

The full JST is in: *JosephSmithPapers.org*, *Inspired Version*, or Hite's NT with JST, 336. The "New Rendition" and a main source of commentary: Richard Draper, Michael Rhodes. *The Revelation of John the Apostle*. Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015. Also I use Alonzo Gaskill's notes / commentary on Revelation; and the D&C and Joseph's Sermons (Ehat, Cook, *Words of JS*).

Fall Schedule

Sept 8: Rev 1	Introduction: Vision of the Throne of God
Sep 15: Rev 2-3	Admonition to 7 neighboring churches
Sep 22: Rev 4-5	Vision of God's Throne
Sep 29: Rev 6-7	Open Book of Seven Seals #1-#6, <i>Interlude</i>
Oct 6: Rev 8-9	Opens 7th Seal
Oct 13: Rev 10-11	<i>Interlude</i> , Continuation of 7th Seal
Oct 20: Rev 12-13	God's Kingdom vs. Satan's Kingdom
Oct 27: Rev 14-15	Restoration, <i>Interlude</i>
Nov 3: Rev 16-19:2	Final scenes of the world, <i>Interlude</i>
Nov 10: Rev 19:3-20	Marriage Supper of the Lamb, Millennium
Nov 17: Rev 21-22	New Heaven and New Earth, Conclusion

Apocalyptic Literature:

A genre that prophesies about the end of time. It is highly symbolic and means: "something uncovered" or "revealed." It includes prophetic visions that describe the supernatural and cataclysmic events (i.e. Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 37, the second half of Daniel, Apocalypse of Baruch, IV Enoch, and many more dating from 210 B.C. and 200 A.D.). It claims to record what the prophets saw in dreams or visions. It includes images cloaked to inspire deep thinking to figure it out—like a riddle.

Title: Revelation = Apocalypse

The title comes from the book's opening phrase: "a Revelation / Apocalypse from Jesus Christ." The Greek describes a specific type of revelation: "Apocalypses / *apokalupsis* / an unveiling / uncovering / revealing."ⁱ The book's messages are not clear. God intentionally inspired it as an apocalyptic puzzle, or riddle of the future, that God wants us to figure out in order to understand. Fortunately, the Restoration provides much to help uncover John's uncovering (including the D&C, JST, and the Prophet Joseph Smith's sermons).

Synopsis

The Apocalypse of John describes a series of visions that symbolically depicted the history of our world. Even though we do not have a full record yet (D&C 93:18), this is our only scripture that reveals this much of the whole scope of the Lord's plan. Many other prophets also received a vision of the history of the world: Adam, Enoch, the brother of Jared, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Nephi—to name a few. Yet God gave only John the responsibility of publishing his record to the world (Rev 1:11; 1 Nephi 14:18-27; Ether 4:16; etc.). With the help of Joseph Smith's inspired keys, we see the book focusing on uncovering the last days, as well as briefly touching on the God's direction from His throne, the history of the world, Jesus' Second Coming, and end of the earth. It wasn't until the restoration though, that we received the keys to understand it's message.

Four-fold Message:

1. The book unfolds Jesus' character and roles—as Son, high priest, judge, delegator, warrior, savior—Look For HIM.
2. We learn of our Savior's extensive and intimate care for the world from the pre-mortal earth to its celestial state
3. Watch with faith and hope to see the warnings without over-reacting or become heedless (as Noah's neighbors)
4. It warns Christians of all times, that the real enemy is Satan. It warns against Satna's oft repeated poisons:
*Love of materialism, *Honors of men, *Selfishness, *Pride or symbolic Babylon.

Author: John the Beloved

Modern revelation confirms that the author is the Apostle John (son of Salome and Zebedee, brother of James I, fishing partner of Simon Peter and Andrew—see D&C 7; 1Ne 14:20-24). Some date John's visions to the end of the first century because Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyon (AD 120-203), recorded that John wrote his Apocalypses "towards the end of Domitian's reign," which ended in AD 96. As a second historical witness—Tertullian (AD 155-240) also said John was forced to Rome and "plunged, unhurt into boiling oil and thence remitted to his island exile."ⁱⁱ But Caesar Domitian could not kill John. (He did kill other Christians though as he enforced Emperor Worship. Richard Draper suggests that the apostle chose "exile (*deportatio* in this case) over death" (Draper, *Revelation of John*, 67).

John had an intimate role in bringing forth the restoration. This became one of John's specific assignments mentioned in the book of Revelation (Rev 10:10). Very early on, before the Book of Mormon was translated or priesthoods received, the prophet Joseph Smith received a vision of John learning that he would be "a ministering angel . . . for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth" (D&C 7:6). The first heir of salvation in this dispensation was the prophet Joseph Smith. Additionally, the Apostle John assisted with the restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood.

Isle of Patmos

John wrote from the "Island of Patmos" (Rev 1:9, NIV). The small (10'x6'), rocky island is 60 miles off the coast of Ephesus (or western coast of modern Turkey). In the fourth century, the historian Eusebius recorded that John resumed his residence in Ephesus after his exile on Patmos. Unlike previous scholars assumed, the island was not a Roman prison (*Ibid.*, 64-67), but a naval outpost to fight pirates. It also became a place for John to draw closer to God and receive these visions.

Outline

Vision:	Throne Of God	Seven Churches	BC 4000- AD 1000	AD 1000- AD 2000	AD 2000 2nd Coming	Millennium 20XX-30XX	Final Scenes	Celestialized Earth
Chps:	1, 4-5	2-3	6:1-11	6:12-7:3.	8:1-19:2	20:1-6	20:7-15	21:1-22:6
Verses:	36	51	11	14	201	6	9	33

Organization of Chapters

(Chronological history of the earth with four interludes)

1. Intro and Vision of the Christ
- 2-3. Message to 7 Churches
 - * Description of Christ
 - * Condemnation
 - * Challenge
 - * Promise
- 4-5. Throne Theophony--Vision of Heavenly Father in His Temple and Christ accepting His Call
 - * 24 Elders
 - * 4 Beasts
6. Open 1st-6th SEALS: Unfold history of the earth depicted as
 - * 6,000 years divided into six seals of the book
 - * 4 horses one for each of the thousand years from Adam to Jesus's birth
7. **Explanation** of the purified and exalted state of the noble saints—144,000
- 8-9. Open 7th SEAL including
 - * 6 of the 7 angels/servants sound their trumpets
 - * First woe
10. **Explanation** of John's call
11. Continued 7th SEAL
 - * 2 Witnesses in Jerusalem
 - * 2nd Woe Finished
 - * 7th Angel sounds trumpet
- 12-14. Kingdom of God vs. Kingdom of Satan
 - * Woman as the Church of God appears
 - * Premortal war with Lucifer continued on earth with Dragon or Serpent
 - * Christ harvests His Righteous
15. **Explanation** of Heavenly Temple with 7 Angels with 7 Last Plagues
16. Final scenes of the world
 - * 7 Angels Pour out Plagues
 - * Battle of Armageddon
- 17-18. **Explanation** of Great and Abominable Organizations followed by the Fall of Wickedness / Babylon
19. Marriage Supper of God and His Saints
 - * The Conquering Christ Returns to Judge on a White Horse
 - * Satan and His Devils are Cast Out
20. Millennium, and Afterward, the Final Scenes of the World
 - * Battle of God and Magog
 - * Final Judgement
- 21-22. New Heaven and New Earth

(I adapted this information from: Alonzo Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*. SLC: Deseret Book, UT., 2003)

Dealing with: God

- Eyes
- Cloud
- White raiment of Priests / Priestess
- Sword
- Bridegroom

-Heavenly Things:

- Angels
- Horns
- Wings
- Incense
- Sun
- Mountains
- Sea of Glass

-Humans:

- Kings-Priests / Queens-Priestess
- Name
- Crown
- Candlestick
- Golden Sash and Bow
- Stars
- Forehead
- Sealing on forehead
- Bride or Woman

-Animals:

- 4 Beasts
- Lamb and Sheep
- Serpent or Snake
- Horses
- Dragon

-Numbers:

- 7 Seals
- 1/3
- 2
- 3
- 3 ½
- 4
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 12
- 24
- 40
- 144
- 666
- 1000

-Colors:

- White
- Black
- Red or Scarlet
- Brass
- Gold
- Pale
- Green

Symbolismⁱⁱⁱ

- = Light and Knowledge, Multiple Eyes is Omniscience
- = Shekinah, God's Glory & Protection in the Wilderness
- = Robes of the High Priest (Ex 29:5; Dan 10:5)
- = God's Word: Command, Judgment
- = Jesus the Messiah or Christ
- = Heavenly Servants (JST)
- = Power and Strength, both Good and Bad
- = Power to Act
- = Ascending Prayers of the Righteous
- = Celestial Glory, the Son of God, Daily Reminder of Second Coming
- = Temples, Patterned after the Heavenly Temple, Separation from World
- = Omniscience of Heaven or Celestialized Earth
- = Heirs of God (Rev 1:6; D&C 84:38)
- = Personal Character, Authority, or New Name for the Initiated
- = Conqueror (laurel wreath in John's time)
- = Church as carriers of Christ's light, Temple symbol of the Spirit
- = Clothing for Kings and Priests, respectively
- = Servants / Angels of God (i.e. church leaders)
- = Desire, Thoughts (also associated with heart)
- = Anointed with Calling and Election
- = God's Church Members or Covenant Israel
- = Individual Animals Representing their Classes in Heaven
- = Christ and His Disciples, Gentleness, Meekness, Humility, Submissiveness
- = Originally a Symbol of Christ that was Usurped by Satan's Temptations
- = War Animal
- = Evil, Destruction (in Greek snake and dragon are interchangeable)
- = 7,000-year History of Adam's Posterity on the Earth
- = Portion, Limited, Bounds Have Been Set
- = In Hebrew the Life Force, Creative Power, Male and Female, Witnesses
- = Godhead, Divine Involvement Related to Atonement (3hrs, 3days, 3crosses)
- = Midway to being whole or complete
- = Geographic Fullness, Totality, Four Quarters (not corners) of the Earth
- = Not Complete, Imperfect
- = Creation, Complete, Whole, Fullness, Perfect, Oath, Eternal Life (Egyptian)
- = Christian Sabbath, Rebirth, Covenant of Circumcision, and Baptism
- = Divine Order, Priesthood, Heavenly Order (12 months, etc.)
- = Fullness of Priesthood, Exaltation or One's Calling and Election Sure
- = Period of Purification, Trial, Testing, Probation, Mourning
- = Priesthood Power Perfected (any multiple of 12 speaks of God's Order)
- = Trinity of Imperfection, Satan, Great and Abominable, Anti-Christ
- = Large Number, Period of Time, Magnified Number, Length of Seal
- = Victory, Purity, Righteousness, Spirit, Light, Revelation
- = Sorrow, Grief, Mourning, Sin, Judgment, Darkness, Destruction
- = Atonement, Mortality, Blood, Bloodshed, Sin, Violence
- = Judgment, Stability, Strength, Endurance, Permanence
- = Divine, Wealth, Celestial, or, Worldliness (depending on the context)
- = Impending Death, Cadaver
- = Vegetation, Life

Historical Interpretation

The Book of Revelation was accepted as scripture in the first century, questioned in the second, and canonized in the third. From approximately AD 300 to 1,000 it was interpreted as an allegory of good and evil with evil finally being destroyed when Satan is bound. When Christ did not return over the first centuries, Christians theorized that missionary work would commence for 1,000 years and then Christ would come (“post-millennialists”). But that did not happen either. During the Reformation, Protestants interpreted the book as referring to historical persons or societies (i.e. Nero). It wasn’t until the Prophet Joseph restored several keys of interpretation that the book was uncovered. Unlike most other Christians, Joseph taught that the book teaches that Christ’s Second Coming will precede the millennium. That will not happen until the saints are prepared.

It was not until the Restoration that we learned most of the book is chronological. It spans the history of the earth (D&C 77:6-7). Each seal is a period of approximately one thousand biblical years of history. In addition to D&C 77, the Prophet Joseph Smith also taught about the Book of Revelation and left many keys to help understand the symbolism.

Summary of Restored Keys for Interpretation

These keys help unlock meanings and symbols of the book (but once inside, the text still needs exploration). The vision was recorded in this way so that the reader would learn from it.

- D&C 77 is God’s “explanation of the Revelation of St. John” (and footnotes to Topical Guide parallels).^{iv}
- D&C 88; 93:18; Ether 4:15-16; and the JST of Revelation
- Temple imagery from the initiatories, endowment, and sealings
- Look for the Plan of Salvation and pray for the Spirit of revelation.
- Identify symbols and significant numbers (these come from OT symbolic usage and Joseph—see chart above)
- Read with an ancient eastern mind-set to find allegorical messages. The language paints verbal pictures to emphasize effect, not details.
- Read the book of Revelation for comfort and encouragement that God’s covenant will be fulfilled

With these important keys, the book is more accessible than it ever has been. The Lord will hold us responsible for studying, understanding, recognizing and preparing for the last days. Commit time and thought to understand.

Text: Prologue (Rev 1:1-3)

Rev 1:1 “The Revelation of John , a servant of God, which was given unto him of Jesus Christ, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass” (JST) Joseph Smith felt inspired to make many changes to the first eight verses. The text speaks mainly of the future. The past is barely touched on, while the last days before Second Coming gets the most attention.

Note John used the plural, “servants,” suggesting future readers. We fall into that category with several revealed keys to unlock the text. The Berean Bible (BSB) capitalizes “His servants” to clarify that it refers to servants of the Lord. We are the Lord’s servants when we do what the Master asks. Those who follow the promptings of the Spirit are the Lord’s servants. The Lord wants His servants to receive this information to help them prepare for the Second Coming. In that sense, the book is written to us. It will “shortly come to pass” in the sense that all is as one day with God” (Alma 40:8; also see D&C 63:53; 64:24).

“He sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John” (KJV) The Greek word for *signify* means: “to give a sign or token of recognition by which true can be distinguished from the false” (Richard Draper). The series of visions compiled into the Book of Revelation includes many angels—but John’s first guide in verse 8, is the Lord. This introduction via divine messengers gives the authenticity to the message. Angels come to testify to of truth and use signs and tokens to identify that they are divine. In the scriptures, angels often come to give course corrections.

John learned these things when an angel “gave a sign / *sémainó* / make known.”^v John was able to trust the angel as a servant of God because he recognized a divine “sign.” The Prophet Joseph Smith also warned that if we receive a spiritual visitor, we should ask them to shake hands to determine if they are from God or the devil. D&C 129:5 explains that if they are resurrected, they will shake hands with us). In this manner, the angel gave John some sort of a sign to identify himself as a divine messenger.

Rev 1:3 “Blessed are they who read, and they who hear and understand . . . and keep those things that are written” (JST) John charges the saints with receiving this Apocalypse and seeking to understand it as a gift from God to prepare for His Coming. From the synagogue practice, the Christians read their sacred texts in their worship services. Joseph changed the text from “he who reads” to “they who read,” which opened the audience beyond the ancient initial audience.

Greeting to the Seven Churches (Rev 1:4-8)

Rev 1:4-5a “*Now this is the testimony of John to the seven servants who are over the seven churches in Asia . . . who hath sent forth his angel from before his throne . . . Therefore, I, John, the faithful witness, bear record of the things which were delivered me of the angel, and from Jesus Christ*” (JST italicized) John testifies that he will accurately convey the Divine message that he received. The number seven is used 55 times in the Apocalypses and represents whole, complete, or perfect. (In John’s Gospel he also used seven symbolically—including only seven miracles and seven sermons of Jesus.)

Rev 1:5b-6 “. . . To the *One* loving us and releasing us from our sins through His blood” (BLB)
This literal translation emphasizes the Savior’s continuing redemption to all who repent.

Rev 1:7 “**Unto him who loved us, be glory; who washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God**” (JST) John describes and honors our Redeemer by acknowledging several aspects of His atoning gift, including the potential to purify us to serve as priests to God.

“**He cometh in the clouds with then thousands of his saints in the kingdom, clothed with the glory of his Father. And every eye shall see him. . . Amen**” (JST) Christ’s triumphal entrance this time will be to come to earth in the clouds with God’s glory. The children of Israel previously were blessed with a “cloud by day” (Numbers 14:14). When the Savior comes again, He will be the pillar of light along with the Divinely-given clouds.

Rev 1:8 “**I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.**” The title, “I am,” was also the name heard by Moses in Mt Sinai. It provides continuity from ancient Israel to the end of time. We also find interesting overlays with temple symbols and God’s deliverance. The word “Almighty / *pantokrator*” connotes an unrestricted power exercising absolute dominion. God the Father orchestrates the score or plan on earth. Then Jesus brings about the score or plan. The Lord is the conductor of this life’s symphony. He is active and continues to be active.

John’s Vision of the Son of Man: A Throne Theophany (Rev 1:9-1)

Rev 1:9-11 “**I, John, your brother . . . in the suffering . . . and patient endurance . . . was on the island of Patmos . . . on the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: ‘Write on a scroll . . .’**” (NIV) John had suffered for his testimony of Jesus Christ. As a translated being, his body changed to lengthen his life and remove physical pain, but he still “suffered” emotional pain. We learn in the Book of Mormon, “ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the world (3 Nephi 28:9; also see Jn 21:20-23; D&C 7).vii

Rev 1:12-13 “**I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the middle of the lampstands saw one like the Son of Man . . .**” It is the glorified Savior. The seven branched candlestick or menorah stood near the veil in all Israelite temples. It represented the Tree of Life from the Garden of Eden, and the way back to the presence of God. Jesus identified Himself as the “light of the world” and “I am the light which ye shall hold up” (Jn 8:12; 3 Nephi 16:24). In this vision, there are seven, or a complete amount of light, surrounding the Son of Man “of Holiness” (Moses 6:57). They represent John’s seven churches (Rev 1:20).

“**dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest**” (NIV)

Jesus has been dressed—Greek “*enduo*”—in His sacred clothing. The word means to be invested with clothing (literally or figuratively) –to array, and clothe with.” The clothing is important as a temple text. Priests wore long white robes when serving at the temple, and Moses’ high priest, Aaron, had the “ephod of gold” and Urim and Thummim on his chest (Ex 28:6, 30). To be clothed or endued, is related to a special investment, which will lead to sacred events and covenant making.

Rev 1:14-15 “**His hairs are white like wool . . . eyes are like a flame of fire . . . feet are like fine bronze . . . voice is like the voice of many waters**” (BLB) There are similarities with this vision as there are in D&C 110 when the Lord appears to Joseph in the Kirtland Temple. Both visions are of the heavenly temple and are described with sacred symbols.

Rev 1:16 “**He is holding in His right hand seven stars**” (BLB) The Lord’s right—or covenant—hand held “complete” light which may include healing and omniscience. Just as He did with His parables, the Lord explains the meaning

to John. The stars represent the seven “angels” or “servants” over the seven churches (1:20, JST). Both mean messengers of the Lord.

“and a sharp two-edged sword is going forth out of His mouth; and His face is like the sun shining” (BLB) His piercing voice is likened to the strongest sword known, probably representing the strongest words known (Hebrews 4:12; and D&C 6:2; 11:2; 12:2; 14:2; 33:1). In Greek the sword continually issues from his mouth. By the power of His word, He created the earth (Jacob 4:9; Mormon 9:17).

In addition to military vocabulary, the sword also has ancient temple imagery. Moses commanded that before the animals were sacrificed their throats were cut by a sword before being placed on the altar. The “sun” represents celestial life.

Rev 1:17 “when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. And He placed His right hand upon me, saying, ‘Fear not’” John is overwhelmed by the Lord’s grandeur. Similar reactions to seeing God’s Throne theophanies are shared in: Isaiah 1:18; 6:1:-8; Dan 7:9; etc. Jesus comforts John by touching him with His covenant, right, hand, and giving the assurance that he has nothing to fear, not even the pains of hell. John may have felt like he was living in hell on Patmos, but the Lord reassures him. Jesus also testifies that he has the power to release all those from hell to kingdoms of glory. It is an assurance to the church members that Christ’s promises will be fulfilled; He will save all to immortality, and Eternal life to those who repent and “overcome” the natural man and Satan’s temptations to choose good over evil.

Rev 1:18 “the keys of hell and of death” Jesus overcame all and thus received the keys of hell—not Satan. We define “hell” as a place of suffer and repentance. After the wicked have suffered for their sins, our Redeemer will release them and most will inherit a kingdom of glory (D&C 76).

Rev 1:19 “Write . . . the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter” When Jesus has to explain the images, we realize that John wrote what he saw.

Rev 1:20 “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand . . . the stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks . . . are the seven churches.” Each church has the angelic assistance. The administration of angles are given to covenant keeping disciples. Each church member or disciple is given a calling to carry God’s light to the world. The Lord explains images to help John and his readers solve the riddle of the vision through study and prayer.

i Strong’s #602, <https://biblehub.com/greek/602.htm> (accessed 11/18/19)

ii Tertullian, *The Sacred Writings of Tertullian, Annotated Edition* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2017), Chp XXXVI. https://books.google.com/books?id=oqh67TAWp-UC&pg=PT485&lpg=PT485&dq=Tertullian%27s+writings,+plunged,+unhurt+into+boiling+oil&source=bl&ots=pnSNkf5cRa&sig=ACfU3U1QNpyvOCVZafGq2b4lToRHCFXdLg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjs_sLH-fLJAhV1JDQIHZApcDUQ6AEwCXoECACQAQ#v=onepage&q=Tertullian's%20writings%2C%20plunged%2C%20unhurt%20into%20boiling%20oil&f=false (accessed 11/17/19)

iii Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*, Deseret Book, 2003, adapted.

iv The information in D&C 77, was first published in the Nauvoo Newspaper, *Times and Seasons*, under the title: “A Key to Understanding the Revelations of St. John, in a Series of Questions and Answers.” From there it was later collected with the writings in the Pearl of Great Price, and finally placed chronologically in the Doctrine and Covenants. See Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, *Brigham Young University, New Testament Commentary: The Revelation of John the Apostle* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 33.

v Skousen on the Book of Revelation.