

# Revelation - Chapter 1

Revelation 1:1

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**T**he Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

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## The Revelation of Jesus Christ,

As you can see, this last book of the Bible, The Revelation, opens with an announcement of its title. While, technically, we can't say that this was necessarily the conscious intention of the author, the fact is, before there were any such things as title pages or titles, books were commonly known by their first words. So, in this particular case, its title is derived from the first word of the text, written in Koine Greek—*apokalypsis*, meaning “unveiling” or “revelation.” Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible presents the following close, yet simple to understand, analysis of this word.

**apokalupsis**, *ap-ok-al'-oop-sis*; *disclosure*: -appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed, revelation. From **apokalupto**, *ap-ok-al-oop'-to*;...to take off the cover, i.e. disclose: reveal.

So, what do we learn from the above? A word...a title, if you will, that clearly tells us, by the most unavoidable implication—not only in the original Greek, but in any known language—that all the symbols, representations, and prophecies found in this book are fully intended to be brought to the careful attention and scrutiny of the sincere Bible student and, as a result, understood (John 7:17; 1 Corinthians 2:14). In fact, on its face, the effect of the word itself seems to beckon our attention, as if it were inviting all who will to behold, know, and be blessed. What other purpose could the Apostle John have had—and that, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—in using such a clearly definable word as “revelation?” And as further, irrefutable support of what should be obvious to anyone who allows words to carry their own definitions, especially as they are used in the Word of God, consider Romans 16:25, 26, 2 Corinthians 12:1-7, Galatians 1:11, 12, Ephesians 1:15-18, and Ephesians 3:1-5 for other instances on how the KJV uses the same word. Needless to say, the consistency and intention are obvious in each one. So, what can we conclude from this? Simply, but adamantly...that every one of Revelation’s 404 verses are within reach of being rightly interpreted and understood, not one excepting! To suggest otherwise, no matter how carefully or supposedly well-intentioned the

# Revelation - Chapter 1

## Revelation 1:1

objection, directly contradicts the very meaning of the noun itself and its divine purpose for being in the very first verse. Worse yet, it presumptuously challenges an explicit declaration by the very Spirit of God that “All scripture” is implicitly “profitable” –which, of course, by the obvious providence of God, includes the Book of Revelation (2 Timothy 3:16).

Yet, interestingly, even after all this plain evidence found in just one simple, straightforward word, there are many who will still only grant that some or, at best, most of The Revelation can be understood, adamantly contending, “But not all of it!” Tragically, this groundless opinion, in reality, manages to do nothing less than cast doubt upon the whole of the prophetic book itself, leaving many to wonder which verses are truly interpretable and which are not—and maybe, ultimately, whether in fact anyone really has it right on any one of them to begin with. And then there are a number who, because of this ill-founded uncertainty, will commit to one person’s teaching, and some to another’s, depending upon which verses either one declares are interpretable and important and which are not. And further, by inference, doesn’t such an opinion, in the final analysis, unwittingly accuse God of authoring confusion—a possibility Scripture declares can never be the case (1 Corinthians 14:33)?!

**which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass;**

This part of the verse tells us something that readily affirms the point made in the first part. Consider the plain import of what is being said here—that is, that the Father gave “him”, Jesus, the prophecies of The Revelation to “shew” his people important future events (John 12:49, 50). Now, just on the merit of this declaration alone, I would ask, is it at all possible that one could legitimately and rationally doubt that all of the prophecies of The Revelation, with all their signs, symbols, and representations, can be understood—and that, each with its divinely-intended meaning? Let me ask the same question in another way. Is there any room here to think that God would “shew...his servants things which must shortly come to pass” through a mixture of clarity and ambiguity calculated to render some or most of it uncertain? There can be only one answer...Certainly Not! Instead, wouldn’t He always intend all that He reveals to His prophets to be understood, whether sooner or later? Forbid any suggestion to the contrary! Amos 3:7 declares:

# Revelation - Chapter 1

## Revelation 1:1

“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”

In other words, that which God is about to do, or that which His providence would choose to allow, He reveals to His people so they may be forewarned. Why? Because He wants us to always be ready and able to make an intelligent decision as to where we will choose to stand amidst the straight places and in the heat of battle. He wants us to know that we are not, in the least, alone—that He is, today, perfectly acquainted with every minute detail of every future event unto the end of time and, because of this divine advantage, is well able to offer us a gloriously redemptive outcome if we endure and wait patiently for the wonderful outworking of His infinite providence in all these things.

And frankly, in its most basic sense, don't we all know that to “show” (“shew”) a “thing”, as the verse declares, is to offer, exhibit, or produce something for the thoughtful scrutiny of another? Then the one who is shown the “thing” can, through careful consideration, reach an informed conclusion as to its meaning or value. In this case, add to this common action the vital assistance of the Holy Spirit, and all of that which is offered in the Word of God is readily within the reach of evaluating and then understanding, right (John 16:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Peter 1:19-21)?

Now, let's consider the word “*shortly*” —especially when compared with phrases of similar import found elsewhere in the book of Revelation, such as “*for the time is at hand*” (Revelation 1:3), “*Behold, I come quickly*” (Revelation 3:11; Revelation 22:7, 12), and “*Surely I come quickly*” (Revelation 22:20). Doesn't it, and they, more than imply a period of waiting, or anticipation, which consists of a relatively short duration of time—that is, that the events to be portrayed to the Apostle John in vision were to begin in his day and come “to pass” quickly unto the second advent of Jesus? Think of it this way...to each generation after Jesus' first advent to the world, every prophecy fulfilled serves as a strong reminder that “time” is transpiring dynamically and purposefully toward Christ's promised return. With each historic step, the second coming of Jesus is growing nearer and nearer. With the conclusion of each predicted event, one following another and many following many, the whole of the divine narrative of The Revelation continues to accelerate rapidly toward a consummate, heavenly end. And because of this, it can be readily said that throughout the many centuries from its Savior's ascension, the waiting church has doubtless been

# Revelation - Chapter 1

## Revelation 1:1

wonderfully enlivened and consoled by the solemn, yet joyful fact that it is living in the last period of time in this earth's history (Romans 13:11, 12; Hebrews 9:26; James 5:8; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:18).

### **and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:**

The word "signified" means that the prophecies contained within The Revelation were to be communicated to John through the use of signs and symbols. The word also occurs in John 12:33, John 18:32, John 21:19, Acts 11:28, and Acts 25:27, and is rendered "signify, signifying, or signified." In unbroken consistency, it properly refers to some sign, signal, or token by which anything is made known (compare Matthew 26:28; Romans 4:11; Genesis 9:12-13; Genesis 17:11; Luke 2:12; 2 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Corinthians 14:22).

Of course, the "he", here, refers to Jesus Christ, and it is likely that "his angel" is Gabriel. Such an assumption is quite reasonable since it would seem most appropriate that the same being who carried significant time-line prophetic messages to the prophet Daniel (who wrote the sister book to Revelation, the book of Daniel, in the Old Testament) would also carry highly significant prophetic end-time messages to the Apostle John (Daniel 8:16, 17; Daniel 9:21-23). Also to be considered is the fact that not only is Gabriel the angel who brought to Zacharias the "glad tidings" of the birth of the one who would usher in the first advent of Jesus—that is, John the Baptist, but he also visited Mary regarding her miraculously conceiving and giving birth to "the Son of God" (Luke 1:5-19, 26-35; Luke 2:8-11).

Revelation 1:1