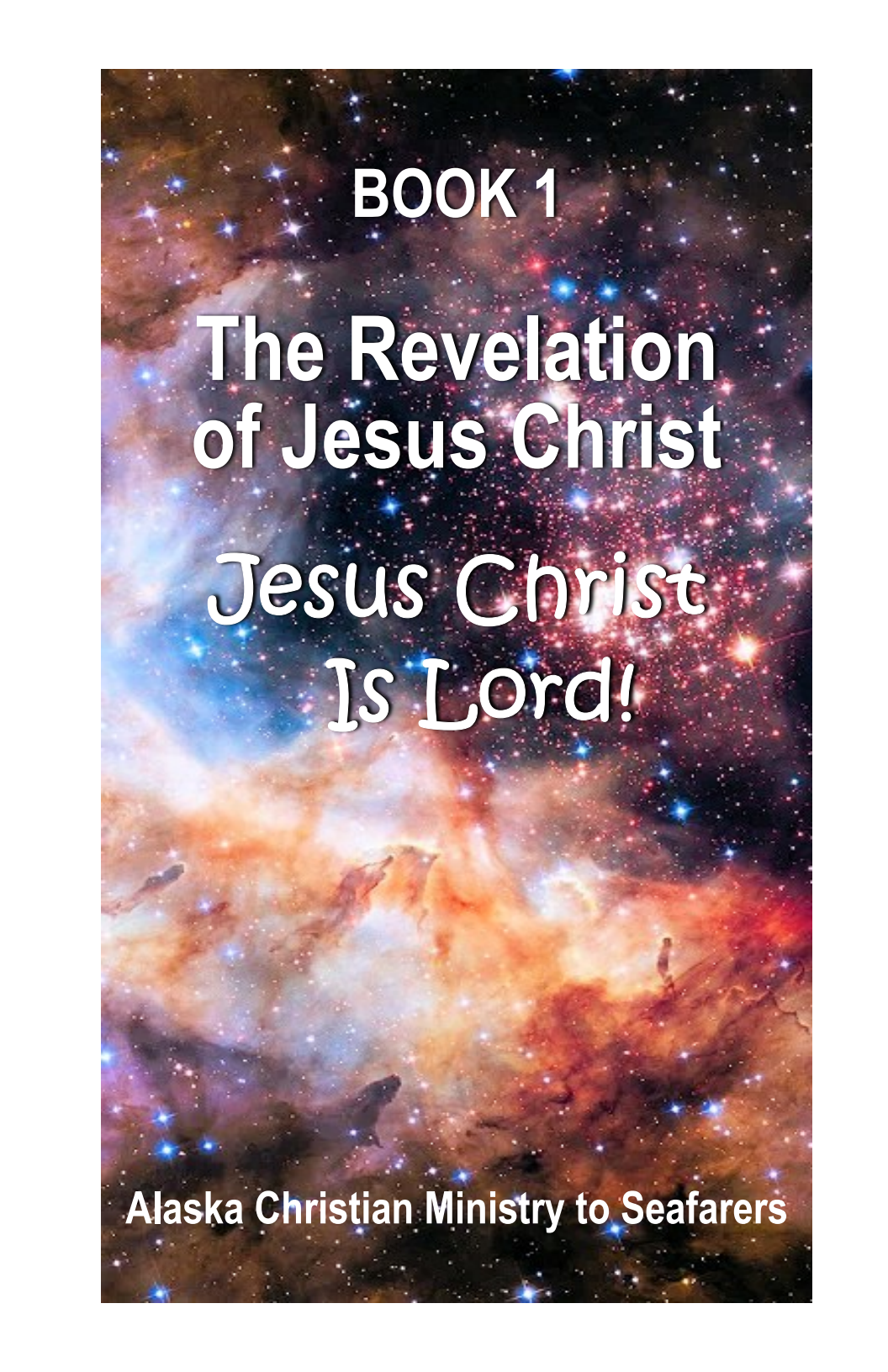




BOOK 1

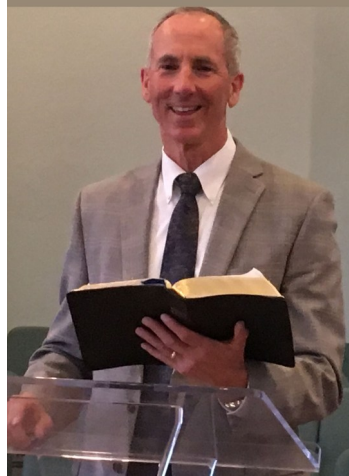
The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ Is Lord!

Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Foreword

God's Word is an infinite source of spiritual riches, and so whenever I open it, the question becomes, "*What truths does God have to impress upon my soul today?*" He always answers! Not in some mystical, secret doctrine kind of way, but in showing me what has been there all along and giving me a joyful expectation of sharing it with others.



This book contains some of the truths *lying in plain sight* that we discovered during the summer of 2025 as we studied the Book of Revelation. I trust these truths will continue to be relevant in written form to the blessing of your soul!

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "K" and a long, horizontal stroke.

Kevin Redig

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1982 edition).

Vistoso Community Church
Publication: December 2025

Introduction

In preparing to teach the Book of Revelation, I have been studying it for some time, along with reading the thoughts of a broad collection of Bible teachers. In doing so, I have come across those who have found the invention of gun powder in Revelation 9, the discovery of America in Chapter 10, and the importance of Protestantism in Chapter 11. And this is just scratching the surface of the interpretations you can find! I have zero interest in any of this. Further, I have been amazed at the huge volume of speculative detail available regarding the locusts with a sting like a scorpion and women's hair. Let me assure you—I am not going there either.

You see, our faith is not grounded on speculation, but on Scriptural truths and promises. What I most certainly want to do, by means of our study of Revelation, is to further your faith. By that, I mean I want to provide God's truth in such a way that it prompts a faith response on your part and, thereby, gives you all the more reason to steadfastly trust Him in the midst of the trials and tribulations of this life.



Thus, our foray into the Book of Revelation has no intent to be an exhaustive study of its content. Rather, I trust it will be what God wants us to know for our time and place, that we might combine it with all the other truths we have been learning from the New Testament epistles. The ultimate goal in our study is that we might continue in our quest to be *Prevailing Christians* within the fellowship of a *Prevailing Church*!

And so by way of introducing our study, allow me to ask you to ponder two questions:

1. Why did the Bible end this way?

Let me explain. From Romans onward, we have the unfolding of God's wonderful position and provision for the New Testament Christian and His expectation for the Church which He likens to being the *Bride of Christ!* As we come to the close of the Bible, expecting more of the same, we are left with an over-the-top description of supernatural events, a confusing array of symbols, and the outpouring of judgment! It is easy to ask, "*What happened?*" I think this explains why some want nothing to do with the Book of Revelation and others become obsessed with its detail. Let me suggest right now that neither approach is what God has in mind for this closing book of His revelation.

2. What is the singular message of Revelation for the Church?

What are we to take away from this book? How does it apply to our lives right now? There is a case to be made that the church is not even going to be present for most of the events depicted in Revelation, so why even study it?

After raising these questions, let me firmly declare that we are going to spend a significant amount of time studying the Book of Revelation because it has a very important role in the life of a church-age saint. Once we come to understand its place in the Scriptures and its primary message, much will fall into place. We won't need to know the exact meaning of

every symbol, nor the mechanism by which supernatural events occur. Instead, we will be moved by the plans and purposes of our God in a way that impacts our lives right now—today and every day thereafter. As always, the Word of God is to be transformative—and I am quite certain we will find it to be so!

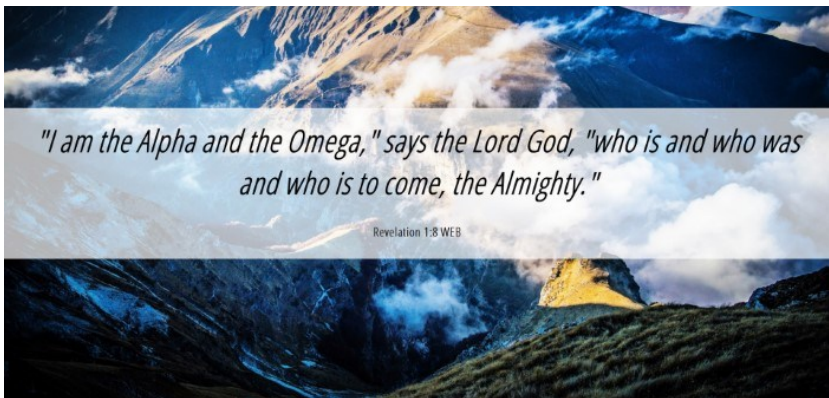
Our First Glimpse at the Text!

Before we do any work in detail, let me simply introduce you to a selected sampling of the text of Revelation Chapter 1. I think you will immediately sense a change in tone along with the distinctive nature of this book that closes our Scriptures.

"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."

Revelation 1:8

Does this sound like John 1:14: *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*? Both are a reference to the same member of the Trinity, but they are a completely different description.



To take this a step further, consider this verse:

... and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man ... His head and hair were white like wool ... 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. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.



Revelation 1:13-17

How is Jesus presenting Himself?

Is Jesus presenting Himself as the One who came to save, or as something else? Do you remember John leaning back against Jesus to ask Him a question in John 13? Now, this same John is falling at the feet of His Lord as if dead. What has changed?

Even at this early point in our study, let me suggest to you that the Book of Revelation is going to portray a completely different picture of Jesus than the one to which we have grown accustomed—and it is only going to grow stronger as we get deeper into the book.

Now, to be certain, the things that we have learned from the New Testament epistles are still absolutely true. What needs to happen is that we need to add to our understanding of our Savior. He is an infinite God, so we shouldn't be surprised that there is a need to expand our

understanding of who He is. Again, I want to be very clear: We are not going to replace what we know about Jesus with something new. On the contrary, we are going to add to our understanding so that Jesus' stature is greatly magnified in our thinking!

Already I have a *point of application* for you:

The church is guilty of presenting a partial Jesus and so, of course, the world is blissfully ignorant of what is to come. This is partially our fault! Given our weak testimony of what is to come, it is not surprising that the world has little or no anticipation of the Jesus of Revelation. This is a catastrophe in the making, for the Book of Revelation is going to make it very clear that you do not want to meet the Jesus who is "coming soon" in an unsaved condition!

Allow me to come back to the two questions I posed earlier, and begin to answer them.

Why did the Bible end this way?

A Fitting Ending. *First, it is the perfect capstone to God's plan of redemption and a fitting bookend to how the Bible began!*

A *capstone* is an architectural term that refers to a finishing course of stone that completes and beautifies a project. So, too, the Book of Revelation completes God's so-great plan of redemption, putting the perfection of His plan on glorious display!

The Book of Revelation is also a fitting *bookend* to how the Bible began in Genesis. We stand in awe of the supernatural in Genesis as God calls this material universe into

being and then shapes and fashions it to His purposes. So, too, the supernatural is on awesome display in Revelation—even to the point of the creation of a completely new heavens and earth. Have you ever compared the relationship between these two bookends of the Bible? It is an eye-opening experience to do so! This chart provides some of the comparisons.

<u>Genesis</u>	<u>Revelation</u>
1. An earthly paradise, tree of life and river of blessing.	1. The Paradise of God, <u>the</u> Tree of Life and the <i>river of the water of life</i> proceeding from the throne.
2. Paradise lost through sin.	2. Better than Paradise regained through Christ's atonement.
3. The first man and his wife set over God's creation.	3. The Second Man and His Bride ruling over a redeemed world.
4. We learn of an innocent lamb sacrificed.	4. The Lamb slain for us is worthy of all worship.
5. God's great adversary beguiles Adam and Eve—they sin and lose dominion.	5. The adversary, that ancient serpent, the Great Dragon, is thrown into the Lake of Fire and dominion restored.
6. We have the first: murderer, polygamist, rebel, drunkard, prideful ruler ...	6. All such are banished from God's presence—forever.
7. We have the rise of Babel (Babylon).	7. We pause to contemplate Babylon's doom!
8. We see the city man built.	8. We observe the glory of the City of God!
9. Makes clear the death, sorrow, pain and tears that inevitably accompany sin.	9. Does not close until we see God wiping away all tears, and welcoming the redeemed into an eternity where there is no sin, death, pain, or sorrow.
10. A Savior is promised in veiled prophecy.	10. The Savior is revealed in all His glory and magnificence.

A View of the End. *A second reason the Bible has ended as it has is to give those laboring in enemy territory and receiving tribulation in this world, a clear image of the end of the story.*

In Revelation 1:3 we are told:

Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it ...

Of course, it would be reasonable to ask how do we *keep* that which is mostly future? I believe the answer is by reading the Book of Revelation and allowing it to prompt us to believe that *God doeth all things well!* (Mark 7:37)

We are so prone to look at circumstances and get all panicky. Much like Henny Penny, we run around declaring the sky is falling. What we have in this last book of the Bible is a dramatic assertion that God is going to wrap up everything with a bow as only He can! In no uncertain terms, wrongs will be set to right, evil banished forever, and the redeemed forever in God's presence.

So, how do we *keep* what God has revealed in Revelation? We keep it by steadfastly trusting Him to do all that He has told us He will do!



REVELATION 1:3 WEB

*Blessed is he who reads
and those who hear the
words of the prophecy, and
keep the things that are
written in it, for the time is
at hand.*

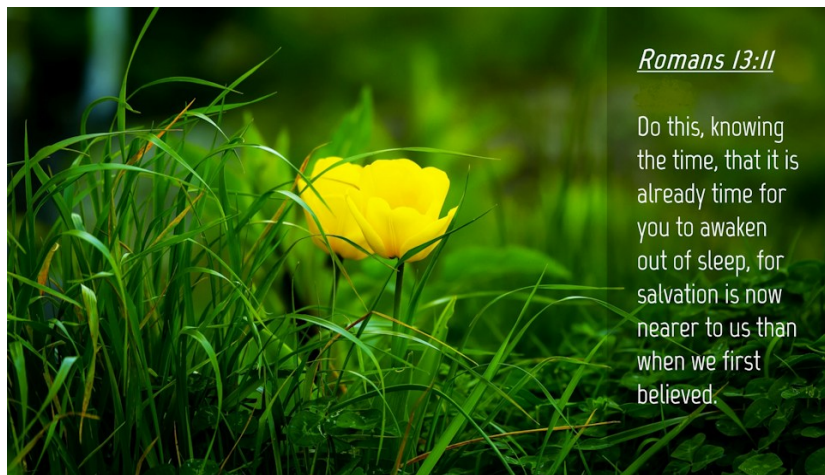
The Church's Place. *A third reason for the Bible ending as it does is that it allows the church to be forewarned and properly place itself in the flow of redemptive history—which should lead to a sense of urgency!*

There are two chapters addressed to the Church right at the beginning of Revelation—Chapters 2 and 3. I am sad to report that they do not reflect very well upon the Bride of Christ. We have found a number of ways to turn from our *First Love* and engage in all manner of behavior that is unseemly for those betrothed to Christ. For me, this creates a sense of urgency on my part, and I hope it will do the same for you.

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Romans 13:11-12

The Book of Revelation is a wake-up call for the Church to put on the *armor of light*, for we know what the



Prevailing Christian is to be doing: *walking by faith, living by the Spirit, and manifesting the life of Christ always and everywhere!* This is how we want to be found by our Lord when He returns. The *terrible times* of the last days are not meant to be descriptive of the Church, but rather, describes a world intent on self-destruction! The hour is near, let our study in Revelation prompt a sense of urgency on our part! Now, on to our second question.

What Is the Message for God's People?

To answer this second question requires us to take an interpretive *fork in the road!* You might be surprised to learn that there are primarily three different ways in which the content of Revelation is understood. Not only are these three ways completely different from one another, but they lead to completely different answers to the above question.

Three Interpretations. Naturally, it is very important that we get this right!

Answer #1: The content of Revelation has been completely fulfilled.

This is often called the *Preterist* view. It only works if you interpret nearly the entire content of Revelation in a symbolic manner. This approach leads to some strange conclusions, such as teaching that Satan is currently bound.

Answer #2: The content of Revelation is a picture of Church history. Thus, the bulk of events in Revelation have occurred during the course of the last 2000 years.

Under the guise of this interpretation, it is not uncommon to connect historical events like the fall of Rome and both

world wars with the events of Revelation. As you can imagine, this approach requires quite a bit of interpretive gymnastics. It also tends to find us currently in the last part of Revelation with an unknown, but small amount, left to unfold in just as cryptic a manner.

Answer #3: The content of Revelation was prophetic at the time it was written and still largely predictive of the future in our day.

This is often referred to as the *Futurist* view. As you can probably tell from the above comments, this is the view that I hold and the perspective from which I will proceed. I take this position simply because it is the only one which allows the text of Revelation to communicate using the normal and customary use of language, which is the way God's Word is always meant to be interpreted.

Jesus' Position. *A second message from the Book of Revelation for God's people is the bringing of the Lord Jesus Christ front and center! It does this from the very first verse of the book and consistently thereafter.*

The revelation of Jesus Christ ...

Revelation 1:1

The word translated *revelation* comes from a Greek word which means to unveil that which was hidden. Think of an artist who uncovers his work of art before a gathering of patrons. Now, it is true that Jesus was revealed at His First Advent as the Word made flesh, but in the Book of Revelation we are going to see our Savior in a whole new light! To take the above point a step further: Revelation's message for us is to fill our horizon with the person of Christ, to have Him loom larger in our thinking than anyone else!

Let me show you how Revelation is going to help accomplish this in our thinking. Prior to the Book of Revelation, how is it that we know the Lord Jesus? Let me suggest the following as a representative list of how the Scriptures have presented Jesus to us:

Creator (John 1, Genesis 1)

Promised Savior (Genesis 3)

Incarnate Savior (John 1, 12)

Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53)

Bearing our sin (II Corinthians 5, I Peter 2)

Our Example of humility and service (Philippians 2)

Calling us to believe in Him (John 3)

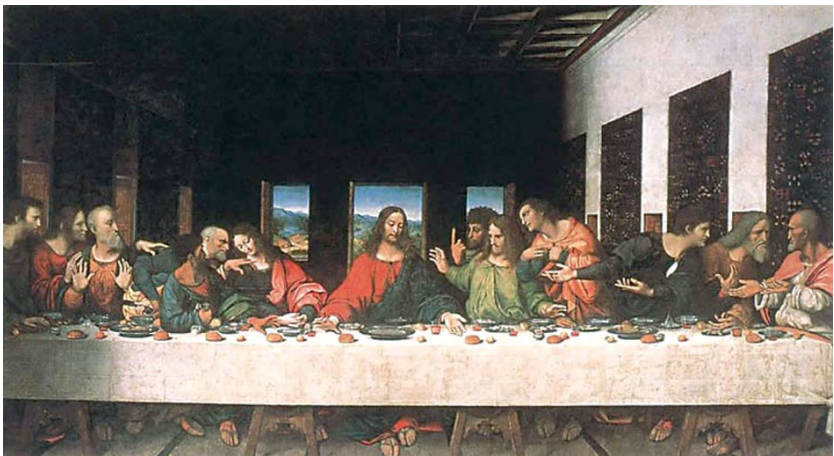
Calling us to abide in Him (John 15)

One in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2)

Bound by love to those who believe (Romans 8)

Our intercessor, advocate, and Savior (Hebrews, I John)

Should we limit ourselves to the Book of Revelation, the portrayal of our Savior changes dramatically.



First and Last - Almighty (Revelation 1)
Holding the keys to death and Hades (Revelation 1)
Judging the Church (Revelation 2-3)
Given this earth as His inheritance (Revelation 5)
Worthy of all worship (Revelation 5)
The One who pours out judgment upon
this earth (Revelation 14)
The King of kings and Lord of lords who
vanquishes the armies of the Beast
and false Prophet (Revelation 19)
The One who binds Satan, and then throws him into
the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19-20)
The Judge on the Great White Throne (Revelation 20)
The One who says ... "It is done!" (Revelation 21:6)

The Lesson. This is the crucial lesson for the church from the Book of Revelation:

- We know Jesus from the Book of Romans as the One who demonstrated His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
- We know Him from the Gospel of John as the One who will abide in us as we abide in Him.
- We know Him from Philipppians as the One in whom we find life and our upward call.

And now, I submit to you it is time we also know Him as He is portrayed in the Book of Revelation!

JESUS IS LORD OVER ALL:
SO HE WILL JUDGE!
SO HE WILL REIGN!

I have no doubt that during the course of our study I will be asked many questions about the interpretation of this seal judgment or that trumpet judgment; about the timing of a particular event; and to add my speculation to that of others. I have to tell you, the text of Revelation has cleared almost all of those things from my mind. I am thinking about Jesus: He is coming as Almighty God, and King of kings and Lord of lords! I am thinking,

Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come.

Revelation 14:7

Let me suggest that we have problems in the Church today because we have believed in a Jesus that is less than the Jesus of the Scriptures. In particular, we have believed in a Jesus that is less than He is portrayed in the Book of Revelation.



A Biblical Answer

Allow me to close our introduction to the Book of Revelation by returning once more to the two questions I have raised, along with three points of application:

Question #1: Why did the Bible end this way?

Question #2: What is the message for God's people?

***First,** only the Jesus portrayed in Revelation can complete the storyline associated with the redemption of God's creation.*

In this life, we are called to follow the example of the *Suffering Servant* who has gone before. In part, we do so because we are confident that One is coming—the Lord Almighty is His name—the One who will execute judgment and establish an eternal reign.

***Second,** as the Church passes through times which look bleak, can we find comfort in the Book of Revelation?*

To answer the question, consider this: At the close of the



first century, Jesus had not yet returned and the church was down to one remaining apostle, the one whom Jesus loved, the Apostle John. John is banished to Patmos, his days numbered. State-sponsored persecution of the church by Rome was ramping up. Do you think the church in 95 AD was becoming anxious, beginning to feel sorry for themselves,

and perhaps even having doubts? I would not blame them if they did! So, what kind of message did they get from God? It is this kind of message:

God is in charge. The judge is coming, He will set every wrong to right, and restore things to what they were meant to be. Blessed are those who are aligned with Him and hold fast to their hope of the Lord Jesus bringing all to perfection. Rejoice, the Lion of the tribe of Judah is coming and He will reign with an iron scepter. The Lamb who was slain—whose blood covered our sin such that we need never fear the judgment to come—is coming. Have no fear! Maranatha—come quickly Lord!

Now I ask you, if this applied to the fledgling church in 95 AD, does it apply to the Church today? Of course it does, and it will continue to do so until He comes for us or we go to Him! No matter what the 5 o'clock news has to say, Revelation has the last word!

Third, the Book of Revelation forces us to confront two important truths.

- As lost rebels, we can know the Jesus of the New Testament epistles through turning in faith to the person and work of Jesus Christ, thereby receiving the gift of eternal life. Or, we can know the Jesus of Revelation as Judge, Jury, and Executioner!

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

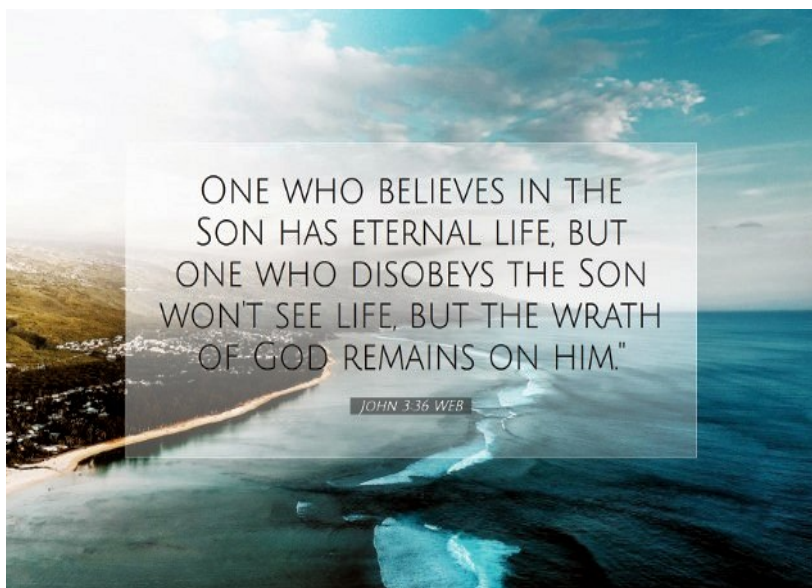
John 3:36

It is a matter of life or wrath! And so I implore you, be reconciled to your heavenly Father through the finished work of the Son while you have the opportunity.

Now is the time of His favor, and so now can be the day of your salvation through faith alone in Christ alone!

- As saved followers of Jesus, we can find encouragement and boldness because we know the Lord will gather His Bride to Himself, the King is coming to set wrongs to right, and blessed is He who overcomes by holding forth the name of Jesus as the one answer to what ails mankind. The time is short. The next step in the unfolding of God's plan is imminent, and, when He comes, He will do so swiftly to judge!

The above choices are not hidden. They are scattered throughout the Scriptures, perfectly brought to stark clarity in God's closing revelation to us. Choose Jesus to have life, and trust the Lord Jesus to come and set wrongs to right!



The Savior to Come!

Having introduced the Book of Revelation in a somewhat general way, we now transition to working our way through the text. We do so, I believe we will confirm what I have introduced thus far. The Jesus portrayed in Revelation is not the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, nor the One who humbled Himself to a death on the cross of Philippians 2. We are going to see the *unveiling* of a completely different aspect of our Savior. So, we begin:

The revelation of Jesus Christ ...

Revelation 1:1

Think of the word *revelation* as an unveiling of things we have not known or fully appreciated about our Savior. But how does this work? Where do we go to find those things we haven't known or fully appreciated?

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:1

Naturally, we turn to the Word of God for what we seek—our one authoritative source. As we do, we find that God the Father is the one unveiling further truth about the Son. This isn't Jesus promoting Himself, but the Father giving testimony about His Son. The Son, in turn, has made it known by sending it via an angel to the apostle John. Then John testifies to everything he received. As a result, we have a more complete *unveiling* of the Son. Please take note, the word *soon* might be a bit misleading. It is meant to convey the idea of speed. When what is coming begins, things will unfold quickly!

Then the text contains a promise:

Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Revelation 1:3

This is the only time in the Scriptures we find a blessing pronounced on those who simply read the Word of God. Not surprisingly, reading is coupled with understanding and the response of faith that accompanies *taking to heart* what God has revealed.

Note the second reference to time. What is coming is *near*. So we now know that the events of Revelation are going to happen, and when things begin to unfold they are going to do so quickly!

The Imminency of God's Next Step

Now is a good time to make sure we adjust our thinking to God's. If we point to 2000 years of Church history, we are not likely to conclude the next step in God's plans is going to occur at any moment—but it is! Let me introduce you to the idea of *imminency*.

1. *The time of the Church is short. We have always been living in the last days, and this should be our settled mindset.*

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

1 John 2:18

But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.

Hebrews 1:2

We need to wrap our heads around this. From God's perspective, this time during which God is working through His Church has always been the *last days*!

2. *God's view of time is different than ours.*

Beloved, do not let this one thing escape your notice: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. II Peter 3:8

This statement by

Peter was never meant to somehow reconcile secular teaching on the age of the universe and the creation account in Genesis. On the contrary, it is meant to make clear to us that in God's estimation, the Church has not been in existence for all that long. The message is: don't lose faith, Jesus is coming again, only a *few days* have gone by since He ascended to the Father's right hand.

3. *There is no Biblical reason why God's plan of redemption couldn't move on to the next step—today! That is the Doctrine of Imminency!*

We are not waiting for any particular event to occur before God's next step. We might have a difference of opinion on the sequence of what is next, but not regarding the truth that things could begin to unfold



**Therefore, we know
that it is the last hour.**

Revelation 1:3

today. Don't forget that when they do, things are going to happen quickly. We should be anticipating an avalanche and not a glacier! That is exactly what we will discover when we get to the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* in Chapter 6.

4. While we wait, what kind of people should we be? What an important question, which Peter answers very clearly.

Therefore, beloved, as you anticipate these things, make every effort to be found at peace—spotless and blameless in His sight.

II Peter 3:14

We wait in dependent trust, living lives that are spotless and blameless before our Lord! That's the way to be found by Jesus should He come for us today!

About the Seven Churches

Continuing in our text:

John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Revelation 1:4-5

What seven churches? Hold that thought for a moment. Our text will tell us shortly.

John is passing on a message of grace and peace to the church, while we wait for what is to come. Of course, the message is from the eternal One—the Lord Jesus Christ.

The *seven spirits* is a potential point of confusion. The Greek allows this to also be translated, the *seven-fold*

Spirit. In that case, it would be speaking of seven aspects of the one Spirit. I think this is the preferred understanding, since elsewhere we find the Scriptures making that exact reference. For example, consider Isaiah 11:2:

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the LORD.

Isaiah 11:2

Isaiah is predicting that the Holy Spirit that will rest upon the Lord at His First Coming is: Lord, wise, understanding, counselor, strength, knowledge, and promotes the *Fear of the Lord*. He is the seven-fold Spirit of God!

Allow me to draw your attention to an important theological distinction that will become more pronounced as we continue. Did you note that Jesus is said to be *the ruler of the kings of the earth*? Many are satisfied with this being true in some kind of inconsequential way which can therefore be claimed to be a present reality.

I reject such an interpretation. The Scriptures are clear. Jesus will rule over the kings of the earth and, when He does so, it will be with an iron scepter. He will be a present ruler

and His reign will be anything but inconsequential. Read the end of Revelation to make up your own mind.



Since seven churches have been mentioned, let's move forward to Verse 11.

**"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last"
... "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."**
(Revelation 1:8, 11)

Note on the map below the locations of the seven churches:

- They are all located in the Roman province of Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey. This is the location of much of the early missionary activity as the church spread out from Jerusalem.
- Notice the circular nature of these seven locations. Further, as it turns out, these seven cities were the center of the Roman postal districts for this region.



If you wanted to get *the word out* in Asia Minor, it would go through these seven cities.

- So, let me suggest that these seven are representative of the expanding church of the time. Before God turns to the judgment to come upon this world, He begins with the household of faith. And, He does so in such a way that would be applicable to the church for as long as it continues. That will be the focus of our study when we get to Chapters 2 and 3.

Some Details of Christ's Return

Picking up where we left off earlier:

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.

Revelation 1:5-6

As those who make up the church, we are very familiar with our status as those who have been cleansed from our sins by the *Blood of Christ*. What is less familiar is being labeled as *kings and priests*. Let me suggest something to you that might be new. There will be few more dramatic moments in history than the return of Jesus in Revelation 19 as King of kings and Lord of lords. Upon the authority of God's Word, I understand this is going to occur just as it is written. Tuck this away in your thinking for future development. When Jesus returns as King, there are going to be Church-age saints returning with Him as kings and priests. He has designated us as such for that specific purpose! Is that not what the Word says?

It would seem we have a role in His coming kingdom. Ponder this for now, there is much more to come.

Here is a clear statement of His coming. As mentioned, the detail can be found in Chapter 19.

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.

Revelation 1:7

Those who pierced Him are, of course, the Jewish people. But this event is something that will involve not just the Jews but the entire world. Ponder two further passages:

“Men of Galilee ... why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.”

Acts 1:11

“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.”

Matthew 24:30

If I take these verses to mean what they say, then just as Jesus bodily ascended from this earth to the Father's right hand, so also will He bodily descend when He returns. He is going to do so visibly and with a manifestation of power and glory. Wow! I can't wait! So why is the world going to mourn?

In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead.

Acts 17:30-31

The world is going to mourn because it has rejected the idea that mankind will ever be accountable to their holy Creator.

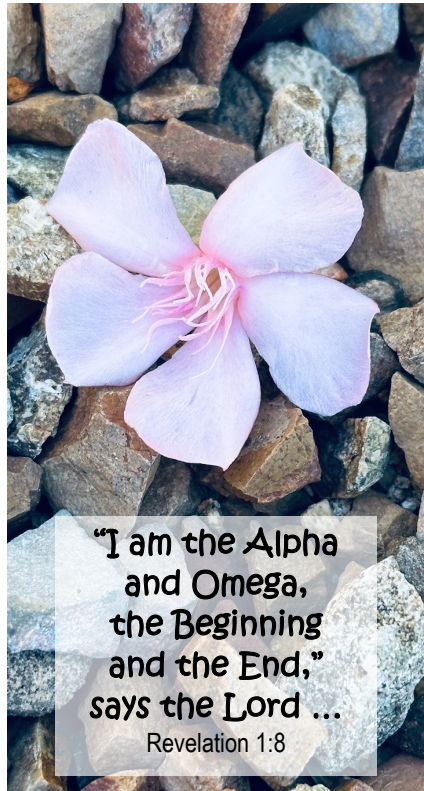
Thus, when they are faced with just how wrong they are and they can see Judgment coming on the clouds, there is going to be a sense of widespread dread. Lost mankind can only suppress the truth for so long! The resurrection is proof of a judgment to come—something the lost have ignored. There will be no ignoring the return of Jesus in glory.

As an aside, I am ashamed to admit that much of the church has ignored the reality of a literal return by Jesus as well. It is our calling to believe the Word and bear witness to the certain return of Jesus in judgment. We have a message of how each and every lost person can be reconciled to the coming Judge before it is too late. I pray that the certainty of what has been written in Revelation will motivate us to do so!

"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."

Revelation 1:8

Jesus covers it all—from the beginning to the end! He is the *Almighty*, speaking of His omnipotence and deity.



Have you been collecting titles and description for the Lord Jesus? There are many given throughout Revelation, and they are different than those used in most of the New Testament.

Then 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 ...

Revelation 1:12-13

I want to know more about these seven lampstands, don't you? In a moment, we will learn an important lesson of interpretation. One like the *Son of Man* can only be Jesus, and we find Him dressed in something that sounds like the priestly garments of Leviticus 16. This is yet another title to add to our collection—Jesus as not only *King*, but *Priest*. Let's continue with the description:

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of rushing 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. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.

Revelation 1:14-17



This is a portrayal of Jesus very similar to that of the *Ancient of Days* of Daniel 7. The feet of glowing bronze, in keeping with Old Testament usage, speaks of judgment for sin. His voice is like that of surf crashing on the rocks! This image of Jesus is certainly different; nonetheless, we must add it to our understanding.

We have the Jesus of the Last Supper in such intimate relationship with His disciples that John was comfortable leaning back against Jesus to ask Him a question. (John 13:25) Now, overcome with awe, John falls at the feet of this Jesus as though dead! Have I not told you that Revelation is meant to teach us:

Jesus is LORD over all:

So He will judge!

So He will reign!

A Fuller Understanding

Now I know there are going to be many who are uncomfortable with this portrayal of Jesus and the emphasis I am proposing.

What Sayeth the Scriptures?

First, let's look at how the Scriptures characterize Jesus at His First Advent.

"A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out, till He leads justice to victory."

Matthew 12:20 quoted from Isaiah 42:3

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and, as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth.

Isaiah 53:7

This was necessary to be the *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* As the text says, Jesus' sacrifice was necessary to satisfy the justice of God and provide victory over sin and Satan, but it is not the full extent of the nature and character of Jesus! Our Savior is so much more.

Second, against the backdrop of Jesus' humility, the Scriptures work hard to make clear that Jesus is divine. This was something that those who interacted with Him had to take by faith. Many did not:

"Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then can He say, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

John 6:42

Yet the miracles that Jesus did, and His resurrection from the dead, authenticated His claim to be the Son of God. The New Testament epistles declare this in no uncertain terms:

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

Colossians 2:9

So, trusting in Christ for eternal life, we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ, and, as such, He died for our sins and was raised again. So must all believe who will receive Him as Savior.

Third, note this glorious distinction. There is no question regarding the deity of Jesus in the Book of Revelation—it is front and center! He is God Almighty, the one who was, who is, and is to come. His sovereignty, omniscience and holiness are on full display. He is the coming King that will *blow away* all Gentile rule and establish a kingdom that lasts forever.

He is no longer in the role of *suffering servant*, for that mission has been accomplished. He is coming as the King over every power, authority, and dominion. We will not have to take it as an object of faith. It will be on full display.

Fourth, when confronted with this Jesus, the One who is coming, we have a new challenge to our faith. Specifically, the Jesus of Revelation is still calling us to come. He can still be approached to find grace and mercy in time of need. He is still calling us to abide. Praise God that He has revealed Himself in the sequence that He did, so that we more readily respond:

“Come to Me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest.”

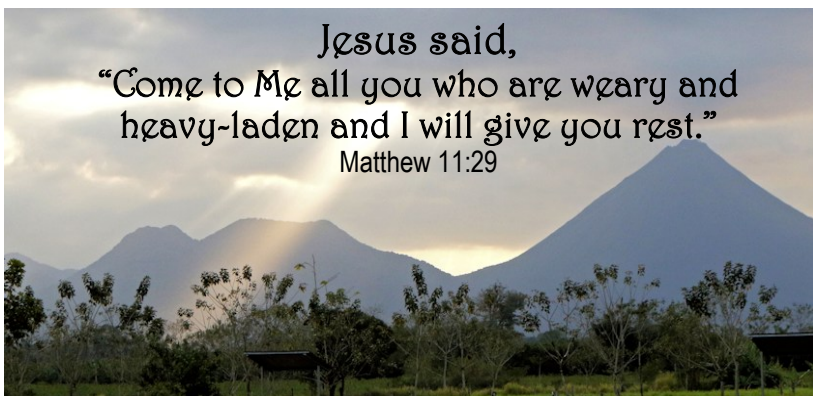
Matthew 11:28

Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him!

Romans 5:9

He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?

Romans 8:32



Fifth, in order to rightly understand the Scriptural portrayal of Jesus, I do not think I can overstate the importance of these points. They remedy two common errors of our day.

1. There are those who think Jesus is only love and not holy—rejecting the idea of the Judge to come.
2. There are also those who understand judgment and are afraid to draw near to Jesus as Savior.

Jesus is both loving and the coming Judge. Align with His love while there is time, lest you fall under His judgment. Do you want proof that Jesus is simultaneously approachable and One who should prompt a response of reverent awe? Consider the following:

And 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 Death.”

Revelation 1:17-18



How Should We Respond?

We left John responding to the Jesus of Revelation by falling at His feet as though dead. He was no longer drawing close, as at the Last Supper, but now is overcome with awe in the presence of the Lord Almighty. Look closely at how this Jesus relates to one that belongs to Him. His very first words are, *"Do not be afraid..."* and what follows is very, very encouraging: *"I have the keys of Hades and Death."*

This conquering King has provided something I desperately needed!

... our Savior Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

II Timothy 1:10

It was the love of the Father and the Son that made possible my escaping death to life and immortality through the salvation provided by Jesus Christ. I am counting on what Jesus has accomplished as my sole hope for the future—are you?

... I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day.

II Timothy 1:12

My confidence is in the finished work of Jesus. I am trusting Him to maintain and preserve my future. He is more than able to do this because He is the King of kings and Lord of lords—no longer a broken reed!

"He who believes in Me will live, even though He dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."

John 11:25-26

I believe that Jesus will do for me what He has said He will do, and I am growing more certain by the day as I

study the Book of Revelation! I have learned it is my Lord and Savior that *holds the keys to Hades and Death*. I know that, because I have believed in Him, I will never experience the *Second Death*! Praise God for the fullness of character and deity of Jesus who is my Savior! I need no other!

Jesus Gives Us an Outline of Revelation

In one verse, Jesus provides the structure for the book:

“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”

Revelation 1:19

- “Write the things which you have seen...” These things are the visions of Chapter 1.
- “...and the things which are...” This refers to the seven churches of Chapters 2 and 3.
- “...and the things which will take place after this.” This is a description of things that are, even now, in the future. Specifically, this covers the details of Jesus taking up His inheritance, taking back control over this earth as the *last Adam*, beginning an eternal reign, and making all things new!



Learning a Lesson on Interpretation

The final verse of Chapter 1 prepares us for what is to come in the next two chapters—Jesus' evaluation of the Church. At the same time, it is going to teach us a valuable lesson on how to interpret the text of Revelation.

“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.”

Revelation 1:20

You would be surprised at the number of questions and, frankly crazy, interpretations that are associated with the first half of Verse 20. There should be no confusion and no speculation regarding the *lampstands* of Revelation Chapters 1-3.

Let's look at three lessons we can learn about interpretation.

First, Let the Text Do It!

First, whenever possible, the very best approach to interpreting the symbols of Revelation is to let the text do it for us.

“The seven lampstands ... are the seven churches.”

I am going to take the approach of believing the plain sense of the Scripture, and thereby interpreting the symbol *lampstand* to refer to one of the seven historical churches of Asia Minor mentioned in Chapters 1, and Chapters 2 and 3.

How solid is this interpretation? I would suggest our confidence should be extremely high, simply because we have the text of Scripture interpreting itself. Apart from this, it would be much more difficult to know for certain what the term *lampstand* is meant to represent. When the Scripture does the interpreting for us, I would suggest you ignore any other interpretations.

Of course, this allows us to ask all kinds of interesting questions, like why did God choose lampstands to represent the Churches? Perhaps it is because we are meant to be a light for the world? Although I trust you agree this sounds reasonable, I also want us to recognize that any such claim is our speculation added on top of what God has revealed.

Second, Look Elsewhere in Scripture!

If a portion of text is not interpreted in the immediate context, then the next best approach is to look for the same symbol elsewhere.

... His feet like unto fine brass ... Revelation 1:15 KJV

In Exodus 38:1-7, we find the altar and utensils used for the burnt offering to be made of brass. These items speak of judgment for sin, so I am going to interpret the *brass feet* to be symbolic of the judgment that is going to come as portrayed in the Book of Revelation. How solid is this interpretation? I certainly do not have the same degree of confidence as when the text of Scripture does the interpreting for me in the immediate context. However, since brass represents judgment elsewhere and there is certainly judgment coming in the Book of Revelation, I am reasonably confident.

Third, Consider the Possibilities!

Sometimes, where there are no scriptural indications, we can do no better than go with a range of possible interpretations.

"... the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches ..."
Revelation 1:20

It would seem obvious to interpret the stars mentioned in Verse 16 to be angels based upon Verse 20. That raises some questions, doesn't it? Does it say anywhere else that churches have angels? Is the letter John is told to write in Revelation 1:11 meant to be delivered to an angel?

A second possible interpretation comes from the Greek word that is translated as angel in Verse 20. It is a word that is not necessarily restricted to meaning *angel*, but actually means *messenger*. So, if John writes a letter to the seven churches, who might act as the *messenger* to deliver the contents to each of the churches? How about the pastor of each church?



Thus, for this reason, I actually interpret the seven stars to be symbolic of the pastors of these seven churches. Is that a *hill to die on*? Of course not! I am fine if you want to stick with angel, but I think this does make the point that not every symbol is crystal clear or without the possibility for difference of opinion.

Conclusion

By way of closing chapter one and this first booklet, allow me to remind you that Jesus has two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably united in one person. In His humanity, He is both our representative and the new *federal* head of the human race.

In Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

I Corinthians 15:22

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

Hebrews 2: 9

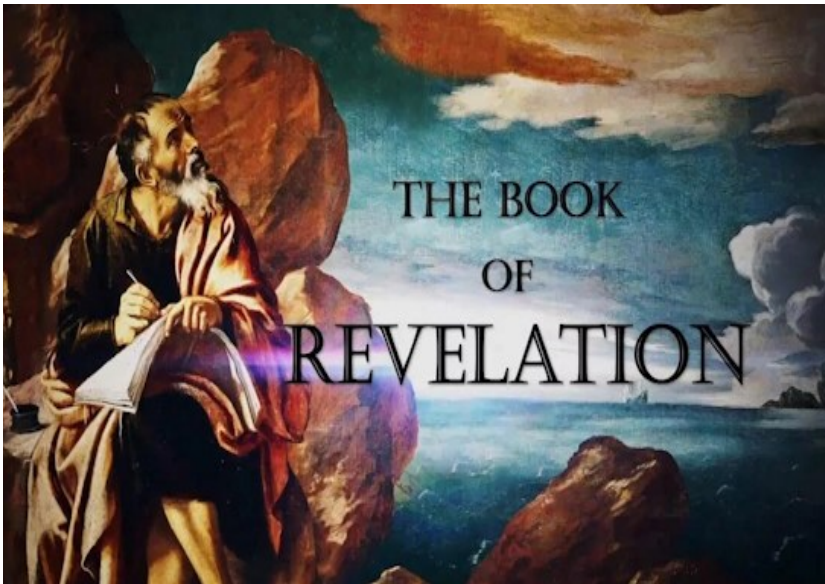
It does seem as if God has gone out of His way to make the humanity of Christ crystal clear in the gospels and epistles. In Revelation we most certainly come up against his deity, and, when we do, it should be no surprise that we see His role as judge and coming sovereign. Now, I most certainly do not intend for you to separate these two aspects of Jesus. Rather, I want you to develop and grow into a fuller appreciation of the unique person of our Savior—fully God and fully man!

My motive in doing this is to make sure we don't pick the Jesus we like better and ignore the other. There are too many Christians who accept only the love of Jesus and ignore the holy, perfectly righteous, coming King. Thus, I close this booklet with a simple thought. Make sure you are ready to meet the Jesus of Revelation by first receiving by faith the Jesus of the First Advent.

He came the first time to bring salvation. That salvation is a free gift to all who will push everything else aside and put their faith in the *person* and *work* of Jesus Christ as the sole means by which each and every one of us can be saved:

- *His person*, in that He is the eternally Second Person of the Trinity.
- *His work*, in that He bore our sin upon the cross, received our punishment, thus satisfying the just demands of our Heavenly Father so that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

This is God's grace on full display and the one and only way to prepare for the judgment that is to come!





Publications written and produced by

Vistoso Community Church

1200 E. Rancho Vistoso Blvd., Oro Valley, AZ 85755 ☎ 520 825-0652

Website: www.vistoso.org