

“THE LORD OF GLORY”

INTRODUCTION: I have just returned from deer hunting in Mississippi: The Mississippi Delta...

1. Each time I go I encounter *another world*, full of mystery, wonder and surprises:
 - a. I do not mean the world of cotton, share-croppers, and soul-food in tiny little towns like Yazoo City, Flora, Benton or Bentonia.
 - b. I mean the world of the forest: *the realm of nature unspoiled and unseen by 99% of city dwellers and suburbanites.*
 - c. It **is** a different world full of different smells, sights, sounds and laws of nature.
 - d. Complete with its own set of creatures: The deer (does, bucks, yearlings, fawns), coyotes, bobcats, wild turkey, grey squirrels, wild hogs, hawks, eagles, buzzards, and a thousand different birds each with its own voice.
 - e. The woods, the swamps, the cleared fields between the forests are their world. I am a stranger there.
 - f. It takes me days for the *noise* of my crowded, cluttered and busy life to give way to the sounds of their world – *sounds with meaning that give sight to a new dimension of creation that never ceases to fill me with wonder, move me to tears, cause me to worship and open up for me times of prayer.*
2. **I go hunting not just to shoot deer and bring home venison to eat. I go hunting because entering into that “other world” is good for my soul.**
3. The Revelation of John is like a hunting trip into the deep woods. It ushers us into *another world*, a different side of the creation...
 - a. A world that has always been there but one to which most of us are blind.
 - b. A world filled with sights, sounds and creatures from another dimension – *angels, demons, souls in heaven, strange creatures, cosmic events, other-worldly places.*
 - c. A world that goes on “*behind the veil*” of the visible, which parts at key places allowing us to step into the Spirit-world (like an opening or a path into the deep woods).
 - d. It will take us weeks to feel at home here, to learn the “language of the new world,” and to feel comfortable with its sights and sounds.
 - e. But once we do, we will also be *filled with wonder, moved to tears, summoned to pray and drawn to worship.*
4. **Special note:** The Revelation of John is full of songs, prayers, and scenes of worship. It is not an inspired comic book!
5. For many people, and most evangelicals, the Revelation of John is treated like a *DC Comics*...
 - a. *Dell Comics*, the creators of *Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Spiderman, Green Lantern* and *Captain America.*

- b. They see the Revelation as a bizarre tale about the antichrist, a world-wide battle with 200 million Chinese soldiers against little Israel, a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, a thousand years of peace on earth, 7 years of horrible persecution, a mid-tribulation rapture, and other strange phenomena.
 - c. Drawn straight from the pages of **Hal Lindsey's** *The Late, Great Planet Earth* (1969).
6. Hal Lindsey was the voice of the 1970's "Prophecy Movement" among *dispensationalists*.
- a. A highly literal reading of Revelation
 - b. Held to by many evangelicals, most Baptists and the majority of independent faith missions
 - c. **Dallas Theological Seminary, BIOLA and Talbot Seminary, and Moody Bible College**
 - d. Well-known teachers: **John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, John F. MacArthur, Jr., Chuck Swindoll**, and others
7. Hal Lindsey entered Dallas Theological Seminary in 1958, and was influenced by **Lt. Col. R. B. Thieme**, pastor of the Berachah Church in Houston, and **Prof. John Walvoord**.
- a. A certificate in theology (one year diploma)
 - b. Worked with *Campus Crusade* at UCLA
 - c. Attended *Melodyland Christian Center* in Anaheim, CA (Charismatic Church)
 - d. Hosted the *International Intelligence Briefing* on the *Trinity Broadcasting Network* (TBN), dropped in 2005
 - e. He also hosted *The Hal Lindsey Report*, carried on the *Angel One* and *DayStar* networks in 2006.
 - f. In 2007, he returned to TBN.
 - g. He has been married four times and been guilty of committing adultery numerous times (leading to 3 divorces).
8. **Wikipedia:** "*Hal Lindsey*"

In The Late, Great Planet Earth, Lindsey wrote that he had concluded, since there was no apparent mention of the United States of America in the books of Daniel or Revelation, that the USA would no longer be a major player on the geo-political stage by the time the tribulations of the end times arrived. Lindsey also interpreted from Revelation and prophetic texts that the European Economic Community, which preceded the European Union, was destined (according to Biblical prophecy) to become a "United States of Europe", with ten members, which in turn he says is destined to become a "Revived Roman Empire" ruled by the Antichrist. The European Union currently has 27 members. A later book, bearing the title The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon, implied that the battle of Armageddon would take place in the not too distant future, stating "the decade of the 1980s could very well be the last decade of history as we know it" and that the U.S. could be "destroyed by a surprise Soviet nuclear attack." The book strongly suggests that the 1980s would see the biblical events of tribulation and end times come to pass. The book was quietly taken out of print in the early 1990s, possibly due to the failure of Lindsey's apocalyptic predictions to come true during the 1980s. Planet Earth - 2000 A.D., published in the early 1990s, states that Christians should not plan to still be on

earth by the year 2000. Lindsey's earlier predictions all assumed that the Cold War would continue indefinitely, and had eschatological significance; he explicitly identified Russia with the apocalyptic figure of Gog. He also assumed that the 1960s counterculture would eventually become the dominant culture, and become the source of prophesied "immorality" that would lead to the establishment of a false religion.

He wrote in an essay on WorldNetDaily that Barack Obama was paving the way for, and demonstrating the world's readiness for, the antichrist, "Obama is correct in saying that the world is ready for someone like him — a messiah-like figure, charismatic and glib ... The Bible calls that leader the Antichrist. And it seems apparent that the world is now ready to make his acquaintance."

9. Why mention all this? *Because many of you have been taught that the Dispensational view of the Revelation of John is the **orthodox** and only acceptable **evangelical** view.*
- a. **Note:** I just got an e-mail from a visitor last month wanting to know if I had a “literal” view of Revelation. An essential for him.
 - b. I hear many dispensational comments from some of you.
 - c. I also sense a great deal of confusion and misinformation about life after death, eschatology, and prophecy.
 - d. Mostly among the older folks, 60 and older
10. Others, primarily the younger saints, have been turned off by all this “*end times’ madness.*” They avoid The Revelation like a plague...
- a. Sad. They are denying themselves access to the *final word* of God’s revealed Scripture.
 - b. The *epilogue* of the Bible
 - i. Introduction: *Genesis 1-11*
 - ii. Body of Revelation: *Genesis 12 – Jude*
 - iii. Epilogue: *The Revelation of John*
 - c. **The Revelation is a review of redemptive history from a heavenly perspective.**
 - d. Genesis 1-2...Eden, Revelation 21-22...New Jerusalem
 - e. Paradise lost to Paradise Regained! (closed loop)
11. **Eugene Peterson:** *Reverse Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination; p. x.*

There are many people who stubbornly refuse to read it, or (which is just as bad) refuse to read it on its own terms. These are the same people who suppress fairy tales because they are brutal and fill children’s minds with material for nightmares, and who bowdlerize Chaucer because his book is too difficult as it stands. They avoid the demands of either imagination or intellect. If they cannot read a page with a rapid skim of an eye trained under the metronome of speed reading, they abandon the effort and slump back into passivity before cartoons and commercials. But for people who are fed up with such bland fare, the Revelation is a gift – a work of intense imagination that pulls its reader into a world of sky battles between angels and beasts, lurid punishments and glorious salvations, kaleidoscopic vision and cosmic song. It is a world in which children are instinctively at home and in which adults, by

becoming as little children, recapture an elemental involvement in the basic conflicts and struggles that permeate moral existence, and then go on to discover again the soaring adoration and primal affirmations for which God made us.

12. Just for the record **J. R. R. Tolkien's** *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and **C. S. Lewis'** *Tales of Narnia* draw their inspiration, their themes and much of their imagery from the Revelation of John.
13. So...tonight I want to begin a journey through the *Revelation of John* on Sunday evenings:
 - a. A journey over 7 months: January 1 to July 22
 - b. 28 messages on John's *Apocalyptic Visions*
 - c. A journey into another world of God's creation
14. **A warning:** It will take you a few weeks to get used to life in this dimension...
 - a. ...to acclimate yourself to John's Apocalyptic world.
 - b. **Not** the comic-strip world of *Hal Lindsey* and its sensationalism (dispensationalism)
 - c. **Nor** the entertaining world of *Tolkien or Lewis* (fables with morals)
 - d. **But rather** visions from God for everyday saints in a world of cosmic warfare. Serious business.
15. **Let's begin:** turn to Revelation 1:1-20...*The Vision of the Lord of Glory*

I. THE MESSAGE TO SEVEN CHURCHES (Rev. 1:1-8)

A. The Revelation of John (1:1-3)

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. (*Revelation 1:1-3*)

1. The apostle calls this last book of his "*The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him...*"
 - a. An *apocalypse* (sometimes an alternate title)
 - b. From *apokalypsis*: uncovering, unveiling, revealing, a look behind a curtain
 - c. A revelation of Jesus Christ: *Christ is the central figure in Revelation*
 - d. Given by *God*: the last revelation of the revealed scripture
 - e. A recapitulation: a review or restating of the story of redemptive history in a new form
2. **Eugene Peterson:** *Reverse Thunder*; pp. xi-xii.

I do not read the Revelation to get additional information about the life of faith in Christ. I have read it all before in law and prophet, in gospel and epistle. Everything in the Revelation can be

found in the previous sixty-five books of the Bible. The Revelation adds nothing of substance to what we already know. The truth of the gospel is already complete, revealed in Jesus Christ. There is nothing new to say on the subject. But there is a new way to say it. I read the Revelation not to get more information but to revive my imagination. St. John uses words the way poets do, recombining them in fresh ways so that old truth is freshly perceived. He takes truth that has been eroded to platitude by careless usage and sets it in motion before us in an “animated and impassioned dance of ideas.” Familiarity dulls my perceptions. Hurry scatters my attention. Ambition fogs my intelligence. Selfishness restricts my range. Anxiety robs me of appetite. Envy distracts me from what is good and blessed right before me. St. John’s apocalyptic visions bring me to my senses, body and soul.

3. John’s vision includes a **panoramic view** of humankind and redemptive history –
 - a. **Note well:** not *general* history: cold war, Muslim jihad, an Israeli state, etc.
 - b. But *redemptive* history: The history of the salvation of God’s people in the world
 - c. The Revelation includes what was (past), what is (John’s present), and what is to come (church age and the future).
 - d. “...to show his servants (Christians) what must soon take place.” (v. 1)
 - e. *Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.* (Revelation 1:19)

4. The Apocalypse was written in the mid-late 90’s, while John was an exile on the island of *Patmos*, having been sent there by the Roman Emperor **Domitian**.
 - a. *I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* (Revelation 1:9)
 - b. **Eusebius** and **Jerome** (4th century) testify to this fact.
 - c. **Eusebius** quotes an early church historian, named **Hagesippus** (born c. 110) who wrote the following:

At this time, the story goes, the Apostle and Evangelist John was still alive, and was condemned to live in the island of Patmos for his witness to the divine word. After Domitian had reigned fifteen years, Nerva succeeded [96-98]. The sentences of Domitian were annulled, and the Roman Senate decreed the return of those committed who had been unjustly banished and restoration of their property. Those who committed the story of those times to writing relate it. At that time, too, the story of the ancient Christians relates that the Apostle John, after his banishment to the island, took up his abode at Ephesus.

5. Take note of verses 2-3...
 - a. *...who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.* (Revelation 1:2-3)

- b. Note: blessed are those who read aloud this final Book of Revelation (*preachers*)
- c. Blessed are those who hear this Book of Revelation (*congregations*)
- d. Blessed are those who “keep it” (*take heed to its exhortations*)
- e. i.e., the 7 churches (and us)

B. The Revelation of Seven Churches (1:4-7)

John to the seven churches that 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 of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. (Revelation 1:4-7)

1. This Apocalyptic vision was written to 7 specific churches:

- a. “*the seven churches that are in Asia*”
- b. 7 churches on an old Roman postal route
- c. Listed in verse 11...

...saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” (Revelation 1:11)

- d. **Michael Wilcock:** *Revelation BST*; p. 33.

At least ten churches had been established in the Roman province of Asia by the time John was writing, so there must have been some reason for his choice of seven of them. For the moment we simply note that both the number of the churches, whose symbolic meaning we shall consider later, and the order in which they are addressed, which is as likely to be a matter of stylized symmetry as one of mere geography, seem to indicate that his message is for the church in general.

- 2. Like *all* the Epistles of the New Testament, Revelation was written to specific, real, historical churches but with a timeless message for all churches in all ages...including the American 21st century.
- 3. **Don’t lose this point:** *Revelation was not written to give you the details of eschatology but to help you live out your faith in these last days and in times of tribulation and persecution.*

And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall

away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Mt. 24:4-14)

John to the seven churches that 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 of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. (Revelation 1:4-7)

4. **This mean:** Worry less about *deciphering* the deep mysteries of this book and focus more on *living out* the message of this book in these last days.

5. **Eugene Peterson:** *Reverse Thunder*; p. xiii.

My primary question before the text has not been “What does this mean?” but “How does this work in the community of believers in which I am a pastor?” I have taken the position that this book does not primarily call for decipherment, as if it were written in code, but that it evokes wonder, releasing metaphors that resonate meanings and refract insights in the praying imagination. Still, questions of meaning have to be dealt with. There is much in St. John that is puzzling. We need intelligent and wise guides who will accompany us through the often daunting terrain of St. John’s text without serious mishap.

6. Focused on the **glorified Christ...**

C. The Revelation of Jesus Christ (1:8)

1. *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8)*
2. Jesus describes himself as the Lord of History:
 - a. *“Alpha and Omega”*: first and last words of the Greek alphabet (beginning and the end)
 - b. The Christ who spans existence: eternity past, human history, eternity to come.
 - c. *“who is (presently) and who was (historically) and who is to come (future)*
 - d. *“the Almighty”*: sovereign, omnipotent, infinitely powerful
3. A picture of Christ needed by a persecuted church in the midst of great trials, testing and tribulation.
4. **Observation:** As our own culture drifts more and more into the dark godlessness of the new dark ages, as in Europe, this message of the Revelation will become more and more personal, pertinent and important for American Christians.

II. THE VISION OF THE GLORIFIED CHRIST (Revelation 1:9-20)

A. A Vision for a Persecuted Church (1:9-11)

1. *I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."* (Revelation 1:9-11)
2. Three important observations here:
 - a. **First:** John states that "*the tribulation*" is **not** something down the road, in the future, after some rapture. The tribulation is *now*, and John was in the midst of it!
 - i. *I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* (Rev. 1:9)
 - ii. The persecution begun by **Emperor Nero** in 64 AD and continuing under **Emperor Domitian** (81-96).
 - iii. Led to John's exile on Patmos, an island off the coast of Turkey, in the Greek Mediterranean Sea.
 - b. **Second:** John mentions "*The Lord's Day*" (v. 10)
 - i. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet...* (Rev. 1:10)
 - ii. Proof in the New Testament of the "Christian Sabbath", Sunday, "the Lord's Day"
 - iii. Established as a Christian fixture by 90's AD
 - iv. John, even alone on Patmos, without a church to attend, *keeps the Sabbath holy* by observing "The Lord's Day."
 - v. **Simon J. Kistemaker:** *Revelation NTC; p. 92.*
John writes that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. This is the only place in the New Testament where this day is so described, for elsewhere it is referred to as the first day of the week. It is the day of the Lord's resurrection, and by the end of the first century Christians had begun to refer to it not as the first day of the week but as the Lord's Day. It is the day that is devoted to the Lord. The text refers not to the eventual return of the Lord and the Day of Judgment but to Jesus' appearing to John on the first day of the week—a day consecrated to Christ.
 - vi. **Please note:** Jesus had to do to John what He has to do to us in order to give us a vision of reality from His perspective...
 1. Take us out of the bustle of the world – *an island in the Mediterranean or a deer-stand in Mississippi.*

2. Meet us “*in the Spirit*”
 3. Do so on “*The Lord’s Day*” (in church)
- c. John hears Jesus’ voice “*like a trumpet*”: an Old Testament image of the priests or prophets blowing a trumpet to announce a day of the Lord (holy day) or a world from the Lord (prophecy/revelation).

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. (Exodus 19:16-20)

Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. (Exodus 20:18-21)

*Cry aloud; do not hold back;
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins. (Isa. 58:1)*

*Then the LORD will appear over them,
and his arrow will go forth like lightning;
the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet
and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. (Zechariah 9:14)*

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thess. 4:16)

3. **God is about to say something very important to us:** We need to set aside a place to hear Him, to keep the Lord’s Day as the day of the Lord, to receive His Word as the last revelation – law, prophecy, epistles, apocalypse.
 4. An important word from God for a church in a place where tribulation, persecution and spiritual warfare are on the rise
- B. A Vision of the Victorious Christ (1:12-16)

1. *Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace,*

and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. (Rev. 1:12-16)

2. John **sees** Jesus. But not the Jesus he saw at the Last Supper or even the Christ of the resurrection or ascension. He sees the **victorious Christ** in His glorified state.

3. He describes Christ to us:

a. *One like a son of man*: a reference to the judge of the world and all the nations, taken from Daniel 7 –

“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And 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 one that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

b. *Clothed with a long robe*: the white ephod of a priest

c. *With a golden sash around his chest*: priest’s girdle

These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. (Exodus. 28:4-5)

d. *The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow*: another reference to God on the Throne

*As I looked,
thrones were placed,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat;
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames;
its wheels were burning fire. (Daniel 7:9)*

e. *His eyes were like a flame of fire*: pure, holy, piercing and judging

I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. (Daniel 10:5-6)

f. *His feet were like burnished bronze* (Daniel 10:6)

g. *His voice like the roar of many waters* (Daniel 10:6)

*The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over many waters.*

*The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.*

*The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.*

*The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.*

*The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth
and strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"* (Ps. 29:3-9)

- h. A picture of Christ the King: awesome, holy, enthroned in power, speaking words of judgment on mankind

*The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.
Your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.*

*The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their roaring.
Mightier than the thunders of many waters,
mightier than the waves of the sea,
the LORD on high is mighty!*

*Your decrees are very trustworthy;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, forevermore.* (Ps. 93:1-5)

- i. *From His mouth came a two-edged sword:* The Last Great Prophet
- j. *His face was like the sun shining in full strength:* The glory of God's holiness.
4. This is not **gentle** Jesus meek and mild – the crucified Christ. This is the Jesus of the second coming: *the son of man about to judge the world and all who live in it!*
5. Jesus the Prophet, Priest and King about to end the world, judge mankind, and bring to earth the New World from heaven.

C. A Vision of the Lord of the Church (1:17-20)

1. *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that 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 are the seven churches. (Rev. 1:17-20)

2. Jesus appears so awesome that it strikes John in such a way that he falls down paralyzed with fear.
3. Jesus touches John, with tender friendship, bids him rise and not be afraid.
 - a. His old friend and Master, Jesus of Nazareth
 - b. Now the Lord of Glory
 - c. Ever the Shepherd of His Churches
4. He is pictured here as standing in the midst of *seven golden lampstands* while holding in his right hand *seven stars*.
5. Jesus now tells John and us what these two sets of seven symbolize.
 - a. The *seven golden lampstands* are symbols of the 7 churches of Revelation (ch. 2-3)
 - i. Gospel lights in the world
 - ii. Filled with the Light of the Holy Spirit
 - iii. *From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God... (Rev. 4:5)*
 - b. The *seven stars* were the messenger to these 7 churches
 - i. “*angels*” (Greek *angelos*); 67 times in Revelation
 - ii. Also means “messenger” (primary meaning)
 - iii. Three interpretations to this statement
 - iv. **Angels:** The guardian angels of these churches:
 1. **J. Ramsey Michaels:** *Revelation IVP; p. 63.*
Everywhere else in the book of Revelation, angels are supernatural messengers, and there is no reason to make an exception here. When angels in this book are identified, it is always either in relation to whomever they serve or in relation to the realm over which they rule. “Angels of the seven churches” belong to the latter group. They rule or preside over the churches just as an angel presides over the sources of fresh water or over fire or over the realm of death and destruction.
 2. Angels responsible for the well-being of the churches
 - v. **The Prevailing Spirit of a church:** as in Rev. 2 and 3:
 1. **Robert Mounce:** *Revelation NICNT; p. 82*
The use of “angel” in the book of Revelation favors identifying the angels as heavenly beings. They could be guardian angels or perhaps heavenly counterparts which came to be identified with the church. The most

satisfactory answer, however, is that the angel of the church was a way of personifying the prevailing spirit of the church.

2. The spiritual state or condition of a church: worldliness, apostasy, lukewarmness, faithfulness, etc.

vi. **Pastors:** The messengers from God to the churches:

1. **Wm. Hendriksen:** *More than Conquerors*; p. 73.

He tells John that the seven stars which he had seen in the right hand of the Son of Man indicate the angels of the seven churches. Angels must be taken in the sense of pastors, ministers. The Lord holds them in his right hand: he exercises absolute authority over them; they are his ambassadors. He protects them; they are safe when they obey him and are faithful in his service.

2. **Simon J. Kistemaker:** *Revelation NTC*; p.

From an analytical point of view, why would Jesus instruct John to write letters to seven individual angels? And would holly angels be held responsible for the sins of the people in the seven churches? Would it not make better sense if he told him to write to representatives of these churches who were responsible for the spiritual well-being of their members? We know that Jesus is holding the seven stars (messengers) in his right hand (v. 16) to send them forth with authority and to protect them. The interpretation that the messengers to the congregations are their pastors makes sense if we view pastors as set forth and commissioned by Christ. They are responsible for the spiritual development of God's people.

6. Here is the bottom line:

- a. *Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.* (Rev. 1:19)
- b. *The things that you have seen:* in his life (past history)
- c. *Those that are:* what was going on circa 95 AD
- d. *Those that are to take place after this:* the future events of the church age after the canon was closed.

7. **The gist:** a grasp of redemptive history from God's panoramic and heavenly perspective

8. The relationship of history past, present events and future prophecy underlies the entire Apocalypse (**Mounce; p. 82**)

CONCLUSION: Why study this Book of Revelation? Why now?

1. **Not** because I needed something sensational, bizarre, weird to build up Sunday night attendance?

2. **Not** because I think we need to focus again on eschatology and prophecy, as the church did in the 60's and 70's...
3. **Not** because of current events: Islam, Israel, Barak Obama (by the way: I do not see the President as the *Antichrist*)...
4. **But because** this generation of the Church needs **Five** things desperately:
 - a. *Hope* in an age of cynicism, pessimism, negativity. The hallmarks of postmodernity. (We need some biblical optimism)
 - b. *Eternal perspective* in an age where we have become so worldly: sports, entertainment, family & friends, school and career. This material world has a short shelf life. Learn that!
 - c. *Worship*. We have made Jesus our Big Buddy, and we no longer are in awe of Him as the Lord of Glory. The Revelation is full of majestic pictures of Jesus and all creation worshipping Him.
 - d. *Clarity* about world events which **do not** revolve around the nation Israel but the person of Christ and His Church.
 - e. *Courage* for the difficult days ahead. We are soon to become a church in tribulation and under persecution.
5. **William Hendriksen** nails the reason why this Book is important for us (*More Than Conquerors*; pp. 11-12).

Persecuted believer, this book of Revelation seeks to impart comfort to you. That is its main purpose: to comfort the militant church in its struggle against the forces of evil. It abounds with consolations for afflicted believers. Unto them is given the assurance that: God sees their tears, their prayers rule the world! Their death is precious in his sight and their soul immediately ascends to heaven. Their final victory is assured, their blood will be avenged, their Christ lives, and reigns forever and forever! It is he who governs the world in the interest of his church. He is coming again to take his people unto himself in "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb" and to live with them forever in a rejuvenated universe.

6. These are Christ's last words, John's final book, and the one message I would want to give to my children and grandchildren before I die!

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. (Rev. 1:3)

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:18-20)

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. (Rev. 22:21)