful relationship with God is solely and totally the sovereign work of God.** The relationship that any person has with God is due to the work of the entire Godhead, the entire Trinity.

There are three stated Divine originating sources of the grace and peace that God gives which grammatically are given in the form of three prepositional phrases, each of which begins with the preposition “from” (απο). G. Abbott-Smith says this particular preposition “from” has to do with both motion and origin (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 48). Grace and peace originate from God and comes as a result of a motion or movement from God. He is the source.

Divine Source #1 - The source of grace and peace is God the Father. **1:4d**

The text says that grace and peace is “from Him who is and who was and who is to come.” We know this is a reference to God the Father by virtue of the fact that the second prepositional phrase connects us to the Spirit and the third prepositional phrase connects us to Jesus Christ.

The description given here concerning the Father is one that certainly refers to His eternity. Any Being “who is and who was and who is to come” is unlimited in time, and has moved within time and will move in future time. God is the God of the past, the God of the present and the God of the future. **If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, what you need to know is that God the Father moved within the time frame of your life and gave you His grace and peace. In fact, Jesus said, “no one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44).**

Much in this book of Revelation is futuristic and prophetic and every bit of it is time-controlled by God the Father. Also carefully notice that it is stated that God “is to come.” God will come and God will judge and when it all happens, only those who have experienced His grace and peace will be safe.

Divine Source #2 - The source of grace and peace is God the Spirit. **1:4e**

We may observe that the second source of our grace and peace is a Divine Being identified as being “the seven Spirits who are before His throne.” Now, of course, the question arises concerning the identity of these seven Spirits; specifically who are these Spirits and to what does this refer.