

REVELATION 1:1-20

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Introduction and Salutation	Introduction and Benediction	The Prologue	Introduction	Prologue
1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-2 1:3	1:1-3	1:1-3
	Greeting the Seven Churches	Introductory Salutation	Greeting to the Seven Churches	Address and Greeting
1:4-5a	1:4-8	1:4-5a	1:4-5a	1:4-8
1:5b-7		1:5b-7	1:5b-6 1:7	
1:8		1:8	1:8	
A Vision of Christ	Vision of the Son of Man	Preparatory Vision	A Vision of Christ	Preliminary Vision
1:9-11	1:9-20	1:9-11	1:9-11	1:9-16
1:12-16		1:12-16	1:12-20	
1:17-20		1:17-20		1:17-20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 1:1-3:22

- A. Verses 1-8 form a prologue to the entire prophecy. The first three verses introduce the author, the time, the genre, and the blessing.
1. The author is John (a common Jewish name).
 2. The time is soon (1b; 3c).
 3. The message is communication in visions and by angelic mediation and is called a prophecy. The first three chapters are very similar to the normal style for letters of the first century.
 4. The blessing is for those who hear its reading and obey its exhortation to faithfulness amidst persecution.
- B. The next four verses (4-7) address the recipients in the form of the seven churches (1:11) and their seven spirits (cf. 1:4,20; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). This section is marked by
1. YHWH being characterized (v. 4)
 2. Jesus being characterized (vv. 5,6b,7)
 3. Believers being characterized (v. 6a)
 4. YHWH speaking (v. 8)
- C. Verses 1:9-3:22 are Jesus' last words to His Church(es). In 1:9-20 and at the beginning of the address to each of the seven Churches, Jesus is characterized by the OT titles used for YHWH.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-3

¹The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, ²who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

1:1 “The Revelation” This is the Greek term *apocalypsis*. It came from two Greek terms which meant “from a hiding place” or “to reveal or unveil something.” It was used in three senses:

1. that which was hidden and is now revealed (cf. Luke 12:2)
2. the fact that Jew and Gentile were now one new body in Jesus Christ (cf. “mystery,” Eph. 2:11-3:13)
3. a type of literary genre found in certain books of the Old Testament, like Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah and in the New Testament in Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, II Thess. 2, and the book of the Revelation.

In this book it means truth from God through Jesus Christ mediated by visions and angelic interpretation. It focuses on the evil present and the coming victory of righteousness through God's supernatural intervening. God will set things straight!

▣ **“of Jesus Christ”** This is either an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE relating the message about Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 1:12), or SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, relating the message given by Jesus Christ.

▣ **“which God gave Him”** Jesus neither taught nor did anything without revelation or permission from the Father (cf. John 3:11-13, 31-36; 4:34; 5:19-23,30; 6:38; 7:16; 8:28-29; 12:49-50; 14:10,24; 17). Theologically this is characteristic of John's writings.



NASB, NKJV **“the things which must shortly take place”**

NRSV **“what must soon take place”**

TEV **“what must happen very soon”**

NJB **“what is now to take place very soon”**

The time element is very important for interpretation of the whole book because it specifically states that John's message had a relevance for his day as well as the future. The term “must” (*dei*) meant “that which is binding, which is morally necessary, which is proper, or inevitable” (cf. Rev. 22:6).

For the concept of “very soon take place” compare Rev. 1:3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20. This may be an OT allusion to Dan. 2:28, 29, and 45. John never quoted the OT but made many allusions to it. Of 404 verses, possibly 275 have OT backgrounds. Translators have been divided in the interpretation of this phrase because of their theological presuppositions about the purpose of the book of the Revelation:

1. suddenly
2. once begun will swiftly occur
3. soon to begin
4. will certainly happen
5. imminently.

Usage of this term in Rev. 22:7, 12, 20 shows that John expected these events to occur quickly during his lifetime (cf. v 3; 22:10). Since there is a 2000 year gap between the writing of this book and our day, many say that John was wrong. However, the use of an immediate time-frame seems to be typical of the prophetic literature from the Old Testament which asserted that current events foreshadowed end-time events. John used first century Rome to depict the eschaton (last days) as Isaiah and Ezekiel used a restored (post-exilic) Judah, and as Daniel had used Antiochus Epiphanes IV. The coming of the new age of righteousness is a hope and encouragement for every generation of believers.

☐ **“communicated it”** This is literally “signified” (*semainō*) (cf. NKJV). “Signs” are the literary format that John uses to communicate this message in his Gospel (*semeion*, cf. 12:33; 18:32; 21:19). This may have an OT link to the OT prophets (cf. Isa. 7:11,14; 8:18; 19:20; 20:3; 37:30; 38:7,22; 55:13; 66:19; Jer. 10:2; 32:20-21; 44:29 and Ezek. 4:3; 14:8; 20:12,20). The fact that this book is called “a revelation” through “signs” and “prophecy” gives us a clue to the literary genre of this book. The modern literary term “apocalyptic” used to describe a genre was unknown to John.

☐ **“to His bond-servant John”** Unlike most apocalyptic authors, John identified himself and structured the opening of his prophetic witness in the form of seven letters (chapters 1-3). Some have denied John the Apostle’s authorship of the book of the Revelation because he is anonymous in his other writings (he calls himself “the beloved disciple” in his Gospel and “elder” in II and III John), but names himself in Rev 1:4, 9; 22:8.

1:2 “the testimony of Jesus Christ” Like v. 1, this can be either an OBJECTIVE, the testimony about Jesus, or SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, the testimony given by Jesus. Sometimes in John’s writings there is purposeful ambiguity which combines both connotations.

1:3 “Blessed” This is the first of seven blessings in this book (cf. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14). The fact that those who read it were blessed shows not only its inspired nature but also its relevance to the people of that day and every day.

☐ **“he who reads”** The NRSV adds “aloud,” implying a public reading (cf. I Tim. 4:13). Congregational reading of the Scripture was done originally by specially trained members of the Church as in the synagogue (cantor). The Church adopted the worship forms of the early synagogue (cf. Luke 4:16; Acts 13:15; Col. 4:16; I Thess. 5:27). We have a historical confirmation of the public reading of Scripture from Justin Martyr, A.D. 167, who mentioned that the Church read a portion from the Gospels and a portion from the prophets.

☐ **“who hear . . . and heed it”** This hearing and doing is the essence of the Hebrew term “*Shema*” (cf. Deut. 5:1; 6:4-6; 9:1; 20:3; 27:9-10; Luke 11:28). Notice the conditional nature of the blessing. Those who hear must respond. This “if . . . then” covenantal pattern is both OT and NT. Blessing is connected not only to knowledge, but also to lifestyle.

☐ **“of this prophecy”** This term addresses both the divine content of this book and the literary genre. This book is a combination of a letter (chapters 1-3), an apocalyptic presentation (seals, trumpets, bowls), and a prophecy (cf. 22:7,10,18,19). It is important to remember that “prophecy” had two connotations: (1) to address the current hearers with God’s message, and (2) to show how current faith effected future events. It is both proclamation and prediction.

☐ **“for the time is near”** This again shows the relevancy of the prophecy to its own day (another example is in Rom. 16:20). See fuller note at v. 1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:4-7

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—⁶and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father— to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

1:4 “to the seven churches” Exactly why only seven churches were addressed is uncertain. There are several theories:

1. some have asserted that these were the churches that John had a special ministering relationship with
2. others have asserted that they form a postal route in the Roman Province of Asia
3. the number seven had great significance to the Jews, especially in inter-biblical apocalyptic literature.

It was the number of perfection from its use of the days in Genesis 1. Therefore, it was probably used in both a literal sense—John did write to several churches which formed a Roman postal route in Asia Minor and symbolically as a way of referring to all churches of all days.

▣ **“in Asia”** This refers to the western end of the modern country of Turkey, which was, in large part, the old country of Phrygia, which became the Roman province of “Asia Minor.”

▣ **“Grace to you and peace”** This was a traditional form of greeting which is seen so often in Paul’s writings. Many assert that the Christians changed the traditional Greek literary greeting from “*charein*” (cf. James 1:1) to the similar sounding Christian greeting of “*charis*” which meant “grace.” “Peace” may have referred to the Hebrew term “*shalom*,” thereby combining the Greek and Hebrew greetings so as to relate to both groups in the churches. However, this is simply speculation.

▣ **“from Him who is and who was and who is to come”** This is obviously a title for the unchanging Covenant God (cf. Ps. 102:7; Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17). Its grammatical form is awkward in Greek but may reflect an Aramaic background. The literal phrase is “from the One who is, from the One who was, and the One coming” (cf. 4:8). This phrase reflects the OT covenant title “I Am” (YHWH, cf. Exod. 3:14). This phrase is used for God the Father in vv. 4 and 8, and of Jesus Christ in vv. 17 and 18 (cf. Heb. 13:8). The purposeful transfer of titles from YHWH to Jesus was one way the NT authors asserted the Deity of Jesus.

This threefold phrase of God as past, present, and future is modified in 11:17, which is the Second Coming at the end of the trumpets, to just the present and past because the future (end-time) has dawned.

Notice the possible Trinitarian formula of v. 4 (if “the seven Spirits” represent the Holy Spirit, which it probably does not). The term “trinity” is not a biblical word, but the concept of the one divine essence, but three eternal divine Persons active in redemption certainly is. See Special Topic at 22:17.

▣ **“and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne”** There have been several theories as to the identity of these seven spirits.

1. because this phrase comes between a reference to God as Father and Jesus the Messiah, many commentators have asserted that it definitely referred to the Holy Spirit. This is possible, but not certain. This same phrase is also used in 3:1; 4:5 and 5:6. In these other instances it is not at all certain that it is a reference to the Holy Spirit unless an allusion in Zech. 4 is assumed.
2. others believe that it is an allusion to Isa. 11:2 from the Septuagint, where the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit are mentioned. However, in the Masoretic Text there are only six gifts mentioned.
3. those of a Jewish inter-biblical background would identify these with the angels of the presence as the seven archangels before the throne of God (cf. 8:2)
4. others relate them to the angels or messengers of the seven churches which are mentioned in 1:20.

1:5 “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness” This is the first of three phrases which describe Jesus the Messiah. These opening verses are paralleled in 20:6-21. Faithful had an OT connotation of one who is loyal, true, and dependable (cf. Isa. 55:3-5). As God’s written Word (the Bible) is trustworthy, so is His ultimate revelation, the Living Word, Jesus (cf. 3:14). The gospel is a message to be believed, a person to be received, and a life emulating that person to be lived.

▣ **“the firstborn of the dead,”** This is the second of three descriptive phrases. This word “firstborn” (*prōtokos*) is used in the Bible in several distinct senses.

1. its OT background refers to the pre-imminence of the first-born son of the family (cf. Ps. 89:27; Luke 2:7; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 11:28)
2. its use in Col. 1:15 speaks of Jesus as the first of creation which is a possible OT allusion to Prov. 8:22-31, or God’s agent of creation (cf. John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-16; Heb. 1:2)
3. its use in Col. 1:18; I Cor. 15:20 (and here) refers to Jesus as the firstborn from the dead
4. it is an OT title used of the Messiah (cf. Ps. 89:27; Heb. 1:6; 12:23). It was a title which combines several aspects of the primacy and centrality of Jesus. In this context #3 or #4 fits best.

▣ **“and the ruler of the kings of the earth”** This phrase, like the previous one, is an allusion to Ps. 89:27 (cf. Ps. 72:11; Isa. 48:23), which speaks of Jesus as the promised Messiah. It also reflects John’s reaction to (1) the emperor worship of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire or (2) the use of the royal Mesopotamian phrase “King of kings” (cf. Rev. 11:15; 17:14; 19:16).

☐ **“To Him who loves us”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, meaning “Jesus continues to love us.” This affirmation is very important in light of the weaknesses and failures of five of the seven churches (cf. chapters 2-3).

☐ **“and released us from our sins”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. The Vulgate and Coptic versions, as well as some minuscule Greek manuscripts, and the King James Version have the verb “washed” (*louō*) which was pronounced exactly like the word “released” (*luō*). The ancient scribes produced texts of the NT by one person reading the text aloud while others wrote it down. The term “released” (with additions) appears in the ancient Greek manuscripts P¹⁸, \aleph^* , \aleph^2 , A, and C while “washed” is found only in later uncial manuscripts, P (sixth century) and 046, as well as in several later minuscule (running Greek script) manuscripts. Hence, “released” or “freed” is the preferred reading. The UBS⁴ gives “released” a “certain” rating.

☐ **“by His blood”** This is an obvious allusion to the sacrificial (cf. Lev. 1-7), vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ (cf. 5:9; 7:14; 12:11; Mark 10:45; II Cor 5:21; Isa. 52:13-53:12). Somehow in the mystery of God, His justice and mercy for all fallen humans met in the substitutionary death of Jesus (cf. Heb. 9:11-28).

1:6 “He has made us” This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE. As Jesus has released us from our sins (v. 5), He has also made us a kingdom of priests to represent Him!

☐
NASB “a kingdom, priests to His God”
NKJV “kings and priests to His God”
NRSV “a kingdom, priests serving His God”
TEV, NJB “a kingdom of priests to serve His God”

This is an allusion to the OT terms used of Israel in Exod. 19:6 and Isa. 61:6 where the nation was considered to be a kingdom of priests. God chose Abraham to choose Israel to choose a lost world (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3). Israel was meant to be a nation of witnesses but they failed in this assigned evangelistic task (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). Therefore, God chose the Church to reach the world (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). The very same phrases which were used for Israel are now used for the Church (cf. Gal. 3:29; 6:16; Phil 3:3; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

It is important to notice the corporate, biblical emphasis of “the priesthood of believers.” Western Christianity has over-emphasized the place and role of the individual and under-emphasized biblical corporality. The NT metaphor of the body of Christ (cf. I Cor. 12) is a similar metaphor. The OT title was never meant as an excuse for believers to assert their individual freedoms. This emphasis developed from the historical struggle between Martin Luther and the Catholic Church of his day. The focus of this context is evangelism (cf. v. 7), involving every believer, attempting to reach every lost and needy human made in God’s image for whom Christ died (cf. John 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIANITY IS CORPORATE

- A. Paul’s plural metaphors
 - 1. body
 - 2. field
 - 3. building
- B. The term “saint” is always PLURAL (except Phil. 4:21, but even there it is also corporate)
- C. The Reformation emphasis of Martin Luther on the “priesthood of the believer” is not truly biblical. It is the priesthood of believers (cf. Exod. 19:6; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6).
- D. Each believer is gifted for the common good (cf. I Cor. 12:7)
- E. Only in cooperation can the people of God be effective. Ministry is corporate (cf. Eph. 4:11-12).

☐ **“to Him be the glory and the dominion”** The term “glory” is an OT commercial term (using scales for purchases) that meant “to be heavy”; that which was heavy (e.g. gold) was valuable. The term came to be used of God’s brightness, majesty, holiness, from the *Shekinah* Cloud of Glory in Exodus. Glory was often ascribed to God the Father in the NT (cf. Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; I Tim. 1:17; II Tim. 4:18; I Pet. 4:11; 5:11; II Pet. 3:18; Jude 25; Rev. 1:6; 5:13; 7:12). See Special Topic: Glory at 15:8.

The term “dominion” addressed to God the Father, is similar theologically to the subordination of the Son (cf. John 17). Jesus is the Father’s agent in all things, but the goal is the ultimate glorification of the Father (cf. I Cor. 15:27-28).

▣ **“Amen”** This is a form of the OT Hebrew term for “faith” (cf. Hab. 2:4). Its original etymology was “to be firm or sure.” However, the connotation changed to that which is to be affirmed (cf. II Cor. 1:20). It was used metaphorically of someone who was faithful, loyal, steadfast, trustworthy (a title for Jesus in 3:14, cf. II Cor. 1:20).

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

I. OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The term “Amen” is from a Hebrew word for truth (*emeth*) or truthfulness (*emun, emunah*) and faith or faithfulness.
- B. Its etymology is from a physical stable stance. The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Deut. 28:64-67) or stumbling. From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:16; Hab. 2:4)
- C. Specialized usages
 - 1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)
 - 2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
 - 3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
 - 4. stability, Isa. 33:6; 34:5-7
 - 5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Prov. 12:22
 - 6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
 - 7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,168
- D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith
 - 1. *bathach*, trust
 - 2. *yra*, fear, respect, worship (cf. Gen. 22:12)
- E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage which was used to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 70:19; 89:52; 106:48).
- F. The theological key to this term is not mankind’s faithfulness, but YHWH’s (cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity’s only hope is the merciful, faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises. Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is a history and record of God restoring His image in mankind.

II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The use of the word “amen” as a liturgical affirmation of the trustworthiness of a statement is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12).
- B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).
- C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43).
- D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 and II Cor. 1:20 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).
- E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as trust, faith, believe.

1:7 “BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS” This verse may have been an exclamation by the angel of v. 1. It is an obvious reference to the Second Coming of Christ. This coming on the clouds was a very significant eschatological sign. It was used in three distinct ways in the OT.

- 1. to show God’s physical presence, the Shekinah cloud of Glory (cf. Exod. 13:21; 16:10; Num. 11:25)
- 2. to cover His Holiness so that humans would not see Him and die (cf. Exod. 33:20; Isa. 6:5)
- 3. to transport Deity (cf. Isa. 19:1)

In Daniel 7:13 clouds were used of the transportation of a Divine human Messiah. This prophecy in Daniel is alluded at least 30 times in the NT. This same connection of the Messiah with the clouds of heaven can be seen in Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:9,11 and I Thess. 4:17.

▣ **“and every eye will see Him”** This seems to imply the bodily, physical, visible, universal return of Christ, not a secret rapture of believers. In my opinion the Bible never teaches a secret rapture or coming. Those verses in the Gospels (cf. Matt. 24:37-44;

Luke 17:22-37) that are often used to support a secret rapture, contextually relate to a comparison with the days of Noah. In Noah's day the one taken was destroyed! Be careful of proof-texting small passages of Scripture out of the inspired original setting and using them to back up your presuppositional theological eschatological system!

▣ **“even those who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him”** This is an allusion to Zech. 12:10,12 (cf. John 19:37). This is a good example of how John reworks OT texts to fit his Roman situation (a Jewish type of reinterpretation called *pesher*). The text of Zechariah is a spring-board to John's new application. In Zechariah the text refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem who grieve over “one pierced,” but here John used it of the Romans and Jewish leaders who crucified Christ (cf. John 19:37). The pronoun “they” in the Masoretic Hebrew text is changed to “all the tribes of the earth” (cf. Matt. 24:30, this phrase is not from the Septuagint). Also, “mourn,” in the context of the Zechariah passage is often interpreted as relating to Rom. 11 where the Jews repent and trust Jesus as Messiah. However, in Rev. 1:7 the mourning is not for repentance, but because the judgment of God has fallen on unbelievers from all tribes (cf. Matt. 24:30). The Zechariah context alludes to the end time judgment of the nations by mentioning “the plain of Megiddo,” in Hebrew it is called Armageddon (cf. Zech. 12:11; II Chr. 35:22 and Ps. 2; Rev. 16:16), the site of an end time battle between God and His people and Satan and his people, the unbelieving nations.

▣ **“So it is to be. Amen.”** This is the Greek word for affirmation (*nai*) and the Hebrew word for affirmation (*amen*) placed side by side for emphasis (cf. 22:20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:8

⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

1:8 YHWH Himself speaks this verse, affirming the truth of the previous statements about Jesus. It combines four titles for Him with an allusion to a fifth and possibly a sixth. Apparently, v. 8 was God adding His personal affirmation to the above statement by the use of these magnificent names.

1. “I Am,” which is an allusion to the Covenant name YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14), a CAUSATIVE form of the verb “to be.” Jesus used this of Himself (cf. John 8:56-59). The title “Lord” (*kurios*) in the NT reflects this OT title. “Alpha and Omega” are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet which assume that God is the beginning and the ending, the controller of history (cf. Isa. 44:6; Rev. 21:6); this title is also used of Jesus in Rev. 1:17 and 22:13. “The Lord” is the modern way of translating YHWH. “God” in Gen. 2:4, YHWH, and *Elohim* are combined (the LORD God) as a name for deity. *El* is the general name for god in the Near East, from the root “to be strong.”
2. “The One who is the One who was, the One coming” is the phrase used earlier in v. 4 which speaks of the unchanging, ever-living God (cf. Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17). This phrase is used of God the Father, YHWH, in vv. 4 and 8 and of Jesus, God the Son, in vv. 17,18 and 22:13 (cf. Heb. 13:8). “The Almighty” which was the OT term, “*El-Shaddai*,” the patriarchal name for God (cf. Exod. 6:3).

One early Greek manuscript, aleph (א), and several later manuscripts add the phrase “the beginning and the end” after the Alpha and the Omega. Scribes inserted it from 21:6, but it is probably not an original part of the inspired original Greek text. The UBS⁴ rates its exclusion as “certain.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:9-11

⁹I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, ¹¹saying, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

1:9-20 This is John's vision of the resurrected, ascended, exalted Christ. These same descriptions are used to address the seven churches (chapters 2-3). John shows His identification with the readers by (1) using the term “your brother” and (2) mentioning his own experiences of suffering, the kingdom, and endurance. These key terms—tribulation, the kingdom, and perseverance—are also examples of Jesus' life which the readers, like John, are to emulate (cf. John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17).

One reason modern western interpreters do not understand the Revelation is because we have never experienced the persecution and trials of the first century Roman world. Revelation is a word to hurting, dying, frightened believers.

1:9 “fellow partaker in the tribulation” See note at 7:14.

▣ **“on the island called Patmos”** The Romans used these small islands off the coast of Asia Minor to exile political prisoners (cf. Tacitus’ *Annals*, 3.68; 4.30; 15.71). Apparently John was exiled to this small island, 37 miles from Miletus. The island was crescent shaped, facing east, ten miles long and six miles wide.

▣ **“because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus”** There are two possible interpretations of this phrase. It can refer (1) to John’s preaching the gospel or (2) to John’s receiving the revelation. We have several historical references to John’s political banishment.

1. Tertullian, *On the Prescription of Heretics*, 36
2. Origen, *Homilies on Matthew*
3. Clement of Alexandria, *The Rich Man’s Salvation*, 47
4. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.20.8-9; and (4) Jerome, *Concerning Illustrious Men*, 9.

1:10 “I was in the Spirit” This is a special phrase that marks off the different visions that John received (cf 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). It seems to refer to a trance-like state in which a revelation was given (cf. Acts 10:10; 22:17; II Cor. 12:1ff). This is characteristic of Jewish apocalyptic literature.

▣ **“on the Lord’s day”** This is the only reference in the Bible, referring to Sunday, which uses this phrase. Sunday was referred to as “the first day of the week” in John 20:19; Acts 20:7 and I Cor. 16:2.

▣ **“like the sound of a trumpet”** This phrase was used in the context of God giving the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exod. 19:16). However, because of vv. 12a and 4:1, it may refer to the voice of an angel. Angelic mediation is characteristic of Jewish apocalyptic literature. Revelation speaks more about angels than any other NT book.

1:11 “in a book” This is the Greek term *biblion*. It was used in the sense of a booklet or scroll. It later became a technical term for a codex or book. John was commanded to write down his visions. They are the self disclosures of Deity. They are not for John’s personal benefit, but for the Church. One characteristic of apocalyptic literature is that it was a highly structured written genre, not given orally, like OT prophecies. A book or scroll occurs repeatedly in Jewish apocalyptic literature as a way to pass on the message for future readers.

▣ **“send it to the seven churches”** The order of these churches followed a Roman postal route which began and ended in Ephesus. Paul’s circular book known as “Ephesians” may have traveled this same route. God’s revelation is never for an individual only, but for the people of God, the body of Christ!

▣ The King James translation adds the phrase “I am the Alpha and the Omega” again, but there is no ancient Greek manuscript support for this phrase in this verse.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:12-16

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; ¹³and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

1:12 “I saw seven golden lampstands” This does not refer to the Menorah (seven-stemmed candelabrum) which was in the Tabernacle (cf. Exod. 25:31-40) nor to the lampstand of Zech. 4:2. These separate, single lampstands were a symbolic way of referring to the seven churches (cf. 1:20; 2:1).

1:13-18 In this description of Jesus much of the imagery has two possible OT backgrounds: (1) YHWH, but also (2) the angel of Dan. 10.

1:13

NASB	“one like a son of man”
NKJV	“One like the Son of Man”
NRSV	“one like the Son of Man”
TEV	“looked like a human being”
NJB	“one like a Son of Man”

Notice the variety in capitalization. The reason is the ambiguity of the term. In the OT it was a descriptive phrase for a human being (cf. Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1). However, it also was used in Dan. 7:13 and possibly Ezek. 1:26 to refer to a human Messiah, whose Deity is assumed because

1. he appears before God
2. he rides on the clouds of heaven
3. he is given the eternal kingdom.

Jesus used this term to refer to Himself because it had no rabbinical usages, no nationalistic or militaristic connotations. It combined the human and divine aspects of Jesus' person (cf. I John 4:1-3; John 1:1-2,14).

Notice that the NKJV and NRSV have "the" while NASB, TEV, and JB have "a." There is no DEFINITE ARTICLE in the Greek text (cf. Dan. 7:13; Heb. 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28). However, the fact that it is a title makes it definite. The ambiguity may be purposeful (an aspect of John's writings). Jesus is a real human being and also the Divine Messiah.

▣ **"clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash"** This phrase has been understood in several ways.

1. as a reference to the High Priest (cf. Exod. 28:4; 29:5; Lev. 16:4 and Zech. 3:4)
2. as a reference to a royal, wealthy person (cf. I Sam. 18:24; 24:12 and Ezek. 26:16)
3. as a vision of the glorious interpreting angle of Dan. 10:5-21, which might signify Jesus as bringing God's message.

Josephus, in his book, *Antiquities of the Jews* III.7.2,4, said that the High Priest wore a girdle interwoven with gold. Therefore, Jesus is the High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary (cf. Heb. 8:1-13; Ps. 110).

1:14 "His head and His hair were white like white wool" This is an allusion to the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9. This is an example of NT authors attributing titles and descriptions of YHWH to Jesus, emphasizing Jesus' Deity.

▣ **"His eyes were like a flame of fire"** This symbolized His penetrating knowledge (cf. Dan. 10:6; Rev. 2:18; 19:12).

1:15

NASB "like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace"

NKJV "like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace"

NRSV "like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace"

TEV "like brass that has been refined and polished"

NJB "like burnished bronze when it has been refined in a furnace"

This word for bronze (*chalkolibanon*) is uncertain. Brass is the related term, *chalkos* (cf. Matt. 10:9; I Cor. 13:1; Rev. 18:22). It was used in Ezek. 1:7 for the cherubim's feet and in Dan. 10:6 for the angelic messenger. Jesus' feet are described in these same terms (cf. 1:15; 2:15) to show His heavenly origin or majestic character.

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "voice was like the sound of many waters"

TEV "voice sounded like a roaring waterfall"

NJB "voice like the sound of the ocean"

This was used of (1) YHWH in Ezek. 1:24; 43:2; (2) the wings of the cherubim of Ezek. 1:24; and possibly (3) of the angelic messenger in Dan. 10:6. Apparently it was a symbol of a heavenly person's authoritative voice (cf. 14:2; 19:6).

1:16 "In His right hand He held seven stars" This phrase is repeated in 1:16,20; 2:1; 3:1. This shows Jesus' personal care of His local churches.

▣ **"and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword"** *Hromphaia* refers to the large Thracian, broadsword which the Roman soldiers carried. This metaphor appears in the OT in Isa. 11:4; 49:2. It symbolizes both (1) war (cf. 2:16; 6:8) and (2) the power of the word of God, especially judgment (cf. 2:12; 19:15,21; II Thess. 2:8). Hebrews 4:12 uses another type of sword (*machaira*), but the same idea—the power of the word of God.

▣ **"His face was like the sun shining in its strength"** A similar phrase is used to describe the angelic messenger of Dan. 10:6 and Rev. 10:1. In Dan. 12:3 (cf. Matt. 13:43) it was a symbol of the resurrected righteous ones. Jesus is described in similar terms at His transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:17-20

¹⁷When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. ¹⁹Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. ²⁰As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

1:17 “I fell at His feet as a dead man” This type of revelation has always caused consternation to humans receiving it (cf. Dan. 8:17; 10:9; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; II Baruch 21:26; IV Ezra 5:14). It is an awesome thing for the supernatural spiritual realm to unveil itself to a human being.

▣ **“He placed His right hand on me”** This gesture shows Jesus’ care and attention to His people (cf. Dan. 8:18; 10:10, 18).

▣ **“Do not be afraid;”** This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, usually meaning to stop an act that is already in process. Humans are afraid of the supernatural realm (cf. Jesus’ words in Matt. 14:27; 17:7; 28:10; Mark 6:50; Luke 5:10; 12:32; John 6:20 and the angel’s words in Matt. 28:5; Luke 1:13,30; 2:10).

▣ **“for I am the first and the last”** This was usually a reference to YHWH (cf. Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12), but here it is used of the exalted Christ (cf. v. 8). This is an equivalent to the phrase “Alpha and Omega.” See notes at vv. 4 and 8.

1:18

NASB, NRSV “the living One”

NKJV “I am He who lives”

TEV “I am the living one!”

NJB “I am the Living One”

This is an allusion to the covenant name for God, YHWH, which comes from the CAUSATIVE form of the Hebrew verb “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). He is the ever-living, only-living One (cf. Dan. 12:7). Again, this is the NT author’s use of an OT title for God to describe Jesus. This is very similar to Jesus using YHWH’s name for Himself in John 8:58.

▣ **“I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore,”** The resurrection was (1) the Father’s stamp of approval (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 4:24; 10:9; I Cor. 6:14; 15:15; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; Heb. 13:20; I Pet. 1:21); (2) a demonstration of the Spirit’s power (cf. Rom. 8:11); and (3) a demonstration of Jesus’ personal power (cf. John 10:11,15,17,18). This reference to Jesus’ death may also have been a way to thwart the gnostic false teachers who denied His humanity.

▣ **“I have the keys of death and of Hades”** The Jews saw death as a prison with gates (cf. Job 38:17; Ps. 9:13; 107:18; Isa. 38:10; Matt. 16:19). Keys are a metaphor for authority. This is symbolic of Jesus’ authority over death for Himself and His followers (cf. 5:9-10; I Cor. 15).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB “Hades”

TEV “the world of the dead”

The King James Version translates this as “hell,” but this is an English translation confusion of the Greek words, *Hades* and *Gehenna*. *Hades* corresponds to the OT word *Sheol* (cf. 6:8; 20:13-14). In the OT humans were pictured as descending into the earth where they were gathered into families. It was a conscious but joyless existence. Slowly God began to reveal more and more (progressive revelation) about the afterlife. The rabbis asserted that there was a righteous (Paradise) and wicked (Tartarus) division in *Sheol* (cf. Luke 23:43). The Bible is sketchy on the details about the afterlife. It speaks in metaphors of heaven (i.e. streets of gold, city 1500 miles cubed, no closed gates, etc.) and hell (fire, darkness, worms, etc.)

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

I. Old Testament

- A. All humans go to *She'ol* (etymology uncertain), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
- B. *She'ol* characterized
 1. associated with God's judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
 3. associated with *Abaddon* (destruction), but also open to God, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
 4. associated with "the Pit" (grave), Ps. 16:10; Isa 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
 5. wicked descend alive into *She'ol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
 6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
 7. people there are called *Shades*, Isa. 14:9-11)

II. New Testament

- A. The Hebrew *She'ol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. *Hades* characterized
 1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
 2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
 3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
 4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
- C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
 1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
 2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Gen. 6; I Enoch)
- D. *Gehenna*
 1. Reflects the OT phrase, "the valley of the sons of Hinnom," (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech*, was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.
 2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH's judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
 3. The Jews of Jesus' day were so appalled by their ancestors' participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
 4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
 - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
 - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
 - d. paralleled to *She'ol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
 - e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
 - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
 - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of unbelieving humans (from *She'ol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-10; 20:1,3).
 - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *She'ol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
 1. originally all humans went to *She'ol/Hades*
 2. their experience there (good or bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell)).

3. the only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *She'ol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine based on a parable.

III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the “immortality of the soul,” which is one of several ancient views of the after life.
 1. human souls exist before their physical life
 2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
 3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
 1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
 2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
 3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matt. 17
 4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, II Thess. 4:13-18
 5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
 6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.
 1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
 2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
 3. the place of God’s throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife. Probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).
- C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-2; Rev. 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death’s Door*

1:19 This phrase has been used as the pattern for interpreting the book of the Revelation. It is seen as either a twofold or a threefold vision. The Greek phrase is a twofold description of what is current and what will occur. John was speaking to his day as well as to the future. This book combines both aspects in the traditional prophetic sense of current events foreshadowing eschatological events. This book addressed the persecution of John’s day and the persecution in every age but also ultimately persecution of the end-time anti-Christ (cf. Dan. 9:24-27; II Thess. 2).

1:20 “mystery of the stars” This term (*mustērion*) is used in several senses by Paul, but all relate to the eternal, but hidden plan of God for humans’ salvation, which is believing Jews and Gentiles being united into one new body in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). Here, however, it seems to be used in connection with the seven churches Jesus is addressing in chapters 2 and 3. From verse 20 it is obvious that the seven spirits, seven stars, seven golden lampstands, and seven angels are all symbolic in some way of the seven churches. This term is used in a similar way of a hidden meaning to a symbol in 17:7. See notes and Special Topic at 10:7.

▣ **“the angels”** The Greek (*aggelos*) and Hebrew (*malak*) terms can be translated “messengers” or “angels.” There have been several theories as to their identity: (1) some say they were the seven spirits which are mentioned in verse 4; (2) others say they were the pastors of these churches (cf. Mal. 2:7); and (3) others say it refers to the guardian angel of these churches (cf. Dan. 10:13,20,21). It seems best that they refer to the churches as a whole, whether symbolized as a pastor or an angel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Does chapter 1 give any clues on how to interpret the book of the Revelation? If so, what are they?
2. Is the book of the Revelation primarily for its day or the last days? Why?
3. Why did John make so many allusions to the Old Testament but never directly quote from it?
4. Why are there so many different titles used for God in this chapter?
5. Why are the descriptions of vv. 12-20 used to introduce each of the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3?
6. Why is the glorified Jesus described so similarly to the angel of Dan. 10?

REVELATION 2 - 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Message to Ephesus	The Loveless Church	The First Letter	The Message to Ephesus	Ephesus
2:1a	2:1-7	2:1	2:1a	2:1-7
2:1b-7		2:2-7	2:1b-7a 2:7b	
The Message to Smyrna	The Persecuted Church	The Second Letter	The Message to Smyrna	Smyrna
2:8a	2:8-11	2:8	2:8a	2:8-11
2:8b-11		2:9-11	2:8b-10 2:11a 2:11b	
The Message to Pergamum	The Compromising Church	The Third Letter	The Message to Pergamum	Pergamum
2:12a	2:12-17	2:12	2:12a	2:12-13
2:12b-17		2:13-17	2:12b-16 2:17a 2:17b	2:14-17
The Message to Thyatira	The Corrupt Church	The Fourth Letter	The Message to Thyatira	Thyatira
2:18a	2:18-29	2:18	2:18a	2:18-29
2:18b-29		2:19-29	2:18b-23 2:24-28 2:29	
The Message to Sardis	The Dead Church	The Fifth Letter	The Message to Sardis	Sardis
3:1a	3:1-6	3:1a	3:1a	3:1-6
3:1b-6		3:1b-6	3:1b-5 3:6	
The Message to Philadelphia	The Faithful Church	The Sixth Letter	The Message to Philadelphia	Philadelphia
3:7a	3:7-13	3:7	3:7a	3:7-13
3:7b-13		3:8-13	3:7b-12 3:13	
The Message to Laodicea	The Lukewarm Church	The Seventh Letter	The Message to Laodicea	Laodicea
3:14a	3:14-22	3:14	3:14a	3:14-22
3:14b-22		3:15-22	3:14b-21 3:22	