Chapter 1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to his servant John, who we learn was imprisoned (or banished) to the island of Patmos in Asia Minor.[1] We are faced with questions from the very start of the vision. Is this the same John who wrote the Gospel? Why was he sent to Patmos? Critics will immediately point out the differences in style between the Gospel and Revelation.

Although many commentaries acknowledge striking similarities between the five Johannine writings, they also acknowledge striking differences and so attribute them to different authors. It is claimed that the gospel and epistle are written in flawless Greek, free from barbarism, solecism, or vulgarism; whereas the Apocalypse was written in inaccurate Greek, full of barbarous idioms and solecisms. R. H. Charles argued persuasively that Johns Greek, for all its idiosyncrasy, is not ungrammatical but has a its own grammar, unparalleled in any other ancient writing, but none the less real and consistent, the hybrid grammar of a man thinking in Hebrew while he wrote in Greek. Some argue that because of the difference in Greek, the Apocalypse represents an earlier development and the gospel and epistles, with the more exact Greek a later development.

However, stylometric analysis[2] using function words indicates that the Johannine corpus has clustering affinity although differences (even within books) can be noticed. For example Rev 2-3 and 21-22 form a sub-cluster within the Apocalypse. In similar fashion John 1 and 21 are slightly different from the body of the Gospel. The similarities of the clusters far outweighs the differences and because we are employing function words which are on the whole impervious to change and indicative of a unique style it suggests uniformity of authorship. Differences can be attributed to the editing process which would not overly affect function words. In the final analysis John received the Apocalypse when he was in exile and had little chance to have his work proof-read or stylistically polished. Thus the "authentic" John shines through with his Hebraised Greek with its unique idiosyncrasies *as he had no assistance* (Johannine school?).

Upon his release he wanted to get the message out as soon as possible. It is probable that the beginning and the end of the Apocalypse was "polished" before sending out. It is also possible that the Gospel prologue and the last chapter were added to his Gospel <u>at the same time</u>. The Gospel begins by emphasising that Jesus was in the beginning "with God" and Revelation commences with Jesus, who is now (again) <u>with God</u> relaying a message from heaven.

That is not to say that John is promoting the fallacy of pre-existence or equality with God (Jesus was towards God; John 1.1) simply stating that his final predetermined destination had been achieved and that as the "word of God" he now spoke from heaven. Similarly, the end of the Gospel makes it clear that John would remain alive "until Jesus came" (John 21.22) leading to speculation among the disciples that John would not die.

Revelation 1	**John 21**
I was in the Spirit on the Lords day **(v.10)**	If he remains until I come **(v.22)**
Unto him that loved us **(v.5)**	The disciple who Jesus loved **(v.20)**
What thou see write in a book **(v.11)**	….would not contain the books **(v.25)**
Who bore witness to the word of God **(v.2)**	This is the disciple who bore witness **(v.24)**

Unlike the synoptic tradition John's Gospel does not contain apocalyptic material. The reason for this is because John was given an expanded version of the Olivet prophecy in the book of Revelation. There was therefore no need for him to record apocalyptic teachings made during Jesus' ministry as he received a message completely dedicated to those teachings. Of course, if the Apocalypse is an expanded version of synoptic apocalypticism (such as found in the Olivet prophecy) then this has implications for how we interpret Revelation.

So a case can be made that his Gospel and the book of Revelation were sent out at the same time and that the Gospel which he had been writing in collaboration with his associates before he was banished had the beginning and ending adjusted. At the same time his draft of the Apocalypse had the beginning (message to the churches) and ending (New Jerusalem), "polished" and sent out to the churches stressing the imminence of impending judgement (behold, I come quickly, Rev 22.7), using the same words as the Gospel… the beginning (John 1.1-2)….but also…the end (Rev 22.13). In other words Jesus is the first and last word of divine Revelation to man. The whole testament (artificially divided into Old and New) speaks of him and this is emphasised through prolific allusions to the Old Testament throughout the Apocalypse.

Daniel and the Apocalypse

Daniel	**Revelation 1**
There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets. (2:28)	The Revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave unto him. (v.1)
Gabriel makes this man to understand the vision. (8:16)	And he sent and signified it by his angel. (v.1)
Blessed is he that waiteth. (12:12)	Blessed is he that readeth. (v.3)
O man, greatly beloved (10: 19)	The disciple who Jesus loved. (John 21:20)
I praised and honoured him that liveth forever and ever. (4: 34)	To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. (v.6)
There came with the clouds of heaven one like the Son of man. (7:13)	Behold, he cometh with clouds. (v.7) One like unto the son of man. (v.13)
A man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz. (10:5)	Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. (v.13)
His body also was like the beryl and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. (10:6)	His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace: and his voice as the sound of many waters. (v.14,15)
Then was I fallen into a deep sleep on my face, with my face toward the ground. (10: 9)	I fell at his feet as dead. (v.17)
And behold a hand touched me. (10: 9)	And he laid his right hand upon me. (v.17)
Fear not (10:12)	Fear not (v.17)

The importance of Daniel to the Apocalypse has been noted in the seminal work done by Beale. However, even Beale does not fully grasp the implications of the importance of Daniel for shaping the message of the Apocalypse. Beale sums up the major themes in Daniel thus;

> "The book of Daniel has the following three dominant themes: (1) historical and cosmic eschatological judgment of evil nations and consequent establishment of God's historical reign or of the divine eternal kingdom; (2) God's absolute sovereignty and kingdom, which controls all earthly rulers and uses their own rebellious actions to accomplish his own purposes; (3) the saints living under an ungodly earthly rule and undergoing trials through being tempted to compromise with the religious practices of pagan society".[3]

Unfortunately, the most important theme of Daniel has been missed, namely, temple restoration and atonement. In the Daniel commentary, God is Judge,[4] it is demonstrated that the **temple** is a major theme in Daniel. Many of the court tales in Daniel function as situational midrash on the temple.

For example, the three friends in the fire depict the dilemma of the exilic community when the temple was burnt, Daniel in the lion's den depicts the frustration and resurrection of the hope to return and rebuild under Darius. The Babylonia section is bracketed by the loss of the temple vessels in Dan 1.2 and the desecration of those vessels in Dan 5.1. Nebuchadnezzar takes pride in the "glory of his house" (cf. the Jews "glorying" in the temple). In Dan 7, the Son of Man exits the heavenly temple surrounded by clouds of incense (Day of Atonement) not to declare forgiveness but to dispense judgement for the mistreatment of the holy people. There follow further descriptions of temple desecrations by Antiochus and a prophecy concerning yet more desolations of the holy place. The "exile" is not 70 years but 7 x 70 years until the great Day of Atonement, when at the end of 490 year "Jubilee" restoration and forgiveness is finalized. But first there will be a particular 3½ year period of tribulation. The focus of Daniel is therefore the restoration of the temple (true worship) and atonement. Questions about the sovereignty of God and punishment of the nations are sub-themes within the wider context of the **temple.**

And this is exactly where the NT picks up the story. Jesus becomes the "Temple" that Daniel anticipated – the true restoration of worship and atonement. Jesus and Stephen were accused of wanting to destroy the temple and change the laws (Acts 6.14) – this is what Antiochus Epiphanes (God manifest) attempted. But Jesus was no Antiochus – and he answers the Sanhedrin in words taken from Dan 7.3; "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt 26.64) and the Apocalypse opens with the similar words: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him' (Rev 1.7).[5]

In other words, Jesus is saying…you may think I am a blasphemer like Antiochus who comes to destroy your temple but I am the "Son of Man" who comes from the heavenly temple as your judge. The irony is that the Sanhedrin was sitting in judgement of God's appointed end-time judge. Moreover, Jesus indicates that he is now the temple – the only place where God could be worshipped in Spirit and truth.

This was the temple that Daniel anticipated. The "heavenly temple" had come down to earth reminiscent of the "garden sanctuary" at the very beginning. God would dwell with men. John does not see "Ezekiel's temple" he sees a city built out of saints – and the temple becomes Jesus and his Father - "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev 21.22). The thematic of the temple is crucial to understanding the Apocalypse, just as it is crucial to understanding Daniel. All the scenes take place either in the "heavenly temple" or on earth/sea/air until the heavenly temple descends. The Apocalypse itself is structured around a conceptual framework of 3½ years of Jewish feasts[6] – Passover (seals), Atonement (trumpets), Witnessing (Hanukkah and Purim), plague-vials (Atonement) New Jerusalem (Tabernacles) etc…is this coincidence?

But before any new temple can be revealed the old temple needed to be removed, after all you cannot put new wine into old bottles. Jesus himself refers to Daniel when he speaks of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Matt 24.15). Once again this theme is picked up in the Apocalypse with the same time periods mentioned (3½ years) and related to the measuring of the temple in Rev 11.1-2. As this commentary progresses it will become apparent that we make the case for recurrent patterns, namely the Jews constantly emerged from exile and rebuilt the temple. Exodus from Egypt –build temple (temple destroyed) –Exodus from Babylon –build temple – temple desecrated by Antiochus (3½ years) – new temple (Jesus) destroyed (after 3½ year ministry) and raised, old temple destroyed (3½ year Roman War) – attempt to build temple by false messiah Bar Kochba –destroyed after 3½ year war (supported by Parthia/Babylon) – Jews exiled – Jews returned (1948)……build temple?? The Apocalypse is therefore not all realized in 70 CE, or in 135 CE (in the past), etc…it is a repeat pattern until final consummation is achieved.

The Apocalypse commences with the words; "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to show his servants **what must** soon **take place**" (Rev 1.1a). G.K. Beale has noted[7] that the formula translated in Rev 1.1 (and also 4.1 and 22.6) as **"what must….take place"** is found in only one other place in the Bible, namely in Greek versions of Daniel 2, where it occurs in verses 28, 29 and 45:

[…..]….he showed . . . what things must take place in the latter days (Dan 2.28 LXX)

[…..]…to show . . . …what things must take place quickly (Rev 1.1)

According to Beale, the verbs translated "show" are "semantic equivalents," both used to describe the "role of the prophets in revealing what God has 'shown' them." The important matter to note is the change from the expression "in the latter days" to "quickly," which "appears to indicate that fulfilment has begun (that it is being fulfilled) or will begin in the near future. Simply put, John understands Daniel's reference to a distant time as referring to his own era and he updates the text accordingly. What Daniel expected to occur in the distant 'latter days' -- the defeat of cosmic evil and the ushering in of the divine kingdom -- John expects to begin 'quickly,' in his own generation, if it has not already begun to happen."

Therefore the Apocalypse in 1.1a anticipates (via Daniel) an imminent fulfilment in the first century; this was a **partial fulfilment** setting the pattern for what is to come. This explains why first century Jewish-Christians (and Gentile-Christians) expected the return of the Messiah in the first century.[8] Of course, Jewish non-believers did not regard Jesus as the messiah but they also expected the appearance of the messiah (not Jesus) in the first century. In fact, the rabbis deleted about 160 years of history from the Persian period in order to adjust their calendar so that the end of Daniel's 490 year prophecy would fall in the first century. This was obviously done "after the fact" but the *Seder Olam Rabbah* calendar was so constructed that it justified the Maccabee and the Bar Kochba revolts. There was then a general expectation of the messianic age arriving in the first century – by both Jews and Jewish-Christians and history was "reinterpreted" in the Jewish calendar to reinforce this belief. This helps explain the volatile first century situation and the number of messianic uprisings that occurred.

Hebrews and the Apocalypse

When the temple was destroyed the Jews concluded that they had been punished because they were not ready to receive the messiah (i.e., because of wickedness)….however, they did not conclude that the punishment had occurred <u>because they had rejected the messiah</u> as they did not regard Jesus as the messiah. There followed a period of introspection and realignment in Judaism where the focus was firmly placed on codification of the "oral" Law and commentary on the Torah with the work done in the Babylonian schools. Nothing had been learned. The take-away from this is that; Jews, Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians expected the messianic age **to arrive in the first century and the Apocalypse fits this historical picture exactly.** The epistle to the Hebrews (to the Jews) reflects familiarity with the Apocalypses demonstrating that it was in circulation <u>before Hebrews was written</u>:

Revelation 1	**Hebrews 1**
God gave to Jesus to show his servants **(v.1)**	last days spoken to us by his Son **(v.2)**
He sent it by his angel **(v.1)**	Christ superior to the angels **(v.14)**
and from the seven Spirits **(v.4)**	Are they not all ministering spirits **(v.14)**
The firstborn of the dead **(v.5)**	The firstborn **(v.6)**
and prince of the kings of the earth[9] **(v.5)**	Appointed heir of all things **(v.2)**
countenance as the sun **(v.16)**	the brightness of *his* glory **(v.3)**
I am alive for evermore **(v.18)**	They perish; but you remain [10] **(v.11)**

The writer to the Hebrews uses the opening chapter of the Apocalypse as a framework for his own opening arguments. His intention is to demonstrate Christ's superiority. Jesus sends his own angel (therefore he is above the angels: proof he is the "Son", the firstborn of Ps 2.7) and therefore he is the <u>heir</u>, who is superior to gentile kings because they are his inheritance (proof: Ps 2.8), Jesus openly manifests glory after speaking with God therefore superior to Moses (proof: Moses required to hide face after meeting God cf. Ex 34.30-32) and Jesus lives forever (proof Ps 102:25-27). Moreover, the "seven spirits" sent by Jesus from before the throne (Rev 1.7) to the seven churches should not be regarded as a threat (if they are heeded) for; "Are they not all ministering spirit, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb 1.4) Jesus has, after all spoken to them in these "last days" (from heaven Heb 12.25) if only they would listen!

The epistle to the Hebrews emphasises how Jesus replaces the temple, its feasts and services because Christians have a "better (superior) covenant" in that Jesus is the fulfilment of everything and therefore Jesus and his saints are now the temple. In other words, going back to Judaism is tantamount to crucifying Jesus again (Heb 6.6) and anyway (very soon) it will all be removed (Heb 12.26).

The proof that this is a correct reading is supported by the fact that the warning to Ephesus is echoed throughout Hebrews because Hebrews was written to the Jews at Ephesus.[11] Moreover, there are countless allusions to the Apocalypse in the body of Hebrews.[12] It is sometimes argued that Hebrews was written after the temple was destroyed because Hebrews never uses the word "temple" but speaks of the tabernacle and its services.

If the temple was already destroyed it would make the argument (of Jews reverting to Judaism) completely unnecessary. Why does the writer of Hebrews prefer the example of the tabernacle? For the same reasons as Rev 13.6, John 1.14 (skenoo) and especially Stephen in Acts 7.46-48 who has God reject the temple in favour of the tabernacle because the tabernacle represented a moveable, impermanent dwelling place that could be dismantled and re-erected.

The Tabernacle represented Christ (and his saints) and the indwelling of the Shekinah glory in perishable mortal bodies that had been raised from death. So Hebrews was written before the temple fell and the writer of Hebrews had a copy of the Apocalypse at his elbow. Blindness in part has not just come to Israel but also to many Christian commentators who cannot see what is glaringly obvious – that the Apocalypse was early and that the early church was aware of the message.

Tripartite Prophetic Formula?

> **Revelation 1:19** Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

The case presented by various commentaries can be summarised as follows- **the things which thou hast seen** could refer to the vision of the, "one like the son of man" in vv.12-20, yet since John is still "within" the vision when he writes in v.19 this would seem artificial. In v.19 John is using the tripartite prophecy formula known as the "epistolary aorist" i.e., while the visions he was about to record were yet to be seen by John, from the standpoint of the reader they belong to the past. **The things thou hast seen** is a reference to v.11, "what you saw write in a book", the conclusion drawn from this, is that the verse should be understood as; **Write what you see, namely the events of the present and the future.** However, the allusion is to the tripartite covenant title which is circumlocution of the divine name in the previous verse (and not a reworking of a tripartite prophecy formula) –

I am he that liveth **-the things which are** - present
I was dead **-hast seen** - past
I am alive for evermore **-which shall be hereafter** -future

The instruction given to John alludes to Rev 1.8: "the one who is, and who was, and who is still to come". The activity of God cannot be limited to any single temporal plane. In similar fashion, those who limit the vision to exclusively preterist or futurist interpretations are limiting the word of God. The visions given to John relates to events in the past, (in his) present, and in the future. The problem facing the expositor, is determining which events are past, present or future. Sometimes this is clearly indicated, i.e., "five are fallen, one is, the other is not yet come" (Rev 17.10). At other times the transition from past to future is ambiguous as the patterns are applicable to different ages.

By the **things which are** we are probably to understand the circumstances of the seven churches that shortly follow as well as the heavenly throne scene[13] of Rev 4, where John is informed about the "things which must be hereafter" (Rev 4.1). However, **before the future** vision unfolds, we see a vision of the Lamb, that has been slain (Rev 5.6) and was slain (Rev 5.9), clearly indicating that the vision commences **shortly after** the Passover resurrection of Jesus, when he was given the sealed book (and not 66 years later in A.D. 96).

Who are the servants?

Many commentators understand the "servants" as the gentile Christian church of a latter age. This rests on the assumption that the persecutor is Domitian[14] and that the seven churches describe seven continuous "church ages". Therefore the Apocalypse has nothing to say to the Jewish nation and nothing to say to Jewish-Christians in the first century. However, all the Old Testament allusions point to the Jews. During the primitive church era Christians were a sect within Judaism. A large minority and in many cases *a majority* of Christian churches were Jewish. Citations and allusions in Rev 1 reflect this fact.

For example, the allusion to Zech 12.10, a chapter which speaks of all the families (tribes) of Israel mourning their rejection of the messiah (vv.9-14), which tribes are encountered in Rev 7 where the faithful from each tribe are sealed. Certain Christian denominations have applied this prophecy literally to their own congregations even selecting who will be among the sealed![15] This is what happens when the Apocalypse is removed from any historical context and "spiritualized". It loses all relevance and can be made to mean anything.

The Faithful Witness

Jesus' title as the "faithful witness" (Rev 1.5) also testifies to the essential Jewish character of the context as it is derived from Ps 89.37 a psalm that contemplates the demise of the Davidic covenant because the Davidide (Hezekiah) was about to die childless. Without an heir, how could the Davidic covenant achieve realization? However, Hezekiah was saved from his deathbed and his life was extended by fifteen years –the reprieve allowing him to marry and conceive a royal line. The same psalm is alluded to in John 12[16] where the Lord speaks of his glorification (crucifixion);

> **Psalm 89:37** It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.
>
> LXE **Psalm 89:37** and as the moon *that is* established for ever, and as the faithful witness in heaven. Pause.

The faithful witness in heaven should not be confused with the moon as it references the rainbow covenant. The rainbow was the covenant of mercy; "For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens" (Ps 89.2). It is the rainbow covenant that appears in Rev 10.1 to reassure the Jewish nation that despite being (temporarily) cast off, God would not forget his mercy. The appearance of the risen Christ in Rev 1.1 is therefore the realization of the Davidic covenant. A Davidide on the throne forever; and this does justice to Psalm 89 as Hezekiah was at the point of a childless death which would have annulled the covenant. The context is purely Jewish:

Revelation 1.5	**Psalm 89**
• The faithful witness	• as a faithful witness in the heaven **(v.37)**
• The firstborn of the dead	• Also I will make him my firstborn. **(v.27)**
• Ruler of the kings of the earth	• Highest of the kings of the earth **(v.27b)**
• I am the first and the last: I am he that is alive and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death. Amen **(v.18)**	• What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? **(v.48)**

The covenant was upheld and established despite the death of the messiah, moreover in words that describe the plight of the "suffering servant"; "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Isa 53.10). The "seed" that Jesus saw (the travail of his soul, v.11) were first century Christians, many of whom (the majority?) were Jewish.

Isaiah 30 and Revelation 1

Moreover, the commissioning of John to write down the visions draws heavily on Isaiah 30. Like all the prophets, John identifies himself with (and in some ways personifies) his people. The powerful point behind these allusions is that the people of Israel were walking in the wrong direction, for they heard the voice behind them, they did not want to hear the word of the Lord pronounce judgment on them: "which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease before us" (Isa.30.10-11).

Isaiah 30	**Revelation 1**
○ Children that will not hear the word of the Lord **(v.9)**	○ Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein. **(v.3)**
○ Write it before them in a table, and note it in a book **(v.8)**	○ Write in a book **(v.11,19)**
○ Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, this is the way walk ye in it. **(v.21)**	○ Heard behind me a great voice **(v.10)**
○ Bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teacher be hidden anymore, but thine eyes shall see thy teacher. (R.V.mg. singular = the teacher=Christ, the teacher of righteousness) **(v.20)**	○ John exiled to Patmos, his brethren persecuted **(v.9)** Every eye shall see him **(v.7)**

The context is once again the Hezekiah era where advantage was taken of his illness and delegations were sent to Egypt to request help against the Assyrian incursion. The Jews are being castigated for attempting to achieve their own deliverance rather than repent and rely on Yahweh.

The setting – the Day of Atonement

> **Revelation 1:10** I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet

The expression "The Lord's Day" has caused much debate in the scholarly community especially as it is a phrase found nowhere else in the NT, the closest expression being the Lord's Supper. Secular usage in Greek sources are always Imperial where κυριακός qualifies nouns such as "[Lord's] treasury" and "[Lord's] service"- therefore, used to describe imperial financial administration and this hardly fits the picture. Suggestions range from the "Sabbath" to the "Day of the Lord" (i.e. the eschatological day of judgement) to Passover. The only scholar who argues for the Day of Atonement is Wilfrid Stot but this is rejected by Ranko Stefanovic; "This argument is weakened by the fact that the scene of Christ among the lampstands reflects not the Day of Atonement, but rather the daily services related to the first apartment of the Hebrew cult as prescribed in the Mishnah".[17]

However, Stefanovic's observation is off the mark as the Day of Atonement in second temple Judaism was the only time when the High Priest cared for the Menorah (a task normally left to the minor priests). A week before the feast, the High Priest would leave his home to live inside the temple. That week, he would perform all the temple duties himself. In addition, he would study two Torah portions and learn one by heart to make sure he didn't make any mistakes. The night before, the High Priest would stay up all night learning Torah and preparing spiritually. If he fell asleep, young priests woke him up by reciting psalms. In the morning, he would put on his priestly clothes and go about the daily morning service, including the morning's sacrifice, the lighting of the menorah and the burning of incense.

However, if the Menorah supposedly had an "everlasting" flame why did it require to be lit daily? The lamps of the menorah were lit daily, "from evening until morning," starting from the central lamp (the shamash) and then moving right to left (Exod. 27:2 1). According to the Talmud (Shabbat 22b), while all the lamps received the same amount of olive oil, the "westernmost" lamp (according to Rashi, the centre lamp, due to its orientation) miraculously never ran out of oil (i.e., it was still burning the next morning), even though it was kindled *first* in the sequence.

In other words, when Aaron would rekindle the lamps every evening (the start of the Jewish day), he found the shamash still burning, so he simply refilled it with oil and trimmed its wick. This miracle is also said to have occurred during the second temple period, though it abruptly ended about 40 years before the destruction of the second temple (in c. 30 CE) as it is attested in the Talmud: "Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot ['For the Lord'] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine" (Yoma 39a).

It has already been noted that Jesus refers to the "Son of man" from Dan 7.13 coming with "clouds"[18] into the presence of the "Ancient of Days". This depicts the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. Furthermore it is only on this day that the High Priest wears a white garment with a golden sash.

Christ also wears a golden sash and although we are not told the colour of his garment, he is depicted as having "white hair" (Rev 1.13-14); making him look like someone "ancient" (Ancient of Days) and denoting purity. He is still acting as a High Priest but now with the full authority of his Father. Most striking is the visage of his face, which shines as brightly as the sun with the reflection of the Father's glory. The High Priestly blessing was pronounced on the people when the High Priest exited the divine presence on the Day of Atonement;

> Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: **The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee**: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them" (Num 6.23-27).

How do we obtain the blessing?

> **Revelation 1:3 Blessed** *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand.

Those who kept the words would receive the blessing –everlasting life and the gift of becoming a kingdom of priests who will reign with him. There are seven beatitudes in the Apocalypse and the ones occurring in Rev 14.3, Rev 16.14 (and Rev 19.9 which runs parallel with Rev 16), have Day of Atonement associations.

The last three are found in Rev 20-22 when the "books are opened" (Rev 20.6, 12) and the fate of the wicked and righteous is decided. In second temple Judaism "The fate of the thoroughly wicked and the thoroughly pious is determined on the spot; the destiny of the intermediate class is suspended until the Day of Atonement, when the fate of every man is sealed (R. H. 16*a*)".[19] Sukkot (Feast of ingathering or Tabernacles) commences five days after the Day of Atonement and forms the backdrop to the blessings in Rev 21-22.

While pronouncing the blessing the priest holds up his hands forming the letter Shin (ש), an emblem for Shaddai, translated as "Almighty [God]" which was copied by the Jewish actor Leonard Nimoy who played "Spock" in Star Trek used the hand-sign as his greeting; "Live long and Prosper" (which is the basic meaning of "EL Shadday")[20].

Jewish tradition states the Divine Presence would shine through the fingers of the priests as they blessed the people, and no one was allowed to look at this out of respect for God.[21] Some congregants will even turn their backs to the Kohanim so as to avoid any possibility of seeing their hands—although this practice is unsupported by any rabbinic source and is probably a tradition that developed later, but if it has early roots it may explain why John heard a voice "Behind him" although it is more likely that an allusion to Isaiah 30 is intended.

The sages also regarded the Day of Atonement as the supreme festival and the greatest day of the year (Gen. R. 2:3), hence its names: "The Great Day" (or, in abbreviation, "The Day") it is therefore no great step to see it referred to as the Lord's Day especially as it was probably intended to carry eschatological overtones to the "Day of the Lord".

The point that requires emphasising is that the Apocalypse held out the hope of national repentance and mercy at any stage for, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Exod 33.19).

The outcome was not predetermined but allowed for a response in which case the recurrent pattern would find complete realization in a single event without the need to constantly repeat. However, intransigence and disobedience would reap righteous judgement; "Will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exod 34.7).

The Seven Churches

> **Revelation 1:20** The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

The message is directed at Seven Churches in Asia Minor. These form the "Menorah" in the heavenly temple, which is depicted in the Apocalypse as having an altar of incense, Cherubim – like living creatures and a throne (The Ark of the covenant). The Menorah should not be thought of in the two-dimensional way in which it is usually depicted, but in three dimensions as it represents a tree with branches (tree of life) around a central stem.

Its representation is therefore multivalent – a tree, a lamp-stand, seven stars, seven angels and seven churches. In so doing it emphasizes the point that the churches are the earthly counterpart of furniture in the heavenly sanctuary just as the tabernacle was built on the pattern (proto-type) of the heavenly.[22] A birds-eye view of the Menorah looks like a star constellation -some speculate that it forms the basis for the "Star of David" –

In any case it seems to signify the heavenly constellation of *Pleiades* or Seven Sisters a star cluster visible to the naked eye and known from ancient times and symbolised on Egyptian and Babylonian artefacts. The Bible has therefore demythologised ancient lore and used it as an example of the "heavenly" lamp-stand but once again the context is purely Jewish (tabernacle/temple). The Nebra Disk found in Germany is usually considered one of the oldest representations of Pleiades (1600 BCE).[23]

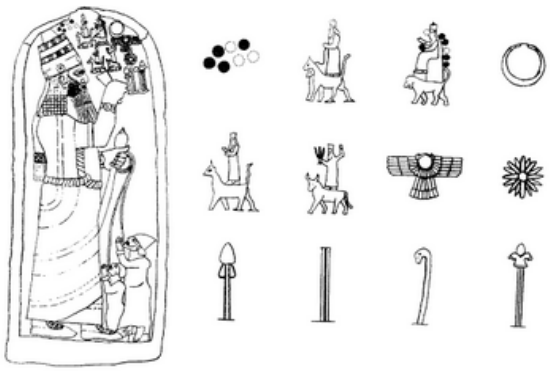

FIGURE 7.2. A monument of King Esarhaddon of Assyria from Zinjirli: The symbols on the right are extracted from the monument on the left, and they seem to represent, among other objects, the Pleiades and seven planets. The four lower staff symbols are unidentified. Sketch by Rea Postolowski and Sharon Hanna.

The Location of the Churches

> **Revelation 1:11** Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

As for the choice of these particular churches Steve Moyise[24] says; "Another point is the definite way that John speaks of 'the seven churches that are in Asia, (1: 4). One might suppose from this that these were the only churches in Asia but we know both from Acts and Paul's letters that this was not the case. Alternatively, we might think that these were the leading churches of Asia but again this does not seem to be true. Thyatira (which receives the longest letter) is a very insignificant place whilst Colossae, Troas and Magnesia have been passed over. Lastly, it might be suggested that these are the seven churches which were under John's oversight but since they cover such a wide area, it is hard to imagine how this came about. In particular, the letter to the Colossians shows that a close relationship existed between that church, the author of the canonical letter and the church at Laodicea (Col 4: 13f). How could it be that John's oversight extends from Ephesus to Laodicea but does not include either Colossae or Hierapolis? We are thus led to the conclusion that the definite nature of the address to the seven churches, is intended to be representative and means something like 'to the Church in all its fullness and diversity' [….] Ramsay also offers an answer for why John addresses these particular seven churches. As a result of his own expeditions, he discovered that each of the cities lies on a trade route. A messenger coming from Patmos would arrive at Ephesus and moving North would come first to Smyrna and then up to Pergamum. If he then turned and descended in a South-Easterly direction, he would come to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and finally Laodicea, where the route back to Ephesus would be due West. Though often called a circular route, its shape is more like that of a triangle (Ephesus, Pergamum, Laodicea) with the other cities acting as stopping off points. Ramsay further conjectured that each of the seven places operated a secondary route allowing for the efficient dissemination of information throughout this part of Asia. Thus the reason that John addressed the seven churches' is that they formed the seven postal districts for this part of Asia".[25]

Conclusion

The Apocalypse is of early provenance probably just before the Nero Persecution but possibly even earlier. The Jewish nation is still intact and the temple is still standing. The essential Jewish character of the Apocalypse which alludes to the feasts and cultic temple rituals testifies to this. Its message is directed to Jews both non-aligned (not believing) and believing (Jewish-Christians) and the "servants" are Jewish believers baptised into the name of Christ. The Gentiles are a secondary concern in this message as the very real threat exits that without repentance the nation will be cast-off and the temple destroyed (as prophesied by Daniel and Christ). When that happens the message will go forth to the Gentiles as they will also be given an opportunity but they too will face consequences for disobedience. It is not as though the gospel was not already being preached to the Gentiles (by Paul) but until the removal of the nation and the temple there was always the chance of re-absorption by Judaism. In fact, that was already happening in the first century- many churches had become corrupt and many "God fearers" had left or reverted to Judaism. Many Jews also reverted to Judaism as a deliberate campaign was waged to subvert and undermine the early church (discussed in the next chapter). There was only one remedy; if no repentance was forthcoming (from the nation *and* the church) the only option left was to remove them and repeat the pattern (again).

Commentators and denominations that do not regard the Apocalypse as having any application to the Jews have deliberately chosen to remove the writing from any historical *and* scriptural context and are therefore forced to assign the work a late date. Any interpretation that applies the Apocalypse to later Christianity of subsequent centuries is clearly a case of allowing the tail to wag the dog. Gentiles seem to have forgotten that they are but a branch in-grafted into a much larger tree and are in danger of overestimating their importance in the scheme of things. Without the restoration of true worship by the Jews the tree is dead and *ipso facto* the branch also.

Appendix: Timeline of the Apostle John

The external evidence is confusing and often contradictory. According to the tradition in Epiphanus, John left Patmos when he was over 90 years old during the reign of Claudius Caesar (51-54 CE). This is clearly impossible for if John were 20 years old at the crucifixion (30 CE) he would have been 40-50 years old during the reign of Claudius. The confusion results from the similarity between the names of the emperors Claudius Nero Caesar and Nero Claudius Caesar (54-68 CE). Eusebius states quite clearly that the emperor was Domitian (81-96 CE) and quotes Irenaeus to the effect that John survived until the reign of Trajan (98-117 CE), making him 90-100 years old. In another place Eusebius mentions that "Peter was crucified head downwards at Rome, Paul beheaded, and John exiled to an Island", giving the impression that these events occurred in close temporal proximity, and that as a consequence Revelation has an early date. By no stretch of the imagination can the 'church fathers' be cited as reliable witnesses. It is far better to rely on the internal evidence from scripture, which overwhelmingly supports an early date. Let us rather consider the traditions and ascertain where they *complement* the scriptural evidence.

- The apostle John is closely linked with Ephesus by early church tradition in fact the "house of Mary" can still be viewed there today.

- According to the Syriac apocryphal "History of John the Son of Zebedee"; After these things, when the Gospel was increasing by the hands of the Apostles, Nero, the unclean and impure and wicked king, heard all that had happened at Ephesus. And he sent and took all that the procurator had, and imprisoned him; and laid hold of St. John and drove him into exile; and passed sentence on the city that it should be laid waste. The angel of the Lord then appeared to Nero and frightened him into releasing John, and Nero thereafter did not dare to interfere with the affairs of the province of Asia.

The last location where John can be reliably placed is at the 'council of Jerusalem' until we meet him again at Patmos in Rev 1.9. The intervening years are not documented and therefore what follows is supposition, but it fits the facts as far as we can know them. Let us proceed by dating important events in the life of John, as far as it is possible from scripture:

Age of John		Event	Date CE
20	30	Mary committed to John's loving care (John 18: 15; 19: 27)	30-31
		John and Peter imprisoned (Acts 4: 19)	
		John and Peter sent to Samaria (Acts 8: 14)	
35	45	John's brother James murdered (Acts 12: 1)	45
40	50	John present in Jerusalem during the 'Jerusalem council' After Paul's first missionary journey. [ecclesia undergoing general persecution] (Acts 15: 6; Gal.2: 9)	Dated between 47-52
42	52	Jews banished from Rome by Claudius (Acts 18: 1)	52-53
		John in exile on Patmos (Rev.1:9)	??
54	64	Nero persecution	64-65
		Jewish war starts	66½
		Nero's death	68
		Domitian caretaker for his father Vespasian for six months	70
62	72	End of the Jewish war	73½

End Notes Chapter 1 pages 1-22

[1] For a reconstructed chronology (time line) of the apostle John the apostle see the Appendix at the end of the chapter.
[2] This is an ongoing project I hope to publish some time in the future.
[3] G. K. Beale, The Influence of Daniel upon the Structure and Theology of John's Apocalypse, *JETS 2714* (December 1984): 413-423,413-414 **Access here** [Retrieved June 2017]
[4] P. Wyns, *God is Judge: A Commentary on Daniel*, (Biblaridion Media, 2011). **Access here** [Retrieved June 2017]
[5] The phrase in Rev 1.7 is a conflation of Zech 12.10 and Dan.7.13; "behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man", and Zech.12.10 "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son."
[6] This is linked to the triennial reading cycle of the Old Testament…..see **Feasts of the Apocalypse**. Apparently, numerous studies have demonstrated that the paschal context of Revelation 1 fits neatly into the context of the entire book of Revelation. However, concentration on a Paschal approach neglects other feasts that are also clearly alluded to in the Apocalypse. If we are dealing with a cycle of feasts over a 3½ year period then we can expect Paschal and Atonement feasts to repeat over this period and that is exactly what we find. For a Paschal approach see; M. D. Goulder, "The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies," NTS 27 (1981): 342-367; T. Niles, As Seeing the Invisible(New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 119-125; Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in Symposium on Revelation—Book 1, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 121-122; Jon Paulien, "The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," AUSS33 (1995): 247-255; Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation, 2d ed. (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2009), 32, 34.
[7] G. K. Beale, The Book of Revelation: A Commentary of the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner,(Grand Rapids, Michigan:Eerdmans,1998),153-4,1130
[8] On this See, P. Wyns, *First Century Expectations*, ***CEJBI***, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2014 **Access here** [Retrieved June 2017]
[9] A paraphrase of Ps 2.7-8
[10] A citation from Psalm 102.25-27
[11] On this see chapter 2-3 page 43 the message to Ephesus
[12] On this see **Dating Matters**. Hebrews is not the only NT book that shows awareness of the Apocalypse.
[13] The heavenly sanctuary is an ever present reality and must fall under **the things that are**, for it represents the glory of God over his creation and continuous divine care for his people.
[14] This is discussed in Chapter 2 page 54
[15] For the J.W. article **Access here** [Accessed June 2017]. The context and interpretation is examined in Rev Chapter 7 pages 109-131.
[16] See, P. Wyns, *Psalm 89* ***CEJBI***, Vol. 3. No. 1. Jan 2009 **Access here** [Retrieved June 2017].
[17] Ranko Stefanovic, "THE LORD'S DAY" OF REVELATION 1:10 IN THE CURRENT DEBATE (Andrews University Seminary Studies, Vol. 49, No. 2, 261-284), 272. Ad loc., for a survey of all the options **Access here** [Retrieved June 2017]
[18] The mention of "Clouds" has multivariate associations as it also denotes the "witnesses" (Heb 12.1), the "prayers of the saints" (Rev 5.8) as well as the "incense cloud" on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16.13).
[19] ATONEMENT, DAY OF: Morris Jastrow, Jr., Max L. Margolis, Jewish Encyclopedia, (1906) [Retrieved June 2017] **Access here** [Retrieved June 2017]
[20] See, P. Wyns, *El Shadday* ***CEJBI***, Vol. 4. No. 2, 2010, Second quarter 2010 @ **Access here** [Retrieved June 2017].
[21] Priestly Blessing (2017, June 2). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 12:16, June 8, 2017, from **Access here** [Retrieved June 2017]
[22] On this see Chapter 11 page 196
[23] Figure 7.2 taken from David H. Kelley, Eugene F. Milone, Exploring Ancient Skies: A Survey of Ancient and Cultural Astronomy, (Springer Science & Business Media, 2011), 214.
[24] Steve Moyise, The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation, (Phd Diss, University of Birmingham, 1993), 17-18. This is a useful article; See there for a list of OT allusions used in the letter to the Seven Churches. Available online [Retrieved June 2017] **Access here** [Retrieved June 2017]
[25] The view that the order of the letters corresponds to the route taken by the messenger is accepted by most modern commentators, eg. Sweet, p. 78; Caird, p. 28; Mounce, p. 76; Krodel. p. 94, who says the suggestion is 'as good as any'; also in the Ph. D dissertation of L. C. Tengbom, Studies in the Interpretation of Revelation Two and Three, Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1976, p. 101.