

Revelation - Chapter 1

Revelation 1:2

Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Who bare record of the word of God,

The “Who”, here, refers back to the one identified at the end of verse 1—that is, John. Now, as to his identity, most if not all Christian commentators understand this to be the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20) —the evangelist and apostle, and the writer of the Gospel and epistles which bear his name, i.e., John, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John.

Without any fanfare, or even slight nuance of self-aggrandizement, John regards himself, by inference, as merely a witness of what he had seen and claimed only to make a fair and faithful “record” of it—almost in the same sense as one would in a court of law. He can only declare what he has seen, no more and no less—for embellishment, exaggeration, or personal opinion would constitute falsehood and a betrayal to the weighty purpose at hand. It’s almost as if this humble declaration served as his own signature, or a solemn oath, to what he is about to attest to. With this in mind, it must be noted that such an apparent sense of responsibility would not be necessary if what one is about to convey is of little consequence and could not be wholly understood. Interestingly, it was with this same sense of self-conviction, more than 20 years before in the gospel of John, that he wrote of himself in the third person as simply “the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.” John 21:24. But even before this in his gospel, with almost the same exact words as are found in this verse in Revelation, he declared of himself, “And he that saw it bare record.” John 1:34; John 19:35 (compare John 1:14, 15). Compare also the following places, where the apostle uses similar language regarding himself: 1 John 1:2; 1 John 4:14.

and of the testimony of Jesus Christ,

In light of what is declared in the first two phrases of this verse combined, we can discern that to John’s previous titles of evangelist and apostle he now, by inference, adds that of prophet—for the Revelation is a prophecy. To this end, he identifies himself as bearing witness to the “testimony of Jesus Christ” himself through “his angel” (see verse 1) —a declaration which exhibits the undoubted conviction of a calling to the office of a prophet.

Revelation - Chapter 1

Revelation 1:2

Regarding this, consider the language of the following scriptures: Exodus 4:12; Deuteronomy 18:18; 1 Samuel 3:1, 15; 2 Samuel 7:17; Isaiah 1:1; Jeremiah 1:9; Ezekiel 2:7; Hosea 1:2; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:3; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1. Sorry if it seems to the reader like a lot of references—and there are many more that could be added here. But the point is, they speak to the unassailable reality that John understood the “moment,” so to speak—that is, the imperative to which he was chosen, i.e., the calling of a prophet to deliver a message crucial to the welfare and guidance of the Church up unto the second coming of Jesus! Further, they also speak to the totally unfounded, sometimes seemingly defiant, stance of any (whether from the pulpit or not) who would even suggest that every last verse of the book of Revelation can’t be understood or were never intended to be understood! Throughout the entire Word of God, was ever a prophet called and sent that God did not intend to be understood (Amos 3:7)—of course, excepting as that prophet was willfully resisted (Ezekiel 12: 2; Matthew 13:13, 14; Romans 11:7, 8)?

One more important note regarding this second phrase of verse 2. The words, “testimony of Jesus Christ” refers specifically to the prophecies of Revelation conveyed to John as the result of the working of the Spirit of God (Revelation 1:9, 10; Revelation 12:17; Revelation 19:10). While it would seem that, because of the context, such would be obvious to the reader, being made clearly mindful of this fact should add a strong awareness of its inherent and divinely intended profitability as well as necessity in knowing. Jesus is identified, for the first time since his ascension, as specially, personally, and intimately addressing the New Testament Church in general, and of all time, regarding “things which must shortly come to pass.” See on Revelation 1:12, 13. Because of this, can we not readily expect to understand all of what is so tenderly and mercifully offered? Should we not take warning, as if seeing the visions and hearing the words from the Savior ourselves? See 2 Peter 1:19-21.

and of all things that he saw.

John experiences visual sensations almost twice as often as audio sensations.