



From Atheist to Theist (Part 34)

Did the Apostle John write Revelation?

(Internal Evidence)

By

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I'm answering a question often asked of me by atheists – What would move a strong atheist to become a strong theist? In my case the answer was evidence for theism, specifically for Christian theism.

We started sharing the evidence that can lead an atheist to theism and Christianity several years ago ([click here to read the first article in this series](#)). We've most recently been looking at evidence for the reliability of the New Testament writings.

So far we've looked at –

- The Gospel Accounts
- Paul's Writings
- James' Writing
- Peter's Writings
- John's Writings (1 John)
- John's Writings (2 and 3 John)

We move now to the Book of Revelation ascribed to the Apostle John.

[Just a reminder that I'm only revealing the evidence available for investigation in early 1971. A future series will look at evidence that has been discovered since that time.]

Here is a basic investigative process for determining ancient authorship:

- Internal evidence – what we find in the letter itself .. claim of authorship, historical information, geographical information, biographical information.
- Language and style – comparing writing style of other letters believed to have been written by same author (e.g. vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, idioms).
- Content – comparing the content with other letters believed to have been written by same author (e.g. theology, historical data).
- External evidence – ancient writers supporting claim of authorship, ancient writers quoting from writings in question.

Revelation

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.”

REVELATION 1:1-2

Internal Evidence

The author of Revelation identifies himself as John from the beginning of the writing to the end of the same writing –

“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:”

Revelation 1:4

“I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 1:9

“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Revelation 21:2

“Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.”

Revelation 22:8

The author clearly portrays the writing as being a ‘revelation’ (*apokalupsis*) of Jesus Christ that God gave Him to ‘show’ (*deiknumi*) His ‘servants’ (*doulos*). The author then identified himself as Christ’s ‘servant’ (*doulos*) named John. The author identified himself as someone who was a ‘witness’ (*martureó*) to the ‘word’ (*logos*) of God and to the ‘testimony’ (*marturia*) of Jesus Christ.

That wording is similar to the opening words of 1 John –

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

1 JOHN 1:1-3

The author of Revelation describes himself as both a ‘servant’ and ‘witness’ of Jesus Christ. The fact the author made clear that his name is ‘John’ would seem to have some internal evidential importance. What other men named John would have been in a position in the late 1st century AD to describe themselves as both a servant of Jesus Christ and a witness of the testimony of Jesus Christ? John the Baptist died decades before the writing of Revelation. John Mark was usually denoted as Mark in the New Testament.

Other internal evidence is that John located himself on ‘the island that is called Patmos.’ Patmos is a small island in the Aegean Sea. The Roman government used Patmos and other islands to relocate political exiles. John said he was on the island ‘for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ,’ which would seem to be the reason that he was on Patmos – for preaching the Gospel of Christ.

John wrote that he was ‘in the Spirit’ (*egenomēn en pneumatī*) on the Lord’s Day and heard behind him a ‘loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.’ That is a statement heard multiple times in Revelation (1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13). Jesus Christ clearly identified Himself as the Alpha and Omega –

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.’ Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. ‘I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

REVELATION 22:12-16

Jesus told John to write to ‘the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.’ (Revelation 1:11b) As we will see in the external evidence, John the Apostle spent the last years of his ministry in Asia. Leaders and members of the seven churches in Asia would have known him personally, so the use of the name ‘John’ would have meant one person to them – the Apostle John.

It would seem internally that John the Apostle is the best candidate for being the writer of Revelation.

Language and Style

The language of Revelation has some differences from other Johannine writings (e.g. Gospel of John, 1 John), but that may be explained in that John was writing what Jesus told him to write to the seven churches and describing what he saw in visions of Heaven and the future.

The description of Jesus as the Word of God and the Lamb (John 1:1; Revelation 19:13) also point to John the Apostle being the writer. The use of the term 'witness' may also point to the Apostle John being the author. He used the term more than any other New Testament writer.

The author of Revelation demonstrated a strong understanding of Old Testament prophecy. Jesus Christ had personally taught John and the other apostles about Old Testament prophecies especially as they related to Him (Luke 24:44-45).

The Apostle John may have identified himself by name in Revelation because the letter was unusual in its apocalyptic language and style. It's interesting that after introducing himself at the beginning of the letter as 'John' three times, he continued throughout Revelation to emphasize the personal pronouns 'I' and "me' as a way of drawing the reader back to the earlier name identification. Here are several examples from dozens of 'I' and 'me' usages –

“I, John, both your brother and companion ...”

Revelation 1:9

“Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands ...”

Revelation 1:12

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.” Revelation 4:1

“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.” Revelation 5:1

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne ...” Revelation 5:11

“Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals ...”
Revelation 6:1

“After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth ...” Revelation 7:1

“And I saw the seven angels who stand before God ...”
Revelation 8:2

“I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. ” Revelation 10:1

“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod.”
Revelation 11:1

“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven ...”
Revelation 12:10

“Then I stood on the sand of the sea.” Revelation 13:1

“Then I looked, and behold ...” Revelation 14:1

“Then I saw another sign in heaven ...” Revelation 15:1

“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels ...” Revelation 16:1

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me ...” Revelation 17:1

“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven ...” Revelation 18:1

“After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven ...” Revelation 19:1

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven ...” Revelation 20:1

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth ...” Revelation 21:1

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life ...” Revelation 22:1

What I found from the beginning to the end of Revelation was an unbroken chain of internal authorial evidence. John wrote from his own personal knowledge and experience. He saw and heard those things. That evidence would have been powerful for the Christians in the seven churches in Asia to know that the Apostle John was the author of the Lord's Revelation.

Next Time

In the next part of our report we will look at the external evidence for the Apostle John's authorship of Revelation.

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