

*A PERSONAL
REVELATION*

By

Eric Fugett

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A Personal Revelation

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I dedicate this book to my mother, who taught me to love God,

To my brothers and sisters, who always make life interesting,

To my grandmother, who filled my childhood weekends with joy,

To my wife and kids, who now fill my life with joy,

To my Sunday school teacher Edna Malone, who made learning the Bible a fun experience,

And to my father, who recently died of cancer. I am so grateful we had grown closer over the last two years.

Now, more than ever, I realize that tomorrow is not promised, and I need to value the time I have with my family today.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I am an electrical engineer by trade and a student of the Bible by desire. The book of Revelation has fascinated me since my early youth. I was brought up attending church services and my mom had me reading the Bible at a very young age. I can remember reading the book of Revelation as a teenager and wondering what “all that stuff” really meant. My opinions on the symbolism in Revelation have changed many times throughout the years and even over the course of writing this book. I won't spoil it for you by telling you what I now believe. You can read the book and decide for yourself.

I have made some startling discoveries, concerning the book of Revelation, that have not been brought to light until now in this book. I have also compiled a few ideas, which have been expressed throughout the ages, into an informative, yet thought provoking writing. Because I am an engineer and not a theologian, I am not trying to make the book of Revelation fit my point of view. I simply take the numbers and symbols in the Bible, and use them the way anyone trained in problem solving would. Because I am an engineer and not a fiction writer, I use the Bible, history and logic to make practical sense of the book of Revelation. If you are seeking the truth about the book of Revelation, then I know you will enjoy reading this book.

My premise in writing this book is simple. If God says things are going to happen at a certain point in time, then that is the time period to look for the answers. I suppose this approach is the reason why it took me about a year, to both research and write this book.

There are too many people to thank for all of the support that I have received while writing this book. Each of you knows who you are, and I do thank you. You have been sounding boards, brainstorming partners, editors, advisors,

and great encouragers. I have to give a special thanks to my family, who have been more than patient with me while I have embarked upon the great task of writing this book.

Most of all, I would like to thank God for the wisdom, insights, people, and information, that turned a strong desire to know the truth into the reality you are about to read.

INTRODUCTION

I have read several commentaries on the book of Revelation in the Bible. Some I have found to be a little far-fetched, while others have contained truths and insights that I have found helpful. However, I felt that they were still missing vital elements of the message that I thought were important.

A few of the commentaries have confirmed what I believed to be true all along: that you must use the Bible to unlock the mysteries of the book of Revelation. Having said this, I would encourage you to be a Berean (Acts 17:10-12) and keep your Bible handy as you read this book. Then you can examine the Scriptures that I will refer to and draw your own conclusions. I believe it also helps to study history so you can better understand the things that have happened that can affect your understanding of the book today. One of my goals in writing this book is to use the Bible and history to bring you to a deeper conviction about the existence of God and the infallibility of His Word.

Having said this, I want you to know that I do not have a Ph.D. in religious studies, nor have I ever taken any religion classes. I do not think you need a degree in religion, or the ability to decipher Greek or Hebrew to understand most of the book of Revelation. I have used a Bible CD with several Bible translations, Bible dictionaries, and a concordance to find most of what I needed. I have also used the Internet, writings of the historians, Josephus and Tacitus, and other books that I have read to help me gain a better understanding of the book of Revelation. Truth be known, my only qualification for writing this book is what was said about Peter and John in Acts 4:13, I am an ordinary, unschooled (theologically) man who has spent time with Jesus.

In this book, I will attempt to give you some spiritual insights and technical understanding while trying very hard not to bore, confuse or overwhelm you. I want you to know that I have prayed for insight each time that I have sat down to write this book. I am greatly encouraged by the way that God has answered those prayers. I am humbled by what I see each time that I read what has been written.

It is my hope that you will come away with a greater understanding of God's patience after reading this book. Likewise, I hope that Christians and non-Christians will come away with a greater urgency to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Lastly, it is my goal to challenge your thinking, and your life, in regards to Christianity in the 1st Century versus Christianity today. I hope that you enjoy reading this book as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

PERSONAL REVELATIONS

1. What images come to mind whenever you think about the book of Revelation?
2. What in your opinion makes this book so interesting to so many readers?
3. What do you think it is that makes this book so hard to understand?

Chapter 1: The Quest Begins

- 1 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,
- 2 who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.
- 3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.
- 4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,
- 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
- 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.
- 7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it 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."
- 9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.
- 10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,
- 11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."
- 12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,
- 13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.
- 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.
- 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.
- 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.
- 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

- 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.
- 19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.
- 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Revelation chapter one wastes no time in identifying a few key items:

- 1) the originator of the message;
- 2) the author of the book
- 3) the method and date of delivery;
- 4) to whom the book is written;
- 5) the importance and urgency of the message;
- 6) what is to be gained from reading it;
- 7) what the response to it needs to be;

ORIGINATOR OF MESSAGE

2 Timothy 3:16-17 reminds us that all Scripture is God breathed or inspired by God. If you don't believe the Bible is from God, then you obviously have not read it and compared what it says to history. Hopefully, as you read this book, it will increase your faith in God and His Word.

Now according to Revelation 1:1, the message is what God, the Father, gave Jesus, the Son, to show His servants **what was going to happen in the near future**. Verses four through five provide us with another snapshot of who the book is from. A greeting is sent from The Eternal Father, The Holy Spirit, and Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who now reigns supreme. Verse eight tells us that the one speaking is the Alpha and the Omega: the one who is, who was, and who is to come. Or simply put, as in the first two words of verse eight, the "I Am" (Exodus 3:13-14).

The number seven, in verse four, where “the seven spirits before his throne” are mentioned, represents completeness or fullness. God gives us seven days for a complete week. Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dream in Genesis chapter 41 to mean seven full years of abundant crops and seven full years of famine. Jesus tells Peter in Matthew chapter eighteen that he is to forgive his brother seventy-seven times or completely every time. We are each given a portion of the Holy Spirit to dwell within us when we become Christians (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). On the other hand, Jesus was given the fullness of God to dwell within Him (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). Thus, the seven spirits represent The Holy Spirit.

Needless to say, there are a number of accepted rules for numbers in the Bible and we will touch on a few of them later. We can waste time arguing over some of these precepts, but the Bible makes it very clear in 2 Timothy 2:23-26 that we are not to do this. Therefore, if you disagree at this point, I simply ask that you be patient with me and continue in this study. I am taking a fresh approach as I go through the book, praying for insight and understanding from God The Father. I only ask that you do the same.

AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

The writer of the book identifies himself as John, the Lord’s servant. The author of the book is obviously the apostle John. This is made clear by the way that he starts all three of his major books, the gospel of John, 1 John, and Revelation. He makes sure that people understand that he is a personal witness of The Lord Jesus Christ and the things that he (John) will be passing on to the readers. In each of those books he tells us that he is testifying to the events that he is relaying to us. However, let us keep in mind that 2 Peter 1:20-21 states that the true author of every book in the Bible is God.

METHOD & DATE OF DELIVERY

The deliverer of the message was an angel of God. There are several passages in the Bible about angels. When we study the topic of angels in the Bible, we learn that angels can be servants of God or catalysts of evil. In Job chapter 1, we learn that Satan is also an angel. In Mark chapter 5 and other passages, we learn that evil, rebellious angels are called demons. Revelation 22:8-9 clearly states that this messenger is an angel of God, a servant along with all of us who hold to The Word of God. He is the one who walks John through the spiritual realm that we read about in this book. As for the date that John received the message, it is found here in chapter one. I will give you the exact date in chapter 13. However, I want to give you an opportunity to figure it out before you read chapter 13. So, I will explain what some of the symbols mean in the upcoming chapters.

RECIPIENTS OF MESSAGE

As was mentioned earlier, the book of Revelation was written to Jesus' servants. In verse four, we are told that it was written to seven churches in Asia. The churches are identified as being in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Since we are still in the introductory stage of the book, and have yet to enter into prophetic language, we can assume the seven churches to be the audience for the book. Other books of the New Testament were written to specific churches as well. Let us keep in mind, that their scope was not entirely limited to the specific churches. They were obviously circulated to the other churches (2 Peter 3:16-17).

As was pointed out previously, seven can also represent completeness, so it can also be interpreted as a message to The Church. Therefore, the book was written to 1st Century Christians, who were about to undergo great persecution at

the time. That does not mean that, as with the other books of the Bible that were written to a specific people at a specific time, we today cannot gain universal truths and insights for our daily living.

IMPORTANCE & URGENCY OF MESSAGE

The book is entitled “Revelation” or “Apocalypse,” which means to disclose or make known. What makes this revelation extremely important is that we are told it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is the only book in the New Testament that is prophetic in nature. Other books in the New Testament do contain prophecies, but none of them are primarily prophetic in their scope. For example, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 19, and Luke 21 all contain prophetic passages, but none of these books are written primarily with the intent to predict and forewarn of future events.

The urgency of the message cannot be denied. In the first three verses John uses the words “**soon take place**” and “**time is near**” to describe the events that he will be writing about. We are told in verse seven that Jesus is coming. If we combine that with the time frame that has already been discussed, then the 1st Century Church must have been relieved, excited, and alarmed as well. It brings to mind such parables as “the tenants,” “vineyard workers,” “talents,” “wedding banquet,” and the “ten virgins” to name a few. In some of his letters, the apostle Paul also seemed to indicate that **Jesus was coming back soon**. The description that Paul gives of Jesus’ return in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is very similar to what John is describing here in Revelation 1:1-10. We have an angel delivering the message, Jesus coming in the clouds, and a trumpet being sounded.

Chapter one ends with prophetic language. John is brought into the presence of his best friend. Here John shows us both the humanity and deity of Jesus. In his initial

description he calls Jesus “son of man,” which depicts his humanity. These words were used by God to describe two prophets in the Old Testament; Daniel in chapter eight, verse seven, of his book and Ezekiel several times throughout his book (as in chapter three for example). These words are used by Daniel to describe Jesus in Daniel 7:13-14 and Jesus often referred to himself as the son of man in the gospels.

Jesus’ attire appears to be that of either a king or high priest since he is wearing a robe with a sash around it. As is mentioned several times in the book of Hebrews, Jesus is both our King and High Priest (Hebrews 7:1-8:3). However, John also sees Jesus in His glorified state of Deity and the sight is more than he can bear. He, like everyone else who comes into the presence of God, is terrified by what he sees (Isaiah 6:1-7, Ezekiel 1:25-28).

After John is reassured, he is instructed to write about what he has seen, what is currently going on, and what will take place later. This is one of those passages that people tend to spin off in a hundred different directions in their interpretations. Let’s just keep the time frame to the 1st Century and see what we can gain from that perspective.

We are now told what some of the first symbols we encounter in the book represent. The seven stars are the messengers (leaders) of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are seven churches. The seven churches mentioned were seven actual churches. But was the message limited to them? Probably not, especially since this was a message that the Christians in Jerusalem, in particular, needed to hear. Continuing the theme of the number seven, it was probably sent to all of the churches and their leaders.

REASONS FOR READING

What was to be gained from reading the book or hearing it read at that time? God's blessing for one thing (vs. 3)! The Christians who read or heard this book would have been reminded of God's favor upon them, and his plans to bless them in the near future. Not only that, but they would have gained a better understanding of His grace (vs. 4), which Titus 2:11-14 tells us is the crucifixion. After reading Revelation, you should definitely have a greater appreciation for Jesus' death on the cross. In verses five and six, we also learn about the love that God has for us, and his plan to use us to minister to others (this reminds me of the passage of Scripture in Jeremiah 29:11).

Another thing 1st Century Christians would have received from reading the book is peace. In a time of turmoil, when everything looked hopeless, Revelation made it crystal clear that their God was still in control. Revelation speaks of judgment on the enemies of God and a "coming out", so to speak, for Christians. This had to bring them the peace (vs. 4) that can only come from God.

What is to be gained from reading or hearing it now? Pretty much the same things that the readers or hearers in the 1st Century would have gained. First, a greater understanding of God's favor upon us, and the great blessings that lie ahead for us one day when we are finally with Him in heaven. Second, we should be moved by God's grace as we learn more about the powerful sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. Third, we should meditate on the love of God and the great plan he has to use each of us individually and collectively to help others. Fourth, we will be reminded that God is still in control, even in a society where evil is so prevalent. Last, but not least, we can learn to have peace when everything around us seems to be falling apart.

INTENDED RESPONSE

How were the 1st Century Christians to respond to this book? The same way that we, as Christians today, are to respond to it. We need to take to heart what is written in this book (vs.3), because the time for each one of us grows nearer everyday. When I was a student, during both high school and college, death was something that I gave very little thought. However, now that I've been married over ten years and have a teenage son, I have come to a greater understanding of the brevity of life. Death is more real to me now than it has ever been. I realize that on any given day my number could be called. Therefore, my relationship with God must be the top priority of my life on a daily consistent basis. My hope is that if you haven't already realized this, that you will soon come to realize the importance of a close, daily walk with God.

PERSONAL REVELATIONS

1. How do you feel about the Trinity?
2. How do you think you would respond if you came face to face with Jesus?
3. How seriously have you been listening to what God is saying to you lately?