

## EP21: Revelation Introduction P1

### Introduction

#### *Who, What, Where, When & Why*

To start, we need to do the customary who, what, where, when and why to frame for ourselves as much background information on this letter as possible. This gives us our context for applying this letter to our lives.

#### **Who is the author?**

According to **1:1-2**, the author of the written letter was John who received his message from an angel who received it from Jesus who received it from the Father.

It is uniformly accepted that based on the style of writing and the testimony of early church fathers, that John was none other than John the apostle who wrote the Gospel of *John* as well as **1, 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> John**, the same apostle who spent time as the overseer or shepherd of the church at Ephesus.

However, as with every Biblical book that has massive prophetic implications for our lives, the scholars have tried to discredit not just its authenticity but its author. With that said, the early church fathers are likely to have a better grasp on the truth of authorship than some scholar who makes critiques 2,000 years after the book was penned through judging the writing style based upon their understanding of the usage of ancient Greek without reference to how the Spirit used the language.

#### **Who is the audience?**

According to **1:1** and **22:6**, the primary audience is the bondservants of Jesus, and the message is a testimony to the churches.<sup>1</sup>

#### *The Bondservant*

In those ancient days, people became slaves for various reasons, though usually it was to pay off a debt. A Jew, however, could only be enslaved by a fellow Jew for 6-years, for in the 7<sup>th</sup> year they had to be set free. But if for the love of his master, a slave decided that he did not want to go free, he could choose to bind himself to his master as a permanent slave. His master would then bring him to the Tabernacle of God, and he would lean against the doorposts and his master would pierce his ear with an awl and place an earring in the piercing. The earring indicated to everyone that he loves his master so much that he is a voluntary slave, willing to do everything that his master wishes, and will serve his master for the rest of his life. Hence, Jesus is referred to as a bondservant of God the Father,<sup>2</sup> and He has the piercings to prove it.

In like manner, those who now are believing in **Yahweh** are the true bondservants of God. They have bet their lives on His name and have chosen to let **Yahweh** be their **Adonai** (Lord), the Banner which flies over their lives, their good Shepherd, their Healer, their Provision, their Righteousness, their ever-present Comfort, their Peace, their Deliverer—the one who sets them free, the one who sets them apart for

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<sup>1</sup> **Revelation 22:16**

<sup>2</sup> See **Exodus 21:1-6; Isaiah 42:1, 53:11**

Himself, the one who is Jealous for them, and the one who wields the host of Heaven for His purposes in their lives.<sup>3</sup>

The bondservants of God are even now believing that He is the Master over all the details of their lives. They have found a home in His love; and in His love, they have chosen to stay forever, doing only what He wants them to do when He wants them to do it (or at least they are progressing along this path).<sup>4</sup> In short, a bondservant trusts the character and nature of **Yahweh**, as He, **Yahweh**, has revealed it.

This is remarkable. What the Spirit communicated is that He inspired this letter not for those in the religion of Christianity at large, and it is not for unbelievers. But it is written to those who have found their safety and security deep in the *agape* love of **Yahweh**.

Hence, all the **WARNINGS** about apostasy and falling away. It is a personal letter encouraging the bondservants of God to never lose **HOPE** to always **ENDURE** and to not follow the others (those slaves abiding in the household of God) in their idolatrous and blasphemous ways.

## What?

Specifically, according to **1:1** and **22:6**, this letter was written to show the bondservants of Jesus what **now** must come to be. With “must” being in the *present active indicative*, we know that it has all been set into motion, it started, and will therefore all happen just as He declares it will happen, it is just a matter of time.

In **1:19**, we get a recapitulation of the “what.” John is told to write the things he has seen, and things which are and the things which **now** shall be hereafter.

The “what” incorporates the **Code** in that God is revealing things that John has seen (the *past*<sup>5</sup>), and things which are a present reality as of the time of the writing and every moment of our now,<sup>6</sup> and the things that will **now** be hereafter—those things that have started to unfold into reality.

In addressing “what will now come **to be**,” the Spirit did **NOT** use the *future* tense, but the *aorist*. He is wanting us to understand that we are not just looking at a now/then, present/future scenario where we fix our eyes on a certain future date for things to happen. **Rather, we are looking at an unveiling of events that are occurring now and somewhat progressively into the future.** In other words, it speaks more of the occurrence of the events, the fact of the events, and not so much the timing or duration of many events; but at the same time points forward to things that have not yet occurred.

<sup>3</sup> These descriptors are all aspects of the name of **Yahweh**, the name upon which we are to bet our lives: **Yahweh Nissi, Yahweh Raah, Yahweh Rapha, Yahweh Jireh, Yahweh Tsidkenu, Yahweh Shammah, Yahweh Shalom, Yahweh Yasha, Yahweh Mekoddishkem, Yahweh Qanna, Yahweh Sabaoth.**

<sup>4</sup> Note: the pathway of a bondservant is through the valley of the shadow of death, it is not an instantaneous reality. To develop the level of trust in a relationship, one must progress through this valley where God is allowed access and permission to kill everything that stands in opposition to His rulership. Some parts of the journey go quicker than others, but it is a journey and not something we can instantly choose, but something we now and continually choose.

<sup>5</sup> Note: when the *aorist* tense is paired with an *indicative* mood, it indicates the event has already occurred.

<sup>6</sup> Many verbs are rendered in the *present* tense are *participles* and denote something continuing or occurring every moment of our now, from times past to times present.

## REVELATION: IT IS THE UNVEILING OF WHAT HAD BEEN CONCEALED

There is another aspect to the “what” (or the purpose of this letter), and it is found in the first words of the text: “*Revelation of Jesus Christ*.” The word “revelation” is a translation of the Greek word, “*apocalupsis*” (Apocalypse) and it means “unveiling”—the unveiling of Jesus Christ—the revealing of what had been deliberately hidden or concealed.

Throughout **Revelation**, we will see aspects of Jesus that were never quite so clear as they are in the unveiling. We find out that He is **Yahweh**, and He is glorious. He sees everything, knows everything, judges everything, initiates everything, and is therefore fully apprised of every little detail of all humanity: both the lives of those in His household, as well as those who have made their abode in the world.

We see Him unveiled as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; the ultimate authority who sits on the throne of heaven; the Lamb of God who is worthy; the Lion of Judah—the mighty warrior who conquers; the coming one; the **Adonai** (Lord) God of the prophetic word; the groom to the bride; the righteous Judge over all of creation; the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the source of David (the heir to his throne); the glory of God which burns brightly throughout all eternity; the tree of life; the hidden manna; and the bright morning star.

### *Full of Drama*

Even though we might get caught up in all the drama (international warfare, cosmic chaos, economic collapse, disease, pestilence, death, judgment of all things, a one world government, a religious system that seduces the masses, a prophet who performs supernatural miracles, an evil dictator who demands to be worshiped as God, and so on, and so on), we must keep our eyes on Jesus. This story is about Jesus and His ultimate victory over every enemy that has ever stood against His Beloved ones.

## THE NARRATIVE REVEALS THAT JESUS IS NOT JUST THE VICTOR, HE IS VICTORY!

### Where?

In **1:9**, John says that he had been exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching the word of God. This is where he received the visions, and it is also where he likely wrote most of it down. But John utilizes the past rendering (“had been”),<sup>7</sup> which is why it is thought that some of **Revelation** was written after his release. But according to multiple passages he was commanded by God to write<sup>8</sup> and it is clear he was writing simultaneous with his hearing and seeing.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is likely that he recorded the vision in prison while on the island, and then added the history and some other details while in Ephesus.

<sup>7</sup> “had been” is rendered in the *aorist middle indicative*. Note on John being a **bondservant**. The *middle voice* indicates that John actively chose to be on the Island of Patmos, he chose to be in prison, for the testimony of Jesus. In other words, John was not afraid of man, and he did not stop testifying regardless of the consequences. Thus, in effect, John chose to be there. John did not see himself as a **victim** of Rome or anyone else, but as a **bondservant** who would not bow down to the dark powers that be, regardless of the personal implications.

<sup>8</sup> **1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 12, 14; 10:4; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5**

<sup>9</sup> See **Revelation 10:4**

Patmos is one of the clusters of islands in the Aegean Sea, anciently called the "Sporades." It is now called Patino or Patmoso. It is some six or eight miles in length, and not more than a mile in breadth and only about fifteen miles in circumference. It has no rivers and is totally barren. It has very few trees and little to no land for cultivation.

It is commonly believed that John was banished to this island by the Roman Emperor Domitian, about 94 A.D. Domitian's goal was to silence John without making him a martyr (but that is not for want of trying). Domitian had witnessed the spread of Christianity and heard the message of the coming King which made the most powerful man in the world paranoid and obsessed with stomping out both the message and the messengers. He initiated the second persecution of the church by Rome and slaughtered many church leaders, even relatives of Jesus.

The story is told that Domitian ordered the proconsul at Ephesus to boil John in a big wok of oil, but miraculously John did not cook. After this miracle, which was a huge imperial embarrassment, Domitian was afraid to kill John. Logically, banishment seemed like the next best thing, especially since Domitian was going around trying to convince everyone that he was a god and deserved to be worshiped, and John was living proof that his claim was a lie. And no better place could have been selected for banishment than the lonely desolate, barren, uninhabited, seldom visited island of Patmos. It had all the requirements of a perfect place of exile and punishment for someone that Domitian wanted everyone to forget.

## When?

Emperor Domitian died on September 18, 96 A.D., a short time after he started the second persecution of the church. Then, on the same day of his death, his successor Emperor Marcus Nerva came to power and shortly thereafter John was released from exile where he returned to Ephesus. Hence, it is believed **Revelation** had been received, finalized, and published between 96-97AD.

## Why?

First, the Called, Chosen, and Faithful ones (the **bondservants**) are the bride of Christ, and Jesus is their lover. And what lover does not want to be fully known. He fully knows us, and He wants us to fully know Him in return. Therefore, He has decided to let those who genuinely want to know Him to see Him in all these different ways so they can understand **WHY** they should trust their entire heart, mind, soul, and strength to His loving mastery of their lives.

Second, the church had gone through, was going through, and is perpetually destined for times of intense suffering, and the **Revelation** was written to give the bride of Christ **HOPE**. Not just hope of our ultimate victory, but more importantly of our ultimate Victor. The hope of every true believer is in Jesus Christ, which is why **Revelation** is an unveiling of our Victor.

When we understand who we are dealing with and get a glimpse of His majesty, power, authority, and rule, we should have no fear about our future (much less fear about our now). Our champion is **Yahweh Adonai**, the Lord God, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. No one compares. He is the ultimate, and those who now and continually believe in Him belong to Him. They are His beloved.

## Historical Setting

It is also important to understand the times in which John wrote, as it frames for us what the original audience would have understood. During this period, the church faced aggressive persecution, not just

from Rome but from the Jews.

Imperial Cultic Worship. The Emperor required all who lived under Roman rule (except for those who were granted an exclusion, like the Jews) to venerate him as a god. They did this by once a year showing up at one of the temples dedicated to the Emperor and burning a pinch of incense while declaring that Cesar is Lord. An official register or log was kept of those who came.

Thus, any believer's refusal to worship Cesar as Lord was easy to discover, making them targets for persecution; and the Jews made sure they were the ones pointing the finger. In fact, it is apparent that the Jews fronted much of the hostility against believers (we will see this in the letter to Smyrna). Jews often turned believers into the authorities claiming that since they did not actually follow Judaism, they were not Jews and were not exempt from Emperor Worship.

Trade Guild Idolatry. There was also a huge problem with the idolatry required by the local trade guilds, which impacted a believers' daily life. Each occupation had a guild (akin to modern day unions): masons, woodworkers, blacksmiths, and so on. And each guild had a god or gods that they honored whom they believed prospered their trade. Thus, if a person wanted to work a trade, they had to give honor to the guild god(s). No honor, no work. These conditions made it exceedingly difficult for a believer to find work and feed his family. Hence, all the admonitions in the seven letters addressing idol worship, eating foods sacrificed to idols, and sexual immorality. Clearly the pressure was so intense that many were compromising their beliefs to survive.

## ***Figurative or Literal***

An extremely difficult challenge with all apocalyptic (**End Times**) literature is to figure out what we are to take figuratively and what we are to take literally. For instance, in chapters **2-3** Jesus utilizes a lot of imagery and **Code** in His letter to the 7-churches, but overall, the message seems to be grounded in the believer's day-in and-day-out experience. But there is a sudden shift when we get to **4:1-2**, and this shift establishes for us our primary perspective, the lens thorough which we are to view this letter.

## **THE VIEW FROM THE HEAVENS REALITY AS IT EXISTS IN THE UNSEEN REALMS**

*"I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.' Immediately I was in the Spirit."*

### **The View from Above**

John was taken up into heaven and He was in the Spirit; thus, he was able to see things from a heavenly perspective, from the view of the Spirit, not the view of the physical or the earthly. **And this perspective is to be our starting point.** This means that all things are identified and described as they exist in the unseen realm and how they are seen in the unseen realm. The information gets transmitted by God through the angelic,<sup>10</sup> and then it unfolds in the physical, or has its impact on the physical. Therefore, we

<sup>10</sup> **Revelation 22:16.** This is akin to how the law was communicated to Moses, from **Yahweh** to an angel(s), to

cannot take a ground up approach, from the earthly to the heavenly, rather we must take a top-down approach from the heavenly to the physical realms, for that is how John saw things.

This perspective is reinforced in all that we learn from the book of Job, the Death of King Ahab, the story of David and the Census, the sifting of Peter and the disciples by Satan, and Paul's infamous thorn in the flesh.<sup>11</sup> Everything originates from the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, and is put into effect via the agency of the angelic (**Yahweh's** ministering servants, including Satan and demons<sup>12</sup>), all of which then plays out on earth.

## What Does this Mean?

We must shake the temptation to make every image a metaphor for something on the earth in the physical realms, for we are seeing reality as it exists in the unseen realm of the spiritual world, with angels, demons, and all manner of heavenly beings.

Technically, we are to take this letter quite literally with the understanding that reality is communicated via pictures, metaphors, idioms, and so on. In other words, a description of some thing or event gives us literal insight into the image as it literally functions or exists in the spiritual realms and then how it all plays out in the physical realms. For example, describing Lucifer as a dragon or a serpent gives us literal insight into Lucifer's character and nature, and not so much what he physically looks like if he were to appear in the physical realms, but how his nature impacts our physical experience.

And with other images, we must use the **Code** or rely on references that a first century person would have fully understood. For example, not many of us get too excited thinking that we will be a pillar in the temple of God. But to the first century believers, this is a picture of strength, stability, and ornate beauty. They would have understood the metaphor and its significance, but we must reach back into time to grasp at our understanding.

**THE FIGURATIVE GIVES US INSIGHT INTO THE LITERAL AS IT EXISTS AND FUNCTIONS IN  
THE SPIRITUAL REALMS AND PLAYS OUT IN THE PHYSICAL REALMS**

## Chronology

At first glance, it seems that **Revelation** is largely written in an orderly chronological fashion (with a few throwbacks in time<sup>13</sup>), as it details seven seals that lead to seven trumpets that lead to seven bowls of wrath, and a lot of activity and drama intermixed in that structure.

However, in carefully analyzing the **Code**, specifically **Toolbox 1: Key Language Elements**, we find that certain activities disclosed by the opening of the seven seals, for example, are happening even now, as they are rendered in the *present* tense. Likewise, certain activities of the Beast, and the story of God's 2

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Moses. See **Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:38, 53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2**

<sup>11</sup> **Job 1-2, 38-42; 1 Kings 2:19-23; 2 Chronicles 18:18-22; 1 Chronicles 21:1; 2 Samuel 24:1; Luke 22:31-32; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

<sup>12</sup> **Hebrews 1:4, 7** (note: "all", meaning both good and bad angels)

<sup>13</sup> See **Revelation 12**

witnesses are also rendered in the *present* tense; and there are a few other activities rendered in the *future* tense (but oddly enough, only a few).

Sticking with the **Code**, as an aspect of *Expositional Constancy*, forces us to deal with this difficult issue of time and the rollout of events. Remember, Jesus told John to write the things he has seen, and things which are, and the things which **now** shall be hereafter.<sup>14</sup> This instruction must be our guide for approaching time. Some of what is written is happening every moment of the now, from the time John wrote. And some things shall be afterwards, after the now.

**THE CODE IS THE TOOL WE MUST UTILIZE TO UNDERSTAND  
HOW THINGS OUTSIDE OF TIME INTERACT WITHIN TIME.**

### ***Understanding Time in Prophetic Literature***

The easiest way to describe time in prophetic literature is that time is like a stacked multilayered cake where each layer is a different flavor—where each bite you take could have both present, past, and future implications all at the same time. The **Code** gives us the understanding of the various layers which are often presented in the same sentence or in the same storyline.

This is extremely difficult on our western minds which love to think linearly. Not many people like multicolored cakes, as all the flavors get mixed up and confuses our palette. We prefer one layer and one flavor at a time. But God loves diversity, and He loves to mix it up.

For instance, when Jesus first came on the scene, He went to a synagogue and He quoted **Isaiah 61:1-2**,<sup>15</sup> well, kind of. He quoted all of verse 1 and then He quoted only part of verse 2 and then stopped mid-sentence. He just conveniently dropped the end of it from the quote.

#### ***Isaiah 61:1-2***

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord ~~and the day of vengeance of our God;~~

Leaving out that last part “**and the day of vengeance of our God**” He put down the scroll and said: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Why? Because the first part of this passage spoke to His first coming, whereas that last part of the sentence speaks to Jesus’ Second Coming— “*and the day of vengeance of our God*”. And only the first part was fulfilled in their hearing. The second part is yet to come.

In communicating the scripture to the prophet Isaiah, the Spirit just layered it all in there together so the casual reader would not know or understand that these events would be split out over centuries of

<sup>14</sup> **Revelation 1:19**

<sup>15</sup> **Luke 4:17-22**

time. In fact, this explains why the Jewish teachers of His day, the disciples, and all of Israel were ready for the day of vengeance of our God. Everyone was ready for the Messiah to come and to bring judgment on the Roman occupiers and to set Israel free from their enemies. That is because they did not realize there was a prophetic time gap of thousands of years in this singular sentence.

As you can imagine, the non-linear treatment of time does not fit well into the **End Times** narratives and propaganda that has been marketed extensively in our generation.

**THE CODE GIVES US CLUES AS TO THE PROPHETIC TIMELINE, BUT WE MUST BE READY TO SEE FORWARD AND BACKWARD ALL AT THE SAME TIME.**

### **Days, Months, and Time, Times and Half a Time**

The Spirit loves numbers, and He apparently loves riddles. Thus, He utilizes 3 (perfect) descriptions of time, each of which adds up to the same number, 3.5 years (utilizing the Jewish calendar of 360 days). He speaks of 1,260 days, 42 months, and Time, times, and half a time.<sup>16</sup> He also utilizes 1,290 days (counting from the *Abomination of Desolation*) and 1,335 days (counting from the beginning of testimony), the overlap of which is 3.5 months.<sup>17</sup> But are these to be taken literally or figuratively, or both?

In our next podcast we will take a deep dive into the examination of this mysterious 3.5 number which shows up all throughout the prophetic text of **Revelation**.

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<sup>16</sup> Time being 1 year, times (time+time) being 2 years, and half a time being 6 months.

<sup>17</sup> **Daniel 12:11-12**