

“LETTERS FROM JESUS - Pt. 2” (Rev. 1:1-4a) [Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth]

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REVIEW/INTRO: We began a series last Sunday working our way through the first three chapters of Revelation. Keep in mind that Revelation is a symbolic book (v. 1). It is a revelation of Jesus Christ as Conquering King of kings and Lord of lords and its purpose was to show the 7 churches in chs. 2-3 the things which would shortly take place (Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:10).

THE BLESSING OF THE BOOK (Rev. 1:3) – a blessing is promised to those who read, hear and keep the things which are written in it. How could John’s audience do this if the book was primarily about events that were 2,000 years away?

THE RECIPIENTS OF THE BOOK (Rev. 1:4a) – the seven churches in Asia (modern-day Turkey), representative of all churches at all times.

THE APOCALYPTIC GENRE OF THE BOOK (Rev. 1:1)

“**Revelation**” – Greek: “*apokalypsis*” – a revealing.
Apocalyptic literature communicates through symbolism.

WHICH MUST “**SHORTLY**” COME TO PASS (Rev. 1:1)

1. Apocalyptic language often describes judgments using descriptions of cosmic disturbances that are not meant to be taken literally, being they didn’t literally happen, but rather is prophetic terminology used to describe the shaking of nations and their leaders (Isa. 13:10, 13; Joel 2:1-2, 10; 3:15-16; etc.).
2. How would John’s original audience have understood this?
3. Other N.T. “**shortly**” passages (1Cor. 4:19; Phil. 2:19, 23-24; 1Tim. 3:14; 3Jn. 1:14; Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6-7, 10 [contrast with Dan. 8:26], 12, 20).
4. If “**shortly**” doesn’t mean “**shortly**” here – how can any timeframes in Scripture be understood?

NOTE: The historic church prior to the early 1800’s didn’t typically interpret Revelation through the grid of Futurism, but either Preterism, Historicism or Idealism.

1. **Futurism** – most of Revelation (from chapter 4 on) is still future.
2. **Preterism** – most of Revelation (chapters 1-18) are about things which took place shortly after the book was written.
3. **Historicism** – The contents of Revelation are fulfilled throughout all of church history.
4. **Idealism** - The contents of Revelation do not predict the future, but rather depict the ongoing battle between good and evil and the ultimate triumph of good.

CONCLUSION: Let’s read the book of Revelation looking for and expecting a revelation of Jesus Christ – as He is today and will be throughout eternity! Let’s learn to rightly divide the word of truth (2Tim. 2:15). Remember, the book of Revelation is communicated to us through symbolism, and those symbols shouldn’t be interpreted literally, but rather the meaning of those symbols should be interpreted literally. Let’s look to the Scriptures for the meaning of those symbols. Let’s experience the blessings promised to those who read the book of Revelation and keep those things which are written in it (v. 3).