

## The Revelation of Jesus Christ 1:9-20 Sermon Notes



### Jesus is the First and the Last

“Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD—with the first of them and with the last—I am he.” Isaiah 41:4

“This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty; I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.” Isaiah 44:6

“Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last.” Isaiah 48:12

### Do not fear!

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all—

how we not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died--more than that, was raised to life--is seated at God’s right hand and is also interceding for us. Romans 8:31-34

### Revelation 1:19

Jesus commands John to write “what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later” (Rev 1:19). To what specifically is the command referring? Many popular commentators have taken this verse as a kind of interpretive key to Revelation, laying out a chronological structure to the book. According to this view, “what you have seen” refers to the time of the vision itself (chapter 1), “what is” refers to the condition of the seven churches, and perhaps even to the entire church age (chapters 2-3) and “what will take place later” refers to still future events, just before the return of Christ (chapters 4-20).

Though the structure seems straightforward, there are significant problems with this view that ultimately render it untenable. The structure is too simplistic and clean. For instance, chapters 2-3 contain references to the future, and chapters 4-22 have references to the past, so that neither section can be understood as strictly chronological. Furthermore, the phrase “what will take place later” can just as easily refer to the order of visions John saw, rather than connoting consecutive eras in world history. There is nothing in the context that would demand a chronological reading.

Perhaps most importantly, the phrase “after these things” is yet another allusion back to Daniel 2:29, 45 (see sermon on Revelation 1:1-3), where the phrase is a way of indicating the “end times.” As we have seen in Daniel 2, and throughout the NT, the end times encompasses the entire period from the first to second comings of Christ. So if the command to write “what will take place *later* (or *after these things*)” refers to end-time events, then it is a command to write about events occurring throughout the entire period between the first and last coming Jesus Christ.

So, what then does 1:19 mean? It’s difficult to be certain. However, rather than providing a chronological table of contents for the book, 1:19 more likely provides a generalized commission to write down the vision. The first part of the command to write “what you have seen” seems to be a repetition of the command already given in 1:11 to write down all the visions that will make up Revelation. The command to write “what is” could refer to the vision as it continues to unfold in the present. The command to write “what will take place later” could be either a reference to the fact that there are more visions coming, or it could be a reference to write about the “latter days” or “end times,” which have already begun and will continue to unfold until Christ returns.