

# Revelation: Prologue 1:1-8

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# Prologue 1:1-8

“Just as the prologue to the Fourth Gospel puts the reader in a position to understand the story of Jesus which follows, so the prologue to the Revelation supplies a vantage point from which the reader may view with understanding the vision of history which follows.”

— Beasley-Murray

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# General Outline

Prologue	Church		World		Heaven	Epilogue
Jesus/John	Vision	Judgment	Vision	Judgment	Vision	Jesus/John
Revelation of J/Christ (1:1-8)	Vision of Son/Man (1:9-20)	Seven Letters (2-3)	Vision of Heaven (4-5)	Judgment Cycle (6-20)	Vision of Victory (21-22)	Revelation of J/Christ (22:6-21)
						

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# General Outline



Prologue
Jesus/John
Revelation of J/Christ (1:1-8)


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## Prologue 1:1–8

- I. Chapter One: Basic Keys of Revelation
  - A. Christological Key
    - Prologue (1:1–8)
    - Emphasis: the core of the gospel = Jesus' death and resurrection
  - B. Hermeneutical Key
    - Inaugural Vision (1:9–20)
    - Emphasis: the core of the church = Jesus' presence and paradigm

## Prologue 1:1–8

- II. Chapter One: Basic Character of Revelation
  - A. Character of the Literature
    - Hybrid genre: epistle, prophecy, apocalypse
    - Six corollaries: six interpretive implications
  - B. Character of the Vision
    - Basic content: “of Jesus Christ”
      - from* Jesus (v. 1)
      - about* Jesus (vv. 9–20)
    - Basic application: “the time is near”
      - first-century believers (not two millennia later)
      - provokes question: did prophecies fail?

## Prologue 1:1–8

- II. Chapter One: Basic Character of Revelation
  - C. Character of the Message
    - Emphasis: the gospel
      - Jesus' death (“faithful witness”)
      - Jesus' resurrection (“firstborn of the dead”)
    - Implication: contextualizes other truths
      - salvation: forgiveness and a kingdom
      - kingdom: priestly and spiritual
      - return: judgment based on Calvary
      - sovereignty: *in Christ through* tribulation (1:5; 1:9)

## Prologue 1:1–8

- III. Prologue Exegesis (1:1)
  - A. Apocalyptic Opening
    - “Revelation”: a genre declaration
    - “of Jesus Christ”: both *from* (v. 1) and *about* (vv. 9–20)
  - B. Immanent Meaning
    - “must take place soon”: (1) quickly or (2) near
    - idea repeated in 1:3 (“for the time is near”)
    - inaugurated or futurist eschatology?
    - relationship to Dan. 2:28 (“in the last days”)

## Prologue 1:1–8

### III. Prologue Exegesis (1:1)

#### C. Authoritative Validation

“signified”: sign language—John prefers pictures to prose (Beale)

“his angel”: God to Jesus to angel to John mediated message, full claim to divine inspiration, authority, gospel concord

alien figure: no other place in the NT in which Jesus communicates through an angel

little help from few NT passages on angels  
connection to “angels” of seven churches?

## Prologue 1:1–8

### IV. Prologue Exegesis (1:2)

#### A. Forensic Setting

“witnessed the word”: expression seems to bear more weight than simply evangelization

“testimony of Jesus”

equals content of “word of God”?

equals Jesus’ witness on the cross?

equals martyr’s witness for Jesus?

#### B. Global Summary

“whatsoever he saw”: *entire* set, *all* visions  
tense same for same verb at 1:19

## Prologue 1:1–8

### V. Prologue Exegesis (1:3)

#### A. Establishes Prophetic Genre

#### B. Blessing Pronounced

“one who reads”: worship setting

“those who hear”: call to obey

fulfills prophetic dimension of genre

ties to conclusion of all seven letters

#### C. Immanence Repeated

“the time is near”: repeats idea of 1:1

how about we read this “literally”?

theology of inaugurated eschatology?

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VI. Prologue Exegesis (1:4–5a)

#### A. Establishes Epistolary Genre

#### B. Address (1:4)

“John”: styled simply as “servant” in 1:1

“to the seven churches”: symbolic number

“in Asia”: historical context

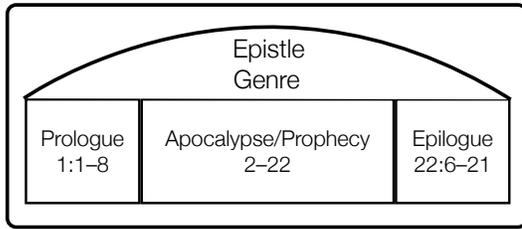
#### C. Benediction

“grace and peace”: Pauline epistolary echo

“from”: 3-fold identification (God, Spirit, Jesus)

“the one who is . . . was”: verbal divine name;  
Exodus traditions (Exod 3:15)

## Prologue 1:1–8



## Prologue 1:1–8

### VI. Prologue Exegesis (1:4–5a)

#### C. Benediction (1:4)

“who is to come”: symbolic of judgment theme  
theme played out in seven letters and visions  
pattern of 1:4, 8 changes at 11:17; 16:5  
verbs = Alpha and Omega = Almighty (1:8)  
a title of sovereignty and power  
“and from the seven spirits”  
2nd element of 3-fold “from”  
symbolic of Holy Spirit in prophetic fullness

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VI. Prologue Exegesis (1:4–5a)

#### C. Benediction (1:5a)

“and from Jesus Christ”  
3rd element of 3-fold “from”  
3rd appearance of this name in 5 verses  
3 crucial identifiers of this name  
“faithful witness”: crucifixion  
“firstborn of the dead”: resurrection  
“ruler of the kings of the earth”: glorification  
John’s equivalent gospel summary  
fulfills “apocalypse of Jesus Christ” (1:1)

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VI. Prologue Exegesis (1:4–5a)

#### C. Benediction (1:5a)

“and from Jesus Christ”  
theological implications  
“faithful witness”: Isa 43:10–13  
in his passion (“not my will”)  
fits needs of Asia Minor churches  
“firstborn of the dead”: Pss 88; 89:27, 37  
primogeniture = messianic inheritance  
rights  
kingdom reign already begun

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VI. Prologue Exegesis (1:4–5a)

#### C. Benediction (1:5a)

“and from Jesus Christ”

theological implications

“ruler of the kings of the earth”: Ps 89:23

Ps 89 interpreted messianically by Jews

John sees Jesus as ideal Davidic king

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VII. Prologue Exegesis (1:5b–6)

#### A. Doxology (1:5b)

“to him who loves us”: present tense praise

doxology reinforces worship setting (1:3)

Jewish covenant language

“and loosed us from our sins”: past tense act

plays out priestly meaning of “loves us”

problem is sin; solution is priestly absolution

“by his blood”: sacrificial language

plays out “loves us” and “faithful witness”

cross as “apocalypse” of God’s love

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VII. Prologue Exegesis (1:5b–6)

#### A. Doxology (1:5b)

“by his blood”: sacrificial language

blood theme in Revelation

Lamb: 5x (1:4; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11; 19:13)

martyrs: 5x (6:10; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2)

elements: 6x (6:12; 8:7, 8; 11:16; 16:3, 4)

unbelievers: 1x (14:20)

conclusion: *almost exclusively Christian*

*focus* and reflected in judgment elements

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VII. Prologue Exegesis (1:5b–6)

#### A. Doxology (1:6)

“he made us a kingdom”: priestly action’s result

kingdom = language of sovereignty

past tense = present reality

“priests”: nature of this kingdom

key statement on *nature* of Christ’s kingdom

priestly action constitutes priestly kingdom

Israel’s destiny (Ex. 19:16): revealing God

Israel’s failure (Ex. 24:4–8; Isa. 43:10–13; 1 Pet. 2:5–10)

Church’s mission (Mt. 28:19; Acts 1:8)

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VII. Prologue Exegesis (1:5b–6)

#### A. Doxology (1:6)

“to him be glory and dominion”: praise offering

glory = making a priestly communion

dominion = making a priestly kingdom

“forever”: key distinguishing mark of this power

bold declaration of sovereignty

ultimate put down of all human dominion

#### B. Response (1:6)

“Amen”: 1st liturgical response

anticipates congregational affirmation

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VIII. Prologue Exegesis (1:7)

#### A. Prophecy

“he is coming with the clouds”: OT allusions

Dan. 7:13—Son of Man’s enthronement

Zech. 12:10—Israel mourns for one pierced

Ezek. 38–39—end-time defeat of nations

entered gospel traditions (Mt. 24:30)

John’s innovations

Daniel realized (Jesus’ enthronement)

Ezekiel universalized (mourners now *all*)

“coming” inaugurated (through Revelation)

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VIII. Prologue Exegesis (1:7)

#### A. Prophecy

“every eye will see him”: sight or perception?

if sight, what context? simultaneity?

if perception, what truth? soteriological?

Jn. 19:37 applies same text to the cross

Roman soldiers witnessing death of Jesus

pagan paradigm of conversion?

“coming” reality tied to cross event?

## Prologue 1:1–8

### VIII. Prologue Exegesis (1:7)

#### A. Prophecy

“they will mourn”: who?

unbelievers: fear of impending judgment?

believers: faith acknowledgment of salvation?

“all tribes of the earth”: John’s innovation

Zechariah universalized (not just Israel)

only true through cross (Jn. 12:32)

#### B. Response

“Even so, amen”: 2nd liturgical response

reinforces gospel truths prophecy encapsulates

## Prologue 1:1–8

### IX. Prologue Exegesis (1:8)

#### A. Divine Declaration

“I am”: echoes of Johannine declarations?

God speaks only here and at end (21:5–8)

direct, divine validation of John’s message

3-part identification of God here parallels the  
3-part identification of Jesus in 1:5

“the Alpha and the Omega”: Greek alphabet

21:6, of God, adding “beginning and end”

22:13, of Christ, adding “first and last,”

“beginning and the end”

## Prologue 1:1–8

### IX. Prologue Exegesis (1:8)

#### A. Divine Declaration

“the Alpha and the Omega”: Greek alphabet

allusive of creation (“in the beginning,” Gen. 1:1)

God consummates what he initiates

“Eschatology is nothing more than creation  
theology’s last chapter.”—Dr. Stevens

lordship claim: controlling beginning and end

= controlling all in between = Asia Minor, 95

a challenge to the churches

## Prologue 1:1–8

### IX. Prologue Exegesis (1:8)

#### A. Divine Declaration

“who is, was, is to come”: repeats 1:4

“coming”: symbolic of judgment theme

theme played out in seven letters and visions

pattern of 1:4, 8 changes at 11:17; 16:5

*inclusio* with 1:7 prophecy of Christ’s coming

Christ’s actions = God’s judgments

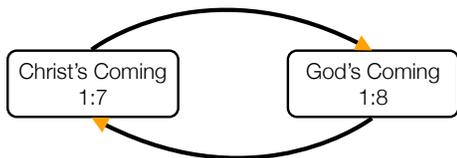
11:17; 19:6 occurrences = final judgments

associated with “Lord God, Almighty” title

## Prologue 1:1–8

Christ's Coming  
1:7

God's Coming  
1:8



## Prologue 1:1–8

### IX. Prologue Exegesis (1:8)

#### A. Divine Declaration

“Lord God . . . Almighty”: supreme sovereignty  
Jewish background  
full name of God among prophets  
Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi  
undergirds earlier Lord of history declaration  
direct broadside to Roman imperial  
propaganda

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## Prologue 1:1–8

“When Caesar Trajanus Hadrianus Augustus Parthicus, holy son of the divine Trajan, son of the divine Nerva, was emperor, Aulus Julius Kouadratus, the temple warden and priest of Dionysius, along with Julia Ourbanas, [dedicated this for] the protector and benefactor of their own mother.”

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