

STANDING ON THE EDGE OF ETERNITY

Gary Hamrick



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To my precious wife, Terri: Thank you for your deep dedication to our Lord and your wonderful support and prayers for me over the years that we have served Jesus together. I love you.

To my wonderful children, Tyler, Austin, and Lindsey: I am grateful to our heavenly Father that He chose me to be your earthly dad. Thank you for loving Jesus and serving Him as you do. I love you.

To my amazing church family, Cornerstone Chapel: What a privilege it is to be your pastor. Thank you for your commitment to knowing the Lord and making Him known! I love you.

May we look forward to the hope of eternity together!

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Foreword

AMIR TSARFATI

When I learned that pastor Gary Hamrick wrote a book on Revelation, I was very excited. The message God gave through the apostle John is so important; it's one that more pastors should take the time to walk their congregations through. Gary's approach in *Standing on the Edge of Eternity*—a blend of teaching and commentary—serves as an excellent tool for the common reader. You'll want to have this book next to you as you read through the visions God gave to John about His future plans. If you see a passage or phrase and wonder, *What does that mean?*, chances are pastor Gary provides the answer. And the questions and takeaways for each chapter are wonderful for personal and group study.

Looking at the world around us, it is difficult to deny the signs of the end times. We see an alliance forming between Russia, Iran, Turkey, and other states exactly as we find prophesied in Ezekiel. The once-incomprehensible idea that everyone around the world could watch an event in Jerusalem all at once, or that the global population could be technologically and universally linked through some sort of code or device, now makes perfect sense. And as European alliances are growing ever tighter, a new world leader may arise.

Since the horrific events of October 7, 2023, the people in my country, Israel, have been reeling, experiencing constant ups and downs as our military victories and efforts to defend ourselves are condemned and muted by international outrage. The peace we feel when an air raid siren is silenced becomes a twist in the gut when we remember the Israeli hostages held captive by Hamas, deprived of nourishment, sunlight, civility, and hope. Some were deprived of life entirely.

As a Jewish believer in Yeshua the Messiah, however, I am blessed with the benefit of the big picture. I mourn with my fellow Israelis, but I also recognize that the wars with Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Syria all fit into God's plan. I understand that God is bringing Israel through difficulties now to achieve a place of peace and safety later. This peace is the landscape for the war described in Ezekiel 38 and 39—the war that will open the door for the period known as “Jacob's trouble,” described vividly in Revelation.

I often say that I'm not a prophet; I just read my Bible. Pastor Gary can say the same thing. He is a wonderful teacher and a wise student of God's Word. In his book, he quotes Jesus' words in John 14, when the Lord promises that after He has gone to prepare a place for us, He will return so that we can be with Him. It is with pastor Gary's own response to this wonderful promise that I will conclude this foreword:

That is our hope. Jesus is coming again. With joyful expectation, we can and should study the book of Revelation.

Awaiting His return,
Amir Tsarfati

Revelation at 30,000 Feet

Studying Revelation is a bit like drinking out of a fire hose. Whether you are a new Christian, a mature Christian, or not a Christian at all, if you want to understand Revelation, a proper foundation is imperative. Legendary NFL coach Vince Lombardi started each season with his team by holding up a football and announcing the obvious: “Gentlemen, this is a football!” He began with the basics, and so must we. This compilation, based on a series of sermons originally given over multiple months, was created to help you see the signs of the times. You are welcome to follow along with the sermons at *cornerstonechapel.net/teachings*.

A Proper Foundation

To understand the hope and joyful expectation the promise of Jesus Christ’s return brings, we must first understand His ascension into heaven. The book of Acts tells us that after Jesus was crucified and buried, He rose from the grave three days later, walked among people for 40 days, and ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives while His apostles gazed up at Him.

Acts 1:1-11—“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’”

This passage promises that as Jesus departed, so will He return. Although no one knows the day or the time that Jesus will appear, we should learn the signs indicated in Revelation and consider world events through the lens of His imminent return.

Matthew 16:1-3—“The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from

heaven. He answered and said to them, ‘When it is evening you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red”; and in the morning, “It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.” Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.’”

Revelation makes for heavy reading—featuring visions of hail, fire, demons, and the Antichrist—yet we do not need to be fearful. God gave us this information in advance so that we can be ready now, like giddy students finding a cheat sheet before taking an exam.

John 14:1-3—“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

That is our hope. Jesus is coming again. With joyful expectation, we can and should study the book of Revelation.

Background

The apostle John wrote Revelation by inspiration of the Holy Spirit around AD 95. John, the oldest and last surviving of the 12 apostles, was likely in his nineties when he wrote from a prison camp on a little island in the Aegean Sea, called Patmos. The Roman Emperor Domitian persecuted Christians who would not denounce their faith, including John, whom he had banished to the Roman labor camp on Patmos. Yet the Lord had greater plans for John and gave him an incredible revelation while he was there.

Notice this is the revelation of Jesus Christ, not the revelation of John. The word “Revelation” in the Greek text of Revelation 1:1 is *apokalupsis*, which is where we get our English word *apocalypse*. It means “an unveiling” or “a revealing.” This book is a revelation of the Son of God. John was simply the instrument whom God used to communicate the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Methods of Interpretation

Proper interpretation is critical to proper understanding. There are three major methods people use when they interpret Revelation: allegorical, historical, and literal or futuristic.

Allegorical—The allegorical method views all of Revelation as symbolism: good versus evil, paganism versus Christianity, and the ultimate triumph of Christ in the lives of believers. This view sees Revelation as a spiritual allegory for the comfort and encouragement of the church, and denies that the book presents prophecies of literal, future events.

Historical—There are two historical views:

Preterist view. According to this view, Revelation describes church history, specifically the early church's struggle against Imperial Rome, with John using symbolic code to recount the events of his day. It shares similarities with the allegorical method, representing certain elements of Revelation as symbolic rather than prophetic.

Total view. In this perspective, Revelation describes all of church history from the Roman Empire until today, culminating in the second coming. Those who subscribe to the total view think Revelation is a symbolic interpretation of the church's struggle against the world system.

Both the allegorical and historical views consider Revelation as a symbolic representation of historical events rather than a prophecy of what is to come.

Literal or Futuristic—In the literal/futuristic view, Revelation is prophetic. Therefore, John speaks prophetically of literal, future events beginning in Revelation 4:1. Symbolism is frequently present, but events unfold in a literal way. Among those who hold to this view, there are differences of opinion regarding the timing of the rapture of the church.

The literal/futuristic view is how I interpret Revelation and is the lens through which we will study the book.

An Outline

REVELATION 1:19—“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”

Jesus’ command to John provides an outline for the entire book of Revelation:

1. Write the things which you have seen. In chapter 1, John wrote about the majestic vision that Jesus gave him.
2. Write about the things which are. In chapters 2–3, John wrote seven letters to seven different literal churches, which signify the church age.
3. Write about the things which will take place after this. In chapters 4–22, John wrote about future events.

The Church Age

The church age began when Jesus ascended into heaven and continues to this day. Believers are entrusted with the sacred privilege of sharing the good news of the gospel so that as many people as possible might come to faith in Christ.

We do not know how long the church age is going to last, but it will end with the rapture of the church alluded to in Revelation 4. The Bible says there will be a generation of believers who will be physically snatched from the earth and taken up to be with the Lord.

The Second Coming

The second coming of Christ will happen in two phases:

Phase One—Jesus alone will come down in the clouds and sound a trumpet call. The dead in Christ will rise first. Their spirits are already in heaven, but during phase one, their bodies will play catch-up and become glorified. Then those believers who are alive and remain on the

earth will be called up together with them to receive their glorified bodies and meet the Lord in the air.

Paul describes this first phase in 1 Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17—“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

“Caught up” in the Greek text is *harpazō*, but in the Latin Vulgate, which is the Latin translation of the Bible, it is *raptus*. *Raptus* is where we get our English word *rapture*.

When the rapture happens, there will be an entire generation of believers who will not experience death! Imagine going up—no funeral for you! Those who are alive at the time of Christ’s return will be given their glorified bodies on the way up to heaven:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52—“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Following phase one will come seven years of tribulation on the earth (Revelation 6–18). Scripture does not specify how soon after the rapture the tribulation will begin, but Christians will be gone from the earth and cataclysmic events will occur. There will be meteor showers, 100-pound hailstones, fresh water turned to blood, famine, diseases, and boils. Many will die.

As a loving Father, this will be God’s final attempt to get people’s attention and prevent the loss of their souls to hell. They do not have to die and stay eternally separated from God. They end up in hell when they stubbornly refuse to believe in the Lord.

Phase Two—After the seven years of tribulation, the Lord Jesus will return to the same place from which He ascended on the Mount of Olives, and the saints who were kept safe in heaven will return with Him for the battle of Armageddon.

Following His victory at Armageddon, Jesus will usher in 1,000 years during which He will rule and reign on the earth (Revelation 20). This period is known as the millennium. At the end of that time, there will be a great judgment in which Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire. At this great white throne judgment, unbelievers will have to stand before the throne and give account of their lives.

Finally, Revelation 21 and 22 describe a new heaven and a new earth because the present heaven and earth will be destroyed. Do not take this the wrong way, environmentalists, but this world is going to burn! In his second epistle, Peter gives us a glimpse of that day:

2 Peter 3:10-13—“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

John's Descriptions

Unfamiliar Sights—Imagine if George Washington were to see a flat-screen television or a cell phone. How would he describe such an object in a time without plastic or electricity? When we read Revelation, we must consider that John used descriptions relevant to his own time to speak of a time to come.

John's senses were bombarded by visions and sounds wholly unfamiliar to him. His descriptions about the future appear to be mystical because he had limited language with which to describe these events.

A Polychronic View—We must also realize that Westerners generally think chronologically. At times, John wrote Revelation with a polychronic or circular view, a view common in Eastern countries that focuses less on linear time and more on multiple events happening at once.

To understand this circular view, imagine John standing in a circular room. On the wall all around him are televisions projecting different images. He writes as he sees all these different things happening in the room around him.

Not Everyone Is the Antichrist

Some people tend to read Revelation and assume that everything we see in our world today is a prophetic fulfillment of this book. But here are some examples of why we should avoid reading our present circumstances into Revelation, particularly in relation to identifying the Antichrist:

Ronald Reagan

In the 1980s, some people believed that President Ronald Reagan was the Antichrist because each of the three names in Ronald Wilson Reagan included six letters. They determined that this was representative of the mark of the beast, or the Antichrist, which Revelation 13:18 says is “666.”

Adolf Hitler

In the 1930s, some in the church were convinced that Hitler was the Antichrist and Joseph Stalin was the False Prophet. As Panzer tanks pulled up to churches throughout Europe, church leaders assured Christians that they would be raptured. Yet the rapture did not happen. Ten thousand pastors were killed during World War II for refusing to bow to Nazi Germany. The church became disillusioned, wondering why Jesus had not returned to take them home.

Barcodes and Chips

Later, barcodes and credit card chips were considered the mark of the beast. But we cannot be so convinced of our own ideas that our faith is lost if things do not happen as we expect. Yet there are warning signs, “birth pains” (Matthew 24:8 NIV), we should be cognizant of. Our world is falling apart, but Jesus is Lord of all. He will come again and take us home to be with Him. We must be ready with joyful anticipation of His imminent return. Our redemption draws near.

The King in Glory

REVELATION 1

The book of Revelation talks about judgment, death, and the Antichrist, and while those are all fearsome things, Revelation is a book of hope. Remember, Revelation was written amid tribulation. When John received this vision, he was in exile for the sake of the gospel, sent to the island of Patmos to slave away in his old age. But amid this darkness, Jesus brought light. This is a prominent theme throughout the book: Jesus is the light amid the darkness, and He promises a blessing on those who read and “hear the words of this prophecy” (Revelation 1:3). So let us look forward to Jesus’ return with hope.

REVELATION 1:1-3—“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. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

Shortly Take Place

John was not suggesting that the events in Revelation would necessarily happen soon. “Shortly take place” is *en tachei* in the Greek text, which translates to “quickly” or “suddenly.” John was communicating that when the events in Revelation do occur, they will happen suddenly.

Angels

There are 76 mentions of angels in Revelation. God used angels to assist with delivering visions to John:

Revelation 5:2—“I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’”

Revelation 7:2a—“I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God.”

A Circular View

Revelation discusses things John “saw” 36 times, and things John “heard” 27 times. As mentioned earlier, while much of Revelation is chronological, as an Easterner, John sometimes described his visions in a polychronic, circular fashion.

A Prophetic Writing

Although some people do not view Revelation as prophecy, John said it plainly in Revelation 1:3: “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy.”

The Beatitudes of Revelation

“Blessed” in the Greek text translates to “oh, how happy,” and *beatitude* means “supreme blessedness.” There are seven beatitudes in Revelation:

Revelation 1:3a—“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy.”

Revelation 14:13b—“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”

Revelation 16:15b—“Blessed is he who watches.”

Revelation 19:9b—“Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”

Revelation 20:6a—“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.”

Revelation 22:7b—“Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

Revelation 22:14—“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.”

Revelation begins and ends with blessing!

REVELATION 1:4-6—“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

“Grace to you and peace 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, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Seven Churches

“Asia” is specifically in reference to Asia Minor, which is in modern-day Turkey. Jesus dictated seven letters to the seven pastors of the seven churches in Asia Minor, while John recorded them on Jesus’ behalf in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

While the churches were literal, they each also represented a specific time in church history leading up to Christ's second coming, and God had a specific message for each literal church and each period of church history.

Seven Spirits

There are three perspectives regarding the identity of the “seven Spirits who are before His throne.”

1. Fullness of the Spirit

The number seven is mentioned more than 50 times in Revelation. Throughout Scripture, the number seven represents things that are perfect or complete, so some scholars believe that the “seven Spirits” represent the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

2. Seven Virtues of the Spirit

Isaiah 11:2—“The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”

Isaiah prophesied those words about Jesus, describing the seven characteristics of the Holy Spirit who would “rest upon Him.” Some scholars believe the term “seven Spirits” references those virtues.

3. Seven Angels

Scholars who adopt this position believe the seven Spirits before God's throne in Revelation 1:4 are the seven angels before God's throne described in Revelation 8:2—“I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.”

This is the interpretation I believe makes the most sense.

Firstborn from the Dead

Jesus Christ was the first person to rise from the dead in a glorified body. Scripture offers instances where God chose to raise individuals from the dead, such as Jesus' friend Lazarus—but in every case, the person would continue to age and eventually die a second time. Jesus is the only person to rise from the dead in a new, immortal body, never to perish again.

Kings and Priests

When people accept Jesus as their Savior, they become co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). They become priests in the sense that they are now endowed with the responsibility of making God known to man by sharing God's truth with others, and making man known to God by praying for people and interceding for them with the Lord.

1 Peter 2:9—"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

What a royal welcome!

REVELATION 1:7-8—"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,' says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'"

Coming with Clouds

The idea that Jesus will come "with clouds" may be both a literal statement and a figurative one. Here, John was referring to Jesus' second coming to Earth, after the rapture has already occurred.

Jesus will come as He left, physically arriving in the clouds, though the preposition here is “with,” not “in.”

But Hebrews 11 suggests that rather than just the physical clouds, the “clouds” in Revelation 1:7 can refer to the saints, who will return with Jesus to rule and reign with Him for 1,000 years. Hebrews 11 is known as the “Hall of Faith” and mentions many of the saints whose experiences are recorded in Scripture. Hebrews refers to these saints as “a cloud of witnesses.”

Hebrews 12:1—“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

The book of Matthew describes Jesus’ return to Earth as “on the clouds.”

Matthew 26:64—“Jesus said to him, ‘It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”

However, the preposition “on” can also be interpreted to mean “in” or “with” the clouds. In fact, in Revelation, this preposition changes to “with.”

Revelation 1:7—“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.”

And 1 Thessalonians also uses “with” to describe that Jesus is coming alongside His saints:

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 (ESV)—“May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”

Old Testament References

The Old Testament is referenced more than 300 times in Revelation, although most instances are not cross-referenced. The description of Jesus given in Revelation 1:7-8 was also presented by the prophet Daniel:

Daniel 7:13-14—“I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”

Every Eye Will See Him

The second coming of Christ will not happen in obscurity. Although Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives, all will be able to see Him. Possibly, advanced technology will accomplish this.

The Jewish People Weep

The sins of all people nailed Jesus to the cross, but the phrase “even they who pierced Him” is a special notation for the Jewish people.

Zechariah 12:10-11—“I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.”

When Jesus finally appears on the earth, the Jewish people will weep bitterly, as will all who denied Him. People will be undone at the sight of the Lord.

All the Tribes of the Earth

Revelation 7:9 describes “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne.” Heaven will be diverse. Jesus came for all, died for all, and loves all.

The Sum of Everything

God is described as the “Almighty” ten times in the New Testament, and nine of those instances are in Revelation. He is also called the “Alpha and Omega,” which references the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This translates to *Aleph Tav* in Hebrew and means “the sum total of everything.”

REVELATION 1:9-11—“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. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,’ and, ‘What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.’”

Tribulation and Persecution

When John used the word “tribulation” in verse 9, he was not referencing the seven years of tribulation discussed later in Revelation, but rather, the tribulations and persecution Christians endured in the first century. Remember, his punishment on Patmos was a result of his faithfulness to “the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” He refused to renounce Christ and faced tribulation as a result.

Captive by the Spirit

The article “the” was not present in the original Greek text, so the literal translation for verse 10 is “I was in Spirit.” This communicates that John experienced something more than the presence of the Holy Spirit. Rather, John was captive by, or caught up in, the Holy Spirit, and God supernaturally transported him somewhere to see this incredible vision.

Jesus Speaking

The voice John heard was that of Jesus Himself, who gave John a command to write down the visions he saw. Eleven more times, Jesus would remind John to write. John may have been so awestruck over the things that he saw that Jesus had to continually redirect him.

REVELATION 1:12-16—“I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.”

Seven Lampstands

The “lampstands” here are a Jewish menorah: a golden, seven-branched candelabra that was used to illuminate the temple. The menorah is a source of light, and the church is to be the light of the world. Hence, the seven lampstands represent the seven specific churches that Jesus would address in chapters 2 and 3.

The Son of Man

The term “Son of Man” is a messianic title applied exclusively to Jesus. Here, John described a vision of Jesus in full glory, with hair like snow, eyes like fire, feet like brass, and a voice like “many waters,” representing Jesus’ majesty, purity, authority, and glory. When John stated that “out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword,” he was referencing the Word of God.

John described Jesus in similar terms later in Revelation when discussing Jesus’ return to Earth:

REVELATION 19:11-16—“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Jesus is not coming again meek and mild. In His second visit, He is coming as the King of kings.

REVELATION 1:17-20—“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you

have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”

A Risen Savior

John fell on his face at the sight of his Savior, but Jesus encouraged him to “not be afraid,” and reminded John that He conquered sin and death for those who believe by rising from the grave. See, Christianity is the only religion that worships a risen Savior. Gandhi, Confucius, Muhammad, and Buddha are all dead, but Jesus is alive!

An Outline

Once again, in verse 19, Jesus provided an outline for the entire book of Revelation:

1. Write the things which you have seen (*past*). In chapter 1, John wrote about the majestic vision Jesus gave him.
2. Write about the things which are (*present*). John was living in a time known as the church age, and in chapters 2 and 3, he wrote seven letters to seven different literal churches.
3. Write about the things which will take place after this (*future*). In chapters 4–22, John wrote about future events.

Stars and Lampstands

Chapter 1 concludes with Jesus defining the seven lampstands as the seven churches, and the “seven stars” as “the angels of the seven churches.”

In this instance, the term “angels” does not refer to the spirit beings that attend to the Lord and circulate in the spirit realm. Rather, the word, in the original Greek text, is *aggelos*, which translates to

“messenger,” referring to the human vessels God spoke to and who spoke on His behalf. In fact, *aggelos* is the same Greek word Jesus used to describe John the Baptist when He called him “My messenger” in Matthew 11:10.

Jesus never dictated a letter to an angel. He dictated letters to messengers, and the messenger of a church is the pastor. Jesus was talking to the pastors of the seven churches, which were in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Reflections on Revelation 1

Getting Started

What is the dominant theme of Revelation? Why do you think it is so important for us to keep this in mind as we read the book?

Study Questions

1. How should we understand the phrase “shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1)? Why should this phrase and Jesus’ words that “of that day and hour no one knows” (Matthew 24:36) motivate us to godly living?
2. The book of Revelation is peppered with God’s blessings. What promise is made in Revelation 1:3? What other blessings are found in Revelation’s seven beatitudes?
3. Jesus is described as “the firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18). What promise for the believer is wrapped up in this name of God?
4. What responsibility comes with God calling His people “kings and priests” (Revelation 1:6)? In what practical ways can we live out this calling?
5. What does Hebrews 11 and 12:1 suggest are the “clouds” described in Revelation 1:7?
6. What does the title “Alpha and Omega” (Revelation 1:8, 11) tell you about Jesus? How might this description bring comfort in your Christian walk?
7. What “tribulation” was John referring to in Revelation 1:9? How did John respond to his tribulation, and how should we likewise respond to ours?
8. In Revelation 1:12, the church is symbolized by a Jewish

menorah. Describe the significance of this symbol in relation to the role of the church in the world.

9. Compare Luke 2:4-7 with Revelation 19:11-16. How will Jesus' second coming differ from His first coming?
10. What does Jesus provide for us in Revelation 1:19?

Important Takeaways for Us Today

1. Why should we study what God said to seven churches that no longer physically exist?
2. Read Revelation 1:17-18. What does this passage tell us about the Jesus we serve now? Why is it vital for us to view Jesus not only as the Suffering Servant, but as the King of kings?