

St. Therese Catholic Church

Book of Revelation *Overview*

October 8, 2024

1



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Initial Comments

- In this book, we will hear about a vision of the risen Lord himself, who entrusts his servant John with an urgent word of prophecy for the seven churches of Asia, and through them to the whole Church in all times and places (39).
- Chapter 1 is a short chapter that introduces the themes of the book.
- In this chapter, we will hear phrases such as "grace to you and peace from him" suggesting the liturgical nature of the book.
- We will see that the Book of Revelation comes alive in the context of the Mass. In the end, Revelation is about worship!

2



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Prologue

- **Revelation:** Greek *apokalypsis*, literally means “unveiling.” It is the only time that it occurs in the book. God’s hidden plan of salvation will be disclosed (40).
- **Gave:** God the Father gives His Son, Jesus Christ, this revelation to show his servants what must happen soon.
 - The sequence is God (Father), to Jesus, to an angel, to his servant John and “us,” God’s servants (McIlraith. 11).
- **Key:** Notice that God’s revelation is *mediated* through heaven (Jesus and angel), to the Church (John, us).

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Prologue

- **Must soon take place:** Whereas Daniel’s prophecy is for the distant future (Dan. 2:28-29; 12:4), this prophecy is urgent.
- **Gives Witness:** John is not the author but gives witness. He faithfully reports what he saw in the visions in this book (40).
- **Blessed Reads aloud / listen:** The book is to be read in the assembly. It was to be read in the context of liturgy on the Lord’s Day (cf. 1:10).
 - **Key:** We already see the liturgical nature of Revelation. The lector who reads the book is blessed and congregation who listens (and keeps) the divine message is blessed.

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Prologue

- **Note:** This is the first of seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation, each focusing on the conduct that characterizes a faithful disciple awaiting Jesus' glorious return (40).
- Revelation is about ethics as well as eschatology (the last things); it provides guidance about how its readers should conduct themselves. Those who listen and heed the message of Revelation are "blessed." (40)
- **Appointed time is near:** Along with "soon" (1:1), John tells us that the appointed time is "near." (cf 2 Pet. 3:8-10)

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Greeting

Lector	Assembly
(1). Presider (John) announces the subject and audience,	
(2). Blessing: Grace to you and peace from him who was and is to come, and from the seven spirits before the throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.	(3). Doxology: To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins and his blood, who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever (and ever). Amen.
(4). Declaration: Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him..."I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord...	

~Williamson, 43

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Greeting

- **Greeting:** All three Persons of the Trinity are named:
 - **Father:** Him who is and who was and who is to come
 - **Jesus Christ:** the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.
 - **Seven spirits:** Before the throne; Isaiah 11:2-3 depicts the Spirit of the Lord resting on the Messiah to bestow seven attributes – wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (44).
- **Mass:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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Greeting

- Jesus is given four titles:
 - **Christ:** God's anointed king descended from David.
 - **Faithful witness:** He came into the world "to testify to the truth" (Jn 18:37). Greek for "witness" is *mártys*, later came to mean martyr. A major theme of Revelation is the call for Christians to imitate their Lord as faithful witness (45).
 - **Firstborn of the dead:** First member of the human race to pass from death to life (Col. 15:20).
 - **Ruler of the kings of the earth:** He holds supreme authority over every other power (Eph. 1:20-23), including the Roman emperor (45).

8



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Greeting

- **To him who loves us:** Assembly's response focuses on Jesus' personal love expressed in his death on the cross for our sake.
 - **Present participle:** Jesus' love is a habitual action – He is the one who *is* loving us (45-46).
 - **Key:** With all the trials that Jesus' followers will face, it must not be forgotten Jesus is *loving them* and will bring them through those trials to the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).
 - **Freed us / by his blood:** The power of Christ's blood is a recurrent theme of Revelation (5:9; 7:14; 12:11). How Jesus will do this provides the overarching story line of Revelation (47).

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Greeting

- **Kingdom, priests:** God promised to make Israel "a kingdom of priests" in Exodus 19:6. This is fulfilled in a new and greater way as a result of Jesus' death on the cross (47).
 - Christ's disciples submit themselves to Christ's rule and in doing so, already reign with him. Through baptism, Christians share in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king.
- **Glory and power:** John completes his doxology by attributing glory (manifestation of God's goodness) and power (authority or rule) to Christ forever.

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Greeting

- **Behold:** Up to this point, John has been speaking in his own voice (47). In vv. 7-8, there is an abrupt change of person with prophetic oracles of the Old Testament.
- **Key:** John brings up Scriptures from the Old Testament using allusions wherein Jewish faithful would know right away what it means.
 - 9/11 was a day of suffering. Imagine someone completely unfamiliar with this U.S. tragic event. For us, it conjures up all kinds of images and emotions. The same is true for the Jewish people with allusions.

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Greeting

- The first prophetic message of the book announces the theme of the book – the glorious return of Christ at the end of history (47).
- His coming on the cloud recalls Daniel's vision of "one like a son of man" (Dan. 7:13).
- Jesus used this image before Caiaphas in Matt. 26:64. The high priest tore his garments and all present declared that he deserved to die.



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Greeting

- **Those who pierced him:** Zechariah 12:10 speaks about Jerusalem's mourning in repentance over one they have pierced.
- The mourning will be followed by a complete purification wherein a fountain will be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to purify from sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13:1).
- **Key:** Fountain is blood and water pouring forth from crucified Christ.



John 19:34: One soldier thrust his lance into [Jesus'] side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

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Greeting

- Notice that John used catch phrases such as "coming amid the clouds" and "those who pierced him" to bring up a whole section of Scripture.
- **Key:** John will consistently use the prophets via explicit quotes or allusions to retell what happened to Jesus, what will happen to those who follow Jesus, and how God's plan of salvation will unfold (not all the details but the general outline).
- Jesus used the parable of the sower via the different kinds of soil (path, rocky ground, thorns, and rich soil) (Mark 4) as a way of revealing the various receptivity of hearts. The same principle applies with the Book of Revelation – reveals hearts.

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Greeting

- **Alpha and Omega:** The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus indicates that he has authority over all history from beginning to end and echoing his claim in Isaiah to be the first and the last (Is. 41:4) (48).
- **The one who is and who was and is to come:** This is the same title as in 1:4.
- **The almighty:** A common Septuagint translation of "Lord of hosts" (48).
- **Key:** The One who was pierced on the cross and brought about purification of sin has all authority and will come again.

15



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John's Commissioning

- **Patmos:** An island in the Aegean Sea about 40 miles from Ephesus.
- Today, Patmos has a population of a little over 3,000 people.
- The Romans used the 34 square kilometer island as a prison (10 miles by 6 miles).



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John's Commissioning

- John may have been exiled to Patmos in the mid-90s.
- He may have been released when the emperor Domitian died in AD 96 (49).
- The Cave of the Apocalypse marks where John received his revelations.
- The Monastery of St. John is a Greek Orthodox monastery founded in AD 1088.



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John's Commissioning

- **In the spirit:** John has a close relationship with the Spirit when he receives the visions that follow. When the second part of the book begins, John tells us again that he was “in the spirit” (4:1) and thus received from the Spirit all that follows to the end of the book (McIlraith, 21).
- **Lord's Day:** Sunday, or the day of Jesus' Resurrection. John's prophetic experience may have occurred in the context of liturgy (49).
- **Heard behind me a voice:** The revelation begins with an auditory vision – a voice tells him to write a book and send it to the seven churches (McIlraith, 21).

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John's Commissioning

- The visions given to John the Lord's Day will reveal the liturgy in heaven. Our earthly liturgy (the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass) is modeled on the liturgy in heaven.
- **Vatican II:** *In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle; we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory* (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 8).

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John's Commissioning

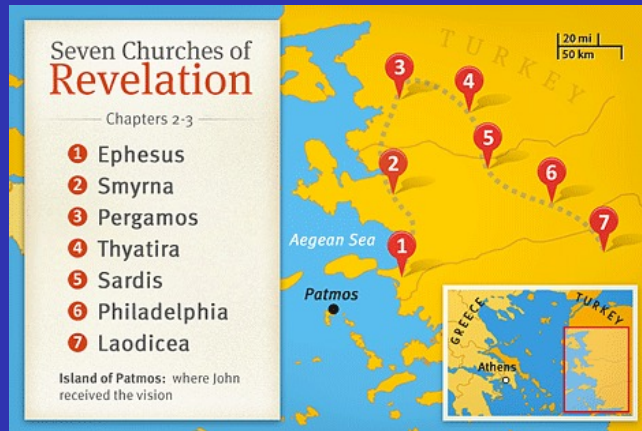
- **Trumpet:** Announces God's presence (or warning/judgment) in the Old Testament; liturgical instrument to worship the Lord. They were also used in Jericho for warfare.
- **The seven churches:** They are listed in the order that the bearer of the letter would likely carry them, starting with Ephesus, the chief city of the province, then making the circuit in a clockwise rotation. Each city lies two or three days' walk from the previous one (50).
 - **Seven:** Symbolizes completeness, suggesting that the book was intended by the Holy Spirit for the whole Church, not only in Asia but also in the whole world (50).

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John's Commissioning



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Vision of the Son of Man

- John turns to see the source of the loud voice he has heard. He will give us a vivid description of what he sees. The figure will be so overwhelming that he will fall at his feet as though dead!
- The divine figure who resembles a human will literally take his breath away.
- **Note:** Think about a time in your life when you encountered something or someone so beautiful or beyond you that you felt paralyzed or struggled to catch your breath.

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Vision of the Son of Man

- **Seven golden lampstands:** Recalls the menorah – a single, seven branched lampstand of pure gold with seven lamps that the priests kept burning every night (Exod. 25:31-40; 27:21).
 - The lampstands announced the presence of God in the temple. Now they announce the presence of Jesus (McIlraith, 22).
- In the Book of Genesis, God walked in the midst of the garden of paradise (3:8). It was clear that he knew everything that was going on. Now, we see Jesus is present and omniscient about the seven churches (McIlraith, 22).

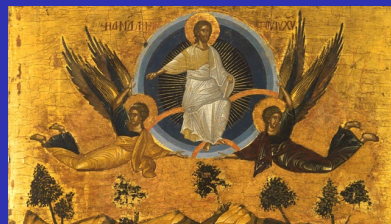
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Vision of the Son of Man

- **One like a Son of Man:** Jesus himself used the phrase “Son of Man” in the gospels. In Hebrew and Aramaic idiom, it simply means “human being.” (52)
- It recalls Daniel’s visions where he sees a humanlike figure ascending to God, the “Ancient of Days,” and who received everlasting, universal kingship, something that by right belongs only to God (52).



- **Note:** Jesus stands external to the churches at the beginning of Revelation. By the end of the book, his relationship will have completely changed (McIlraith, 23).

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Vision of the Son of Man

- **Ankle length robe:** Garment of the high priest. Revelation focuses on Jesus' kingship but also priesthood as he stands before God (52).
- **Gold sash around chest:** Indicates his great authority.
- **Hair as white wool:** Son of Man's hair is white as wool or as snow in Daniel 7:9 symbolizes his eternity and infinite wisdom (53).



<https://www.revelationtojohn.com/jesus-as-son-of-man.html>

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Vision of the Son of Man

- **Eyes like a fiery flame:** Nothing is hidden from his sight. Jesus' eyes are penetrating vision to judge.
 - The flame of fire that issued from God's throne in Daniel 7:9-10 now issues from the eyes of Jesus (McIlraith, 23).
- **Feet like polished brass:** Brass is symbolic of firm, strong, lasting. Christ is depicted as unchangeable.



<https://www.revelationtojohn.com/jesus-as-son-of-man.html>

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Vision of the Son of Man

- **Voice like sound of rushing water:** Christ speaks with divine authority.
- **Right hand / seven stars:** In pagan world, Mithras and Caesars were represented with seven stars in their right hand. Now, Jesus holds the seven stars symbolizing that he has universal dominion.
- **Two-edged sword:** The word of God (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).



<https://www.revelationtojohn.com/jesus-as-son-of-man.html>

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Vision of the Son of Man

- **Face shone like the sun:** The splendor of God shone like the sun (Ps. 84:12; Isa. 60:19).
 - Christians recall that Jesus' face shone like the sun in the Transfiguration (Matt. 7:12) (53).
- **Fell down as dead:** John is overwhelmed by the extraordinary vision he sees.



<https://www.revelationtojohn.com/jesus-as-son-of-man.html>

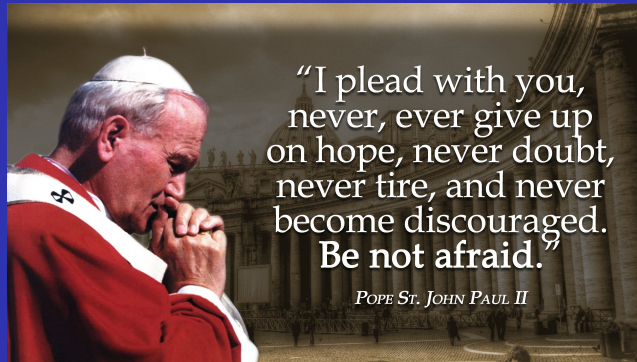
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Vision of the Son of Man

- The Son of Man tells John to "be not afraid," which was one of the great themes of Pope St. John Paul II's pontificate.



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Vision of the Son of Man

- Right hand:** The son of man reassures John by touching him with his right hand (expressing favor).

Son of Man	Meaning
I am the first and the last	Title for God in Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12 in contrast to pagan idols.
I was dead, but now I live forever and ever	Jesus has come back from the dead, clothed with divine authority, and will never die again.
I hold the keys to death and the netherworld	Jesus has the power to unlock Hades (Greek) or Sheol (Hebrew).

~Williamson, 53-54

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Vision of the Son of Man

- Love songs that praise the beloved's body were part of ancient literature, and the name the Arabs use for poems was *wasf* (McIlraith, 24).
- In the Song of Songs (5:10-16), the beloved describes her lover's body: head (gold), hair (like palm fronds, black as a raven), eyes (like doves besides streams of water, bathing in milk), cheeks (beds of spices), lips (lilies), arms (rods of gold), loins (works of ivory covered with sapphires), legs (pillars of alabaster, resting on golden pedestals).
- **Key:** Jesus, the Bridegroom and the One loving us, is described in a love poem from head to feet!

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Vision of the Son of Man

Son of Man	Meaning
His head and his hair	The whiteness of God's glory
His eyes	His divine omniscience
His feet	Divine stability
His voice	Brings his glorious presence to the churches
His right hand	The divine omnipotence that controls the stars
His mouth	From which the divine word issues like a sword
His face	Recalling the Transfiguration

~McIlraith, 24

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Vision of the Son of Man

- **Write down:** John is told to write down:

Structure	Meaning
What you have seen	Chapter 1 – present vision
What is happening	Chapters 2 – 3 – situation in the churches
What will happen afterwards	Chapters 4 – 22 – movement of history to its end

- **Secret Meaning:** Literally “mystery.” Mystery comes from the Greek *mysterion* meaning secret or “to close the eyes or lips.” The mystery is God’s salvific plan for humanity (McIlraith, 25).

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Vision of the Son of Man

- Jesus interprets two of the symbols for us. Note that one of the characteristics of apocalyptic literature is that a heavenly being interprets symbols for us.
 - **Seven stars in right hand:** the angels of the seven churches. This refers either to the bishops or the guardian angels of the local churches (54).
 - **Seven lampstands:** the seven churches; a lampstand provides light and symbolized the radiance of God’s presence (Exod. 40:35-38). As the lampstands provided light for God’s temple, the Risen Christ is in the process of making the whole creation God’s temple, a goal finally achieved in the New Jerusalem (21:1-22:5) (54).

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Vision of the Son of Man

- **Key:** Revelation reveals the awesomeness of Christ. We see different aspects of his person and his work (55).
 - Glorious son of man and ruler (1:13; 14:14)
 - Slaughtered Lamb (5:6)
 - Divine warrior (19:11)
- Jesus, the Bridegroom, is the One who loves us, purifies us through suffering, as He prepares us for the eternal banquet of heaven, the New Garden of Eden and the New Jerusalem, where His Bride, the Church, is cherished, protected, and loved forever.

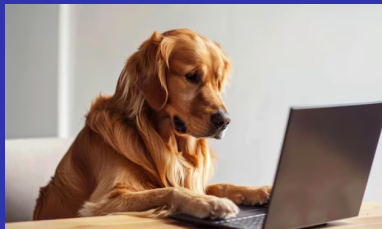
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Next Time

- Tuesday, October 29^h



Revelation 2

Ephesus	2:1 - 7
Smyrna	2:8 - 11
Pergamum	2:12 - 17
Thyatira	2:18 - 29

Revelation 3

Sardis	3:1 - 6
Philadelphia	3:7 - 13
Laodicea	3:14 - 22

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