

Dr. David Mathewson, Revelation, Session 4, Revelation 1 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, Revelation, Session 3, Revelation 1, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Dave Mathewson analyzes Revelation chapter one, dividing it into two sections: an introduction (verses 1-8) and an inaugural vision of Jesus Christ (verses 9-20). The introduction establishes the book's nature as a revelation from Jesus Christ, emphasizing its prophetic and epistolary aspects, highlighting its message to seven churches in Asia Minor, and stressing its Trinitarian foundation. The inaugural vision depicts Christ commissioning John, validating his authority, and foreshadowing the messages to the churches in chapters two and three. The lecture emphasizes interpreting Revelation through the lens of the Old Testament and understanding its counter-imperial message against the Roman Empire. Finally, the lecture provides a framework for understanding the book's symbolic language and its blend of past, present, and future references.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 4 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Revelation).**



**Mathewson_Revela
tion_Session04.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture on Revelation chapter 1 by Dr. Dave Mathewson.

Briefing Document: Revelation Chapter 1 - Dr. Dave Mathewson

Overall Purpose of the Lecture:

This lecture (session 4) focuses on the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, breaking it into two primary sections: verses 1-8 (the epistolary introduction) and verses 9-20 (the inaugural vision of Jesus Christ). Dr. Mathewson aims to not simply repeat commentary but explore significant details, their background, and their function in the broader context of Revelation. He emphasizes that understanding Revelation requires examining the Old Testament roots and the specific historical context of the first-century churches.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Structure of Revelation 1:

- **Verses 1-8:** Function as an introduction, revealing the nature of the book, its intended readership, and some major themes. This section is epistolary, resembling a letter, but more expansive than a typical Pauline introduction.
- **Verses 9-20:** Presents the inaugural vision of Jesus Christ commissioning John to deliver messages to the seven churches. This vision also establishes the legitimacy and authority of John's revelations.

1. Nature of Revelation:

- **Apocalypse:** The book identifies itself as a "revelation" or "apocalypse" of Jesus Christ. The word "apocalypse," at the time, was not yet a literary genre title, but rather meant to expect a divine unveiling of God's will.
- **Revealer:** The lecture posits that Jesus Christ is primarily the *agent* of the revelation, not simply its content. The chain of communication (God -> Jesus -> Angel -> John) emphasizes Jesus's role in actively revealing God's plan.
- **Witness/Testimony:** The concept of "witness" or "testimony" (Greek: *martyria*) is central. Initially, it means bearing witness to something. While it later came to mean martyrdom, in Revelation, it emphasizes the potential cost of faithful witness. It should be noted that Jesus is also testifying.

- **Prophecy:** The book is also presented as a prophecy, emphasizing the importance of obedience. It's not primarily about predicting the future but about motivating action and faithfulness.
- **Letter:** Revelation functions as a letter addressed to seven specific churches in Asia Minor. It aims to communicate to and address specific situations in the center of Roman rule.
- **Trinitarian Framework:** The introduction establishes a Trinitarian framework (God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ). All three are actively involved in the revelation and its purposes. "Grace and peace to you from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ."

1. **Counter-Imperial Tone:**

- **Sovereignty:** The use of "throne" and descriptions of God and Jesus as rulers challenge the Roman Empire's claims of absolute sovereignty, particularly those of Caesar. "Caesar was the one who claimed sovereignty and claimed to be divine. And now by using the word throne, I'm convinced, John intended this probably, but any first-century reader reading this would have understood that this was a direct counterclaim to Caesar."
- **Jesus as Ruler:** Describing Jesus as "the ruler of the kings of the earth" directly contradicts Caesar's authority and claims of divinity.
- **Kingdom of Priests:** The language of Exodus, depicting Christians as a "kingdom and priest," establishes a counter-kingdom, challenging Roman rule through a community of faithful believers.

1. **God's Actions for His People:**

- **Redemption:** Jesus Christ has redeemed his people with his blood, creating a "new Exodus" out of bondage. "...to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood..."
- **Kingdom of Priests:** God's purpose for Israel in the Old Testament (Exodus 19:6), a kingdom of priests, is now fulfilled in the church, made up of Jews and Gentiles. "In other words, God's intention for Israel has now been fulfilled in a new community. That is the church, which is made up of Jews and Gentiles."
- **Faithful Witness:** This kingdom of priests is meant to be a faithful witness, even through suffering and death, anticipating a new creation.

1. Anticipation of Christ's Return:

- **Imminent Return:** The book anticipates Christ's imminent return to bring judgment and salvation. "Look, he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him..."
- **Motivation for Faithfulness:** The anticipation of Christ's coming should motivate and sustain the church's mission to be a faithful witness.

1. God's Character:

- **Alpha and Omega:** God is described as the "Alpha and Omega," the first and the last, drawing from Isaiah. This signifies his sovereignty over history and exclusive claim to worship. This title is given to both God and Christ within the text.
- **Eternal God:** God is described as the one who "is, who was, and who is to come." This reinforces his eternality, presence, and role in consummating history, drawing on texts from Exodus. "Therefore, God not only stands at the beginning of history...but he also stands in the midst of history...and he is the one who is to come."

1. Inaugural Vision of Christ (verses 9-20):

- **John's Identification:** John identifies with his readers, showing he is one of them, not above them. "...I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom..."
- **Old Testament Texts:** The vision draws heavily on Old Testament texts, especially from Daniel and Exodus, to describe Jesus.
- **Heavenly Temple:** The vision portrays a heavenly temple through symbols like the seven golden lampstands. "So already, John is not only drawing on the Old Testament but already in chapter 1, he's creating a scene, a picture of a heavenly temple."
- **Christ's Presence:** Christ is depicted as present *among* the lampstands (representing the churches), emphasizing his intimate knowledge of their situations. "That is, Christ is already portrayed as present with his people...Christ is already portrayed not as some distant deity far above his people...but as one who actually is in the midst of and walks in the presence of his church."
- **Son of Man:** Jesus is described as the "son of man" from Daniel 7, signifying his vindication and kingship.

- **Deity of Christ:** Old Testament descriptions of God (e.g., white hair, titles like "first and last") are applied to Jesus, strongly suggesting his divinity. "And we are going to see this all throughout Revelation where you find language in the Old Testament that was applied to God, now applied to Jesus Christ. Because already, I think John is saying this exalted son of man is none other than God himself."
- **Conqueror of Death:** Jesus holds the keys to death due to his resurrection, offering comfort to the persecuted and warning to the complacent. "Because of his resurrection now, he holds the keys of death."
- **Command to Write:** Jesus commands John to write what he has seen, what is, and what is to come. This should not be taken as a temporal outline but a reflection of how Revelation covers the past, present, and future. "Instead, another possibility is, is it possible that the word when John is told, write what you have seen, I think that could actually be translated, write what you see. That is a reference of the whole book."
- **Model for Interpretation:** Verse 20 provides a model for interpreting the rest of the book. In true apocalyptic fashion, symbols refer to actual persons and events in a metaphorical way. The seven stars are the angels, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Conclusion:

Dr. Mathewson stresses that Revelation 1 provides the foundation for reading the rest of the book. It establishes God's sovereignty, Jesus' deity, and the church's mission as a kingdom and priests. The chapter emphasizes faithfulness amidst suffering, motivated by the hope of Christ's return and ultimate victory over death. The message is one of counter-imperial hope rooted in the promises of the Old Testament.

4. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 4, Revelation 1

Revelation Chapter One Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What are the two main sections of Revelation chapter one, and what is the function of each?
2. According to Mathewson, what does the title "revelation of Jesus Christ" most likely refer to?
3. How does the concept of "witness" or "testimony" function in the book of Revelation, and how does it relate to the word "martyr"?
4. What is the significance of John identifying Revelation as a prophecy, and how should it be understood in terms of obedience?
5. How does John use the Trinitarian language of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in his introduction to the letter?
6. What is the significance of the word "throne" in the context of the first chapter of Revelation?
7. How does the language used to describe Jesus's actions for his people in verses 5-6 relate to the Old Testament and the Exodus story?
8. What is the significance of the titles "Alpha and Omega" and "the one who is, was, and is to come," and what do they tell us about God's character?
9. How does John identify with his readers in verses 9-10, and what does he mean by "the suffering and the kingdom"?
10. What is the significance of the vision of the Son of Man and how does that vision draw from Old Testament texts?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The two main sections of Revelation chapter one are verses 1-8, which function as an introduction to the book, and verses 9-20, which comprise the inaugural vision of Jesus Christ. The introduction reveals the book's nature and themes, while the vision commissions John and legitimizes the message.

2. Mathewson argues that the title "revelation of Jesus Christ" most likely refers to the revelation *given by* Jesus Christ, who acts as the agent of revelation rather than primarily being the subject of it. However, Jesus is also what is revealed.
3. In Revelation, "witness" or "testimony" initially means to testify or bear witness, and not necessarily martyrdom. However, it is clear that bearing witness can result in suffering and even death, eventually giving rise to the understanding of "martyr" as someone who dies for their faith.
4. Identifying Revelation as prophecy is significant because it means that the book is not only meant to be read, but also obeyed. The blessing is upon those who hear and respond in obedience to what is written. It is not a book only about predicting the future.
5. John's Trinitarian language establishes that God, the Father, God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will be all involved in the revelation and the outworking of God's purposes. The greeting includes grace and peace from "him who is, who was, and who is to come," the seven spirits, and Jesus Christ, highlighting the involvement of all three persons of the Godhead.
6. The word "throne" is significant because it presents a direct counterclaim to the Roman Empire, challenging Caesar's claim to sovereignty and divinity. John is claiming that true sovereignty and authority rest solely with God and Jesus Christ.
7. The language in verses 5-6 echoes the Old Testament Exodus story, depicting Jesus as freeing his people by his blood and establishing a kingdom of priests. This imagery is reminiscent of God's redemption of Israel from Egypt, which is now being achieved through Jesus Christ and the Church.
8. The titles "Alpha and Omega" and "the one who is, was, and is to come" signify God's eternal and sovereign nature. Alpha and Omega, drawn from Isaiah, represent God as the first and the last, standing at the beginning and end of history. The phrase "who is, was, and is to come" denotes God's eternity, presence throughout history, and his role in bringing history to its consummation.
9. John identifies with his readers as a "brother and companion" in suffering, emphasizing that he shares in their struggles. The phrase "the suffering and the kingdom" underscores the paradoxical nature of the Christian life, where participation in God's rule involves conflict and persecution.
10. The vision of the Son of Man is highly significant and borrows extensively from Old Testament imagery, particularly from Daniel 7. The son of man figure

represents Jesus receiving his kingdom, and descriptions of him like having white hair, which was previously used to describe God in the Old Testament, suggest the deity of Jesus and his rule over history.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the Old Testament references and allusions throughout Revelation chapter one. How do these references contribute to the message and meaning of the text, and what is the impact of John's use of them in the specific context of first-century readers?
2. Discuss the contrasting themes of suffering and victory presented in the first chapter of Revelation. How do these seemingly paradoxical concepts work together to provide hope and encouragement to the intended audience?
3. Compare and contrast how the Roman Empire and God are presented in Revelation chapter one. How does John use the imagery of the throne to challenge the claims of Caesar, and how does the language of the chapter underscore an alternative power dynamic?
4. Explore the connection between Revelation chapter one and the rest of the book, considering how it functions as an introduction to the major themes, symbols, and perspectives that will be developed later.
5. How does the first chapter of Revelation establish the role and identity of Jesus Christ? Discuss his roles as the giver of revelation, the faithful witness, the exalted Son of Man, and the one who is both God and the Lamb.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apocalypse:** A literary genre involving a revelation of hidden truths, often through visions and symbolism. It signifies an unveiling or disclosure of divine will and intentions.
- **Epistle:** A formal letter, often used in the New Testament to convey messages to specific audiences or churches.
- **Trinitarian:** Relating to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the belief that there is one God existing in three co-equal persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.
- **Martyr:** Originally meaning a witness or testifier, especially in a legal context, the term came to mean one who suffers or dies for their faith.
- **Prophecy:** The divine communication of God's will or messages, often involving future events or moral imperatives. It is not only about predicting the future but also about being obedient to what God is calling the audience to.
- **Throne:** A symbol of authority and sovereignty. In Revelation, the term is used to challenge the earthly authority of the Roman Empire and to assert the ultimate authority of God and Jesus Christ.
- **Exodus Imagery:** Allusions to the Old Testament story of the Exodus, where God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. This is often used in the New Testament to describe God's redemptive acts through Jesus Christ and his establishment of a new community.
- **Alpha and Omega:** The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, symbolizing God's eternity, sovereignty, and presence at the beginning and end of history.
- **Son of Man:** A title used for Jesus in the New Testament, rooted in the Old Testament book of Daniel, denoting a figure of divine and human nature and authority.
- **Lampstands:** A symbol of the churches in Revelation, representing the light of Christ in the world. The lampstands come from Old Testament imagery of the temple and symbolize God's presence.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, Revelation, Session 4, Revelation 1, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about Revelation Chapter 1

- **What is the primary function of Revelation chapter 1 within the book as a whole?**
- Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the entire book of Revelation. It establishes the nature and character of the book, indicates how it should be read, and introduces key themes. Specifically, verses 1-8 function as an epistolary introduction, identifying it as a revelation from Jesus Christ, a prophecy, and a letter to seven specific churches. Verses 9-20 then present an inaugural vision of Christ, commissioning John to deliver messages to these churches and authenticating his authority to do so. This chapter sets the stage for the rest of the book, particularly the messages to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. It also lays the groundwork for understanding the major themes and the way the book is structured.
- **How does Revelation chapter 1 describe Jesus and what is the significance of those descriptions?**
- Revelation chapter 1 presents Jesus in several significant ways. First, it establishes him as the source of the revelation itself, not just the subject of it, emphasizing his active role in communicating divine truth. He is also identified as the "faithful witness," highlighting his authority and the authenticity of the message. The vision of Jesus in verses 12-16 draws on Old Testament imagery, particularly from Daniel, portraying him as the exalted "Son of Man" with divine attributes, such as white hair as described of the "Ancient of Days." The chapter highlights Jesus' power and authority, emphasizing that he is the one who holds the keys to death and Hades. These descriptions underscore Jesus' divine nature and his role as the ultimate authority and source of hope for believers facing persecution.

- **What does the term "witness" mean in the context of Revelation and how does it relate to the idea of martyrdom?**

The term "witness" (Greek: *martyrs*), from which we get the English word "martyr," initially means to testify or bear witness. In Revelation, it signifies Jesus himself testifying to the truth of the revelation, and also the call for John and other Christians to testify to the truth and reality of Jesus Christ. While the word at this time does not directly mean someone who is killed because of their witness, the book makes it clear that this witness is often accompanied by suffering and can lead to death. The book of Revelation demonstrates the idea that one who witnesses may suffer persecution, and may even die for that witness. The "witness" of Jesus himself provides authority to the revelation and it is connected to the idea that followers will witness as well, even to the point of death.

- **How does Revelation chapter 1 present itself as a prophecy, and what implications does this have for how we should read the book?**
- Revelation is explicitly identified as a prophecy in verse 3, emphasizing that the message is meant to be taken seriously and obeyed, not just as predictions about the future. The blessing promised to those who read, hear, and heed the prophecy highlights the practical implications for believers. This means the book isn't just about future events, but primarily about how to live faithfully in the present. It's not just about predicting the future; it's about calling people to obedience and faithfulness. Specifically, it is about remaining loyal to Christ despite the temptation to compromise, especially in the face of Roman imperial pressure.
- **In what ways is Revelation also considered a letter, and what does that reveal about the context of the book?**
- Revelation is written in the form of a letter, addressing seven specific churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). This epistolary format means that the book is intended to be read and applied to specific, real-world situations of these first-century communities that lived within the Roman Empire. The letter aspect clarifies that it is not simply a theoretical work, but a practical message dealing with the specific spiritual and practical struggles of believers in those locations. These churches faced specific temptations and persecution. The letter aspect also establishes that these churches are representative of churches for all time.

- **How is the Trinitarian nature of God presented in the introduction of Revelation?**
- The opening verses of Revelation include references to God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the Trinitarian nature of God. The greeting in verses 4-5, mentions grace and peace coming from the One who is, was, and is to come (God the Father), from the seven spirits (interpreted as the fullness of the Holy Spirit), and from Jesus Christ. This establishes the involvement of all three members of the Godhead in the revelation and the salvation of believers. It demonstrates that the themes in the rest of the book should be understood in the context of God's nature as revealed throughout Christian theology.
- **What is the significance of the language of "throne" and the imagery of a "kingdom of priests" in Revelation chapter 1?**

The repeated use of the word "throne" in this chapter is in direct contrast to the Roman Emperor who claimed to be sovereign over all the world. This word directly challenges the claims of the Roman Empire, which presented Caesar as the supreme authority and ruler. Revelation asserts that God, and not the emperor, holds the true throne and has ultimate authority. Additionally, Christians are described as a "kingdom of priests" echoing the Exodus narrative of Israel, a status redeemed by the blood of Christ. This imagery signifies their role in representing God's rule and presence in the world, a new community made of Jews and Gentiles, and in that they are to serve God faithfully in the face of challenges and persecution.

- **How do the titles "Alpha and Omega" and "the one who is, who was, and who is to come" define God's character and purpose in Revelation?**
- The titles "Alpha and Omega" and "the one who is, who was, and who is to come" emphasize God's eternal nature and sovereignty over all of history. "Alpha and Omega," representing the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, highlight God's role as the beginning and end of all things, the supreme and exclusive ruler of all. This is meant to establish His sovereignty over all and to claim that He alone is the one to be worshiped. The phrase, "who is, who was, and who is to come," expands on the divine name given to Moses ("I AM"), asserting God's presence throughout all of time, both as Creator, present with His people, and as the one who will bring history to its consummation. These titles provide a foundation for the rest of the book and establish that God is present now, and that he is also working toward a future with justice and righteousness.