

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the book of Revelation, a greeting from God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, and a communication of blessing for those who read, hear and keep the words that are written within Revelation; as the end times are near. "...Keep the words..." some translations say heed, obey, take to heart; essentially, take it seriously.

Revelation was given to Jesus by God and His angel was sent to John, who testifies everything he was shown. We are reminded that Jesus freed us from our sins by His blood. Through His sacrifice, he has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve God. We are told that Jesus will return with the clouds and every eye will see Him. Everyone on earth will mourn when they see Him, either because of joy, or because of sadness or fear. God reminds us he is the first, the last, and omnipresent, (in present, in past, and in future). Hebrews 12:1 speaks of "a great cloud of witnesses". This cloud of witnesses are the righteous saints from the Old Testament, often referred to as the heroes of the faith. Clouds are often mentioned in the Bible with either God or Jesus making an appearance. Some believe the "clouds" represent the glory of God veiled so that we can look upon Him. Some believe this "cloud" is other saints that are with God.

Another thought could be that the clouds are used to define the transition between the heavenly and earthly realms. It could be that heaven is in a "higher dimension" or a different plane. I'm not trying to get to "Sci-fi" here but consider the following: We've heard the term "clouds roll back like a scroll". We've heard of our loved ones who have passed on (or gone to heaven) "looking down" on us. Later in Revelation we hear of John speaking of standing on a sea of glass. We additionally hear of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. Why can't we see demons and evil forces, or angels and the spiritual warfare that is going on around us? Perhaps it is because it "normally" is occurring outside of our immediate reality. However, when a person allows the devil a foothold into their life, it allows the demonic forces to escape from that realm into this immediate one. I don't wish to take us too far off topic here, so we will table this discussion for another time.

John describes being on the island of Patmos, jailed for preaching about God and the Gospel of Jesus. He was in the spirit, (communing with the Holy Spirit as I read it), on the Lord's Day, when he hears a "voice like a trumpet" telling him to write what the Lord is preparing to show him and send the message to the seven churches. "Voice like a trumpet" refers to a loud and commanding voice. A trumpet calls attention, announces and commands. John turns towards the voice he heard and sees seven golden lampstands, (the seven churches), and sees "one like the son of man", (Jesus) among them. He was dressed in a full-length robe, with a golden sash, speaks of Jesus being a pure judge and priest. His hair is as white as snow speaks of wisdom, authority, and pureness. His eyes were like a flame of fire speaks of Him being an all-seeing, righteous judge. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace speaks of divine judgment and His voice was like the sound of rushing waters speaks of loud-powerful sound. In His right hand he held seven stars and out of his mouth was a sharp, double edged sword, speaks of the word of God. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance, speaks of the ultimate glory of God or divine glory. Nothing is brighter than the sun.

John falls to his feet in reverence and Jesus places His right hand on John and tells him not to be afraid. Jesus tells John he was the first and the last and the one who was resurrected from the dead. Jesus has the keys of death and Hades at this point. Later in Revelation, Satan has the keys when he unlocks the great abyss. Undoubtedly Jesus allows Satan to take them so that portions of the judgment may be fulfilled. Jesus instructs John to write what he has seen in the past, what he is seeing now, and what he will be seeing later. Jesus tells us the seven stars in His hand are the seven angels of the seven churches and that the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Seven stars (angels): Some believe these are actually the seven pastors of the seven churches. Some believe these were actually angels that protected these churches.

Seven lampstands (churches): These were literal churches in Asia that Jesus used as examples in Revelation 2 and 3. Some people believe they represent “periods” in history as the church has developed. Some people believe they only speak to those churches as reference.

With respect to the seven angels and churches, seven represents the number of completion and perfection. I believe that these churches are used to represent the different levels of devotion that the church, the whole church consisting of both professing and confessing Christians, demonstrate to Jesus. I believe that each of us fit into one of these seven descriptions and that our heavenly rewards, or lack thereof, will be consistent with what we have earned.