

REVELATION

Introduction

We find ourselves in front of the last book of the New Testament and indeed of the whole Bible. Its name is already telling us about its content: “revelation”, “manifestation” of what is hidden.

Two styles are found in the composition of this book: on the one hand, the prophetic style, as found in the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zachariah; and on the other, the apocalyptic style as it clearly appears in the book of Daniel and the apocrypha.

In the prophetic part a series of advises are gathered, addressed to the seven Churches of Asia (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea); we could take these as warnings to the universal Church. It praises some of its achievements while at the same time calling attention to some aspects of its life that have to be amended and changed.

The apocalyptic part tells us about the signs at the end of the world (the famous seven seals and the four horsemen of Revelation); later on it presents the great confrontation where “the power and the kingdom of our God” is victorious, concluding with the great final manifestation of “the new heavens and the new earth.”

The main character and central figure of this book is the sacrificed and risen Messiah, receiving the emblematic title of “Lamb” as John the Baptist applied it to Jesus describing him as “the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

This powerful, enigmatic and symbolic book has fascinated readers and artists. Unfortunately many did not know how to read and interpret the book, therefore misunderstanding its content and reaching partial and illegitimate interpretations and conclusions.

Formerly it was thought that the author was the apostle John, the writer of the gospel. There are a series of coincidences: the name appearing at the beginning of the book, the mentioning of the island of Patmos seemed to confirm it. Very few today accept this identification. It seems, nevertheless, that the description of difficulties and persecutions mentioned in the book refer to the persecution of Diomitian in the years 81–96 of our era.

Message to the seven Churches

1⁴From John to the seven Churches of Asia: receive grace and peace from him who is, who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits of God which are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has washed away our sins with his own blood, ⁶making us a kingdom and priests for God his Father, to him be the glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

⁷See he comes with the clouds and everyone will see him, even those who pierced him; on his account all the nations of the earth will beat his breast. Yes. It will be so.

¹⁰On the Lord’s day, the Spirit took possession of me and I heard a voice behind me which sounded like a trumpet, ¹¹“Write down all that you see, in a book, and send it to the seven Churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

Church of Ephesus

2¹Write this to the angel of the Church in Ephesus, “Thus says the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lamp stands:

²I know your works, your difficulties and your patient suffering. I know you cannot tolerate evildoers but have tested those who call themselves apostles and have proved them to be liars. ³You have persevered and have suffered for my name without losing heart.

⁴Nevertheless, I have this complaint against you: you have lost your first love. ⁵Remember from where you have fallen and repent, and do what you used to do before. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place; this I will do, unless you repent.

Church of Smyrna

⁸Write this to the angel of the Church in Smyrna, ‘Thus says the First and the Last, he who was dead and returned to life:

⁹I know your trials and your poverty: you are rich indeed. I know how you are slandered by those who pretend to be Jews but are not, for they are, in fact, the synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not be afraid of what will happen to you. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you and there will be ten days of trials. Remain faithful even to death and I will give you the crown of life.

¹¹Let anyone who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches: The victor has nothing to fear from the second death.’

Church of Pergamum

¹²Write this to the angel of the Church in Pergamum, ‘Thus says the one who has the sharp, double-edged sword:

¹³I know where you live, where Satan’s throne is, but you cling firmly to my name; you have not renounced me, not even in the days when Antipas, my faithful witness, was killed in your place, where Satan lives.

¹⁴Nevertheless, I have a few complaints against you: Some among you hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak how to make the Israelites stumble by eating food sacrificed to idols and committing adultery. ¹⁵Also, among you some follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶Therefore, repent; if not, I will come to you soon to attack these people with the sword of my mouth.

¹⁷Let anyone who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches: To the victor I will give the hidden manna. And I will also give a white stone with a new name written on it which no one knows except the one who receives it.’

Church of Thyatira

¹⁸Write this to the angel of the Church in Thyatira, ‘Thus says the Son of God whose eyes are like flames of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. ¹⁹I know your works: your love, faith, service, patient endurance and your later works, greater than the first.

²⁰Nevertheless, I have a complaint against you: you tolerate your Jezebel, this woman who calls herself a prophetess and is deceiving my servants; she teaches them prostitution and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

²⁶To the victor who keeps to my ways to the end, *I will give power over the nations, ²⁷to rule them with an iron rod and shatter them like earthen pots*; he will be like me, who received this power from my Father. ²⁸Moreover, I will give him the Morning Star.

²⁹Let anyone who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.’

Church of Sardis

3 ¹Write this to the angel of the Church in Sardis, ‘Thus says he who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars:

I know your worth: you think you live but you are dead. ²Wake up and strengthen that which is not already dead. For I have found your works to be imperfect in the sight of my God. ³Remember what you were taught; keep it and change your ways. If you do not repent I will come upon you like a thief at an hour you least expect.

⁴Yet, there are some left in Sardis who have not soiled their robes; these will come with me, dressed in white, since they deserve it. ⁵The victor will be dressed in white and I will never erase his name from the book of life; instead, I will acknowledge it before my Father and his angels.

⁶Let anyone who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.’

Church of Philadelphia

⁷Write this to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, ‘Thus says he who is holy and true, who holds the key of David; if he opens, nobody shuts and if he shuts nobody opens.

⁸I know your worth; I have opened a door before you, which nobody can close, because you have kept my Word and not renounced me, in spite of your lack of power. ⁹I am giving you some of the synagogue of Satan who call themselves Jews but they are only liars. I will make them fall at your feet and recognize that I have loved you.

¹⁰Because you have kept my words with patient endurance, I, for my part, will keep you safe in the hour of trial that is coming upon the whole world, to test the people of the earth. ¹¹I am coming soon; hold fast to what you have, lest anyone take your crown.

¹²I will make the victor into a column in the sanctuary of my God where he will stay forever. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God in heaven, and my own new name. ¹³Let anyone who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.’

Church of Laodicea

¹⁴Write this to the angel of the Church in Laodicea, ‘Thus says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation:

¹⁵I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! ¹⁶You are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold so I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷You think you are rich and have piled up so much that you need nothing, but you do not realize that you are wretched and to be pitied, poor, blind and naked.

¹⁸I advise you to buy from me gold that has been tested by fire, so that you may be rich, and white clothes to wear so that your nakedness may not shame you, and ointment for your eyes that you may see. ¹⁹I reprimand and correct all those I love. Be earnest and change your ways.

²⁰Look, I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my call and open the door, I will come in to you and have supper with you, and you with me. ²¹I will let the victor sit with me on my throne just as I was victorious and took my place with my Father on his throne. ²²Let anyone who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.’

War in heaven

⁷War broke out in heaven with Michael and his angels battling with the dragon. The dragon fought back with his angels, ⁸but they were defeated and lost their place in heaven. ⁹The great dragon, the ancient serpent known

as the devil or Satan, seducer of the whole world, was thrown out. He was hurled down to earth, together with his angels.

¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice from heaven:

*Now has salvation come,
with the power and the kingdom of our God,
and the rule of his anointed.*

*For our brothers' accuser has been cast out,
who accused them night and day, before God.*

¹¹*They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony,
for they gave up their lives going to death.*

¹²*Rejoice, therefore, O you heavens
and you who dwell in them;
but woe to you, earth and sea,
for the devil has come to you in anger
knowing that he has but a little time.*

New heaven and new earth

21 ¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had passed away and no longer was there any sea. ²I saw the new Jerusalem, the holy city coming down from God, out of heaven, adorned as a bride prepared for her husband. ³A loud voice came from the throne, "Here is the dwelling of God among mortals: *He will pitch his tent among them and they will be his people*; he will be God-with-them.

⁴He will *wipe every tear from their eyes*. There shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the world that was has passed away. ⁵The One seated on the throne said, "See, I make all things new."

And then he said to me, "Write these words because they are sure and true."

⁶And he said to me: It is already done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I myself will give the thirsty to drink without cost from the fountain of living water. ⁷Thus the winner will be rewarded: *For him I shall be God and he will be my son.*

⁸As for cowards, traitors, depraved, murderers, adulterers, sorcerers, and idolaters—all those who live in falsehood, their place is the lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.'

22 ⁶Then the angel said to me, "These words are sure and true; the Lord God who inspires the prophets has sent his angel to show his servants what must happen soon."

⁷'I am coming soon! Happy are those who keep the prophetic words of this book.'

Come, Lord Jesus

⁸I, John, saw and heard all this. When I had seen and heard them I fell at the feet of the angel who had shown me everything, to worship him. ⁹But he said; 'No, I am a fellow servant like you and your brothers, the prophets, and those who heed the words of this book. It is God you must worship.'

¹⁰He then said to me: 'Do not keep secret the prophetic words of this book because the time is near. ¹¹'Let the sinner continue to sin and the defiled remain in his defilement; let the righteous continue to do what is right and he who is holy grow holier.'

¹²'I am coming soon, bringing with me the salary I will pay to each one according to his deeds. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.'

¹⁴Happy are those who wash their robes for they will have free access to the tree of Life and enter the city through the gates. ¹⁵Outside are the dogs, sorcerers, the immoral, murderers, idolaters and all who take pleasure in falsehood!

¹⁶'I, Jesus, sent my angel to make known to you these revelations concerning the Churches. I am the Shoot and Offspring of David, the radiant Morning Star.'

²⁰He who has declared all this says: 'Yes, I am coming soon.'

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.

²¹May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.