

Revelation as Trilogy
The Fellowship of the King
Chapter 1: Prologue

Chapter One serves as an introduction to the book of Revelation. It does so by introducing us to the style of the letter, the purpose of the letter, the revealer/sender of the letter, the recipient of the letter, the audience of the letter, and a summary using visual images which will help us understand how numbers, colors and images will be used throughout the letter.

The style of the letter: verse one opens with these words. “The revelation of Jesus Christ.” The word “revelation” is the Greek word “*apocalypso*”, or to reveal. This is where the name of the letter comes from. This is a revelation, meaning an unveiling of something that cannot be discerned by ordinary human beings. A revelation is something that can only come from God. Thus, this letter concerns information that will be transmitted by heavenly messengers to mortals...in this case to the Apostle John.

The purpose of the letter: verse one tells the reader that the purpose of the letter is to “show Jesus’ servants what must soon take place.” This is what apocalyptic literature does, it offers a glimpse of the future...and often a future that is just beyond the reach of the reader. This sense of immediacy matters because it means that the reader has reason to hope because God is getting ready to act.

The revealer/sender of the letter: the revealer/sender of the revelation/letter is none other than the Trinitarian God. “Grace to you who is and who was and who is to come (God the Father), and from the seven spirits who are before his throne (God the Spirit) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness (God the son).” Though the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity was not to happen for several hundred years, Revelation is filled with language describing the Trinity being united in a single purpose of restoring God’s creation.

The recipient of the letter: the recipient of the letter is the Apostle John. “I John your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance...” One of the hallmarks of Apocalyptic literature is that the revelation is always given to someone famous. In this case it is the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” In addition, the recipient of the revelation must also be suffering. A revelation is never an outsider’s take on the pain of God’s people, but of a person who is persecuted as well...and in this case John is in prison because of Jesus.

The audience of the letter: the audience of the letter is the seven churches. The number seven represents completeness. So, the “Seven spirits” represent the complete Spirit. The seven churches represent the complete church. If we were to map these churches, we would find that they are in a geographical circle...again showing completeness. For reference, all these churches were in what is now the nation of Turkey.

Summary: the summary can be found in verses 12-20. Once again we have the audience (seven lampstands representing the seven churches), the revealer/sender, (Jesus as the Son of Man, as a high priest and as the resurrected one), the recipient (John falling down in fear), and the purpose (Jesus’ command to write what will soon take place and then the pass the information to the audience of the seven churches/stars/lampstands).

Questions:

1. What was your general impression of the book of Revelation before reading this summary?
2. Does this summary of Chapter one help you gain a foothold in the story? If so why? If not, why?
3. What is the most confusing part of this opening chapter?