

# How to Understand the Book of Revelation

We now come to Revelation 1:17-20:

*“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though I were dead. Then He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, though I was dead. Look! I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches”* (MEV).

After John is gripped with fear and falls like a dead man, the Lord tells him not to fear. This fear, the beginning of wisdom and knowledge, is inevitable and proper in His presence. However, once we know it, He wants us to be at peace in His presence so we can perceive the rest of the revelation of Him.

The reason the Lord gives John for not fearing is that He is the First and the Last. He died but is now alive forever. It is all about Jesus. He is our Life, and He has the keys of Hades and Death. If we are in Him, we need never fear the most fearful thing—death. To free His people from the fear of death is a main purpose for the entire revelation. This will also be our result when we understand it.

John is then told to write the things that He has seen and will see—the things yet to come. This revelation of Jesus includes an outline of the future. Even so, the first-century church’s future, a large part of the 21st-century church’s history, cannot be understood if we do not see Jesus in it. The word “history” comes from “His-story.” Again, it’s all

about Him. Crucial to understanding is seeing Him in everything.

Next, the Lord explains to John that the seven lampstands He stands in the midst of are the seven churches. The seven stars in His hand are the messengers to the seven churches. Jesus will be found in the midst of His churches, and if we are going to see Him, we must look there.

As we have covered, there were many other churches in this region than these seven, many of them more notable than some of these. These were obviously chosen for this revelation because of the meaning of their names, and their character reflects what was to unfold from that time to the end of this age. Again, the number seven represents completion, and this was a look at the entire church age. By looking back on this age now, we see the accuracy of the revelation.

We are taking time to carefully lay a good foundation at the beginning of this study. It is important for us to fully grasp the revelation to come. Our goal is more than understanding, but to do our part at the end of this age as a part of the victorious conclusion of this revelation. We must see the glory of the Lord and be changed into His image. We would be better off to abide in Him rather than understand the times perfectly.

For this reason, ask the Lord to be your Teacher. Ask Him to put in your hands or bring to your attention other resources that will make this study a personal experience between you and Him, like it was for John. This does not mean you will see with your physical eyes what he saw, but you can see them with "the eyes of your heart" (Eph. 1:18). This is not as much about understanding the words of the Lord revealed in this revelation as it is about seeing and knowing the Word Himself.

Years ago, I read the book of Revelation in my little cabin in the woods. I prayed specifically to understand chapters 12-14.

Immediately after I prayed, there was a knock on my door. It was Jim Bakker. He had been staying in another cabin on the mountain. With both of his arms full of books he said, "I've got to show you what I just learned about chapters 12-14 of the book of Revelation!" Even though this revelation came through Jim, I knew the Lord sent him to answer some of my questions—so I took this from the Lord, not just Jim. I want this for you as well. You may get understanding through this study, but I hope you receive it from Him, just as John did.

I have had many experiences where I prayed for understanding of a matter, and though the answers rarely came instantly like in the experience above, I knew my Teacher sent it when it did come. Some have given me books or messages with the answer in them. I did not take this as coming from the author as much as "the author and finisher" (Heb. 12:2) of my faith. Being taught personally by Him is more wonderful than the understanding.

Ask Him to confirm and corroborate the things that we study so you know you're not just getting this from me, but from Him. That will make all of this far more wonderful and powerful. Throughout this study, don't just learn more about Him, but grow closer to and abide in Him. {eoa}

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