

Revelation 1:9-20 – Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

What's your *image* of Jesus?

When you meditate on Him, what do you *see*?

The popular images of Jesus are usually drawn up in children's bibles and portrayed in stained glass windows.

We see some man with long medium brown hair, light blue eyes, a serene look on his face.

He's sitting in the middle of a green lawn with a waterfall in the background, birds and butterflies dancing in the air around his head, and children seated all around him while one sit son his lap.

This is Jesus, meek & mild.

This is the Jesus who said, "Let the little children come to me and forbid them not."

If this is the only picture or image that a person has of Jesus, then he/she has a very distorted idea of Who and What Jesus is.

Jesus is indeed meek – but meek doesn't mean weak.

The word actually means "controlled and well-harnessed power."

Jesus is *gentle*, but not mild – there's a vast difference between the two.

And Jesus did invite the little children to come to Him, but he also sent the religious leaders and merchants of the temple running for safety!

Last week we covered vs. 1-8, which is the *introduction* to the book of Revelation.

In vs. 9-20, we have the initial vision John was given of Jesus.

And this vision is going to blow the lid off a lot of goofy ideas about Jesus.

If the Incarnation was a veiling of His glory, as Paul says it was in Philippians 2, then what we have here is the unveiling, the Revelation of His glory.

And thus, the theme and heart of the Book of Revelation.

Look at v. 1 –

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants.

Tonight we see that revelation.

VS. 9-20

⁹I, 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.

From the earliest days of the Church, it was accepted that this John is the *Apostle John*.

It was well known that he had spent time on the island prison of Patmos and that when he returned from exile there, he sent out this book to the 7 churches of Asia.

John began following Jesus as a teenager but it's now 96 or 97 AD.

He's an old man and the last of the Apostles.

He calls himself a "**brother and companion in tribulation.**"

This is a time of *empire-wide persecution* for the church.

Official hostility by the Roman system began with the reign of Nero in the mid-60's, but it was never uniformly carried out.

While Nero himself hated Christians, it was up to the various regional governors to decide what posture they would take toward the Church, which was spreading dramatically at this time.

But 30 years later, an emperor named Domitian has risen to the throne and the policy of persecution was expanded.

Domitian faced many grave problems in administrating the Roman Empire and hit on a way to bring things together.
During the time of Christ some 90 years before, Augustus claimed to be the *personal embodiment* of the Roman spirit.
In other words, he claimed to be a god.
While Augustus welcomed worship, he never demanded it.
Following Caesars carried on the same tradition of being esteemed as gods.
But Domitian decided to *enforce* his deity by *demanding* that people worship him and make a show of loyalty to him as god, and thus solidarity to the Roman Empire.
Caesar worship became a law.
The main hurdle it ran into was the Christian movement.
The Christians *couldn't* worship the emperor as god – and this enraged Domitian.
So he enforced a policy of official persecution of Christians where ever they could be found.
The special focus of the persecution was the leaders of the Church, and as the last living Apostle, John was a prime target.
Reliable early church history tells us that John was arrested and tortured.
The persecutors didn't want to just kill the Christians, they wanted to make their deaths as hideous and painful as possible as a way to terrorize people and scare them away from the Faith.
So John was lowered into a vat of boiling oil.
When he was lifted out, with not one bit of evidence of pain or suffering, the Roman officials decided the best thing to do was to isolate John by putting him on the island of Patmos.
[\[1\]](#)

Patmos was the *Alcatraz* of the Roman Empire.

It's a rocky, desolate island about 10 miles long, and 6 miles wide and was used as a prison without walls.

The island is mostly marble and was used as a quarry for building projects so the prisoners were forced laborers in marble quarries.

John says that he -

was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ

It's interesting that the Roman officials put John on Patmos, really, to shut him up.

But it was on Patmos that John received a message and vision from God that would describe the ultimate demise of the Roman Empire and all earthly kingdoms, and the final victory of Christ over the evil empires of man.

So, there's John; he's probably close to 90 years old, and he's a brutally harsh situation.

He's there for being faithful to the Lord.

And into the middle of this extremity, he's given visions that are simply overwhelming and epoch-making!

That is the way it has often been with God's people.

It's in the middle of great trial and stress that God comes and reveals Himself.

Moses was given the first 5 books of the Bible while in the Wilderness.

David wrote most of the psalms while being pursued by Saul.

Isaiah received the Word of God while being persecuted.

The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah while rotting in a pit.

Ezekiel was given his visions of the glory of God while in exile in Babylon.

Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-nego didn't know the visible presence of God until they were in the flames of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace.

God will not leave His people to suffer *on their own*; and in their *greatest* extremity, He is there to lift them beyond it.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, **11** 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."

Last week I mentioned that one of the arguments critics of the Book of Revelation use to say the Apostle John didn't write it is the poor grammar used in many places throughout the Book. We saw that the answer to this is John's attempt to describe the wild things he saw in the spirit, using language that simply falls short.

He has to *bend the rules* of grammar in order to convey truths that rise *above* those rules.

V. 10 is a case in point.

When he says he was "**in the Spirit on the Lord's Day**" we're not exactly sure what he means.

Two possibilities exist:

- 1) Maybe it simply means that he was in an attitude of worship on a Sunday.
- 2) or, and this is the more probably meaning, he was taken up in the Spirit unto the Day of the Lord.

John was carried beyond *normal sense* into a state where God could reveal the supernatural events of this book.

We find the same thing happening to the OT prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

This is the only time the phrase, "the Lord's Day" is used in the NT, and we need to understand it as it would have been used and understood by the people of John's day.

As I mentioned last week, the key for interpreting the book of Revelation is the OT.

The Day of the Lord is an important and central idea there.

It's the period of history when God *intervenes* in human affairs and sets up His kingdom on earth.

It's preceded by great judgment and turmoil in heaven and earth.

To the Jewish way of thinking, the earth goes through the pains of birth as the rebellious kingdoms of this world transition over into the Kingdom of God.

Creation itself is thrown into upheaval as the curse of sin is finally purged.

John was transported into the future to see the events that surround the Day of the Lord or as we would say it – the Return of Christ. [\[2\]](#)

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

This is his way of describing the *reality* and *clarity* of the vision he had.

This wasn't some kind of wistful and cloudy *dream* he had.

It was crystal clear – so clear in fact there was *definite locality* to it.

He heard a voice where? *Behind* him, and it was *clear*, like a **trumpet**.

Trumpets were used in the OT to call attention to something.

They were used to rally the army to battle.

They were used to gather the people to solemn assemblies.

The point here is that John is being called to gather all his attention to the loud voice.

And the voice says – v. 11

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,"

Look at vs. 7 & 8 again –

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. **8** "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."

Who is this? This is Jesus!

And it is Jesus who speaks to John here in v. 11.

He is the Alpha & Omega, the First and the Last.

As we saw last week, Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet while Omega is the last.

This is a poetic idiom for saying that He is the beginning and origin of all creation, as well as it's goal and destiny.

In Isaiah 44:6 we find this –

6 “Thus says [Yahweh], the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.

The title “**First and the Last**” belongs Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel. ^[3]

And here Jesus is claiming that title for Himself.

Jesus IS Yahweh!

The voice goes on and says . . .

“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.”

Jesus tells John to write what he sees.

He's told to write what he sees 12 times in Revelation, and always following another vision.

It's as though he's so amazed, the Lord has to *remind* him to keep recording.

It may also be that John was reluctant to write because putting into words what he sees is so difficult.

The Apostle Paul was *unable* to articulate the vision of heaven he was given. ^[4]

Yet it seems there are several people today who claim to have been to heaven and to have had visions of God.

They're welcomed on radio and television to share their experiences and speak in great detail about what they saw and heard.

There probably are people who have visions today, but as we look at the Bible we must come to the conclusion that unless the Lord specifically *tells you* to write or to speak, it's probably best to keep your visions to yourself.

Why look here – John is told to write! 12 times he's told to write!

It seems his natural inclination in the face of genuine visions was to NOT write.

John is to write what he sees and send it to the 7 churches of Asia Minor.

There were plenty more than these 7 in this region but these were selected for a specific reason we'll see next week.

For now, just note that the way they're listed, they form a rough circle and are in the order a postal carrier would visit them. [Show map]

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and 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.

When John turned to see who was speaking, the first thing he sees is seven golden *lampstands*.

If you are reading a King James Bible, “lampstands” is translated as *candlesticks*.

These weren't candlesticks – they were *oil lamps*, a picture and idiom that would have been familiar to the Jewish believers and anyone who'd read the Book of Exodus.

One of the most prominent fixtures of the tabernacle whose design and construction are given in

Exodus was the seven-branched golden lampstand. ^[5]

It was an oil lamp filled with special oil.

It was in the Holy Place, which was the vestibule that lead into the Holy of holies. [Show diagram]

On one side of the Holy Place was the table of showbread, with it's 12 loaves of bread, symbolizing God's *fellowship* with the 12 tribes of Israel.

On the other side of the room was the gold lampstand which burned the sacred oil, symbolizing the Holy Spirit's presence in the nation of Israel giving light to the world.

Then right in front of the curtain was the Golden altar which represented the prayers and worship of God's people ascending before His throne.

The lampstand gave light to the Holy Place and served as the symbol of Israel as the light of God to the world.

In John's vision, the 7 branches of the golden lampstand have been separated into each their own stand, and they're arranged in a circle.

V. 20 tells us these seven lampstands represent the seven churches.

20The 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.

Just as the golden lampstand in the tabernacle and temple was a symbol of God's presence in the Nation of Israel, giving light and truth to the world, the churches *now* are that light.

The golden lampstand of the Jewish temple had seven branches, representing the *complete* revelation of God on one stand because under the Jewish system, the worship of God was centralized and located in one place – the temple in Jerusalem.

But John sees 7 lamp, each with it's own stand, because through the Gospel, the worship of God is no longer centralized in one place, it is dispersed throughout all the churches.

In Matthew 5: 14-16 Jesus said to His disciples,

You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father In heaven.-

In Philippians 2, Paul writes –

14Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16holding fast the word of life,

It's the empowering of the Holy Spirit, represented by the oil, which allows us to shine as lights in a dark place.

The light doesn't come from the lampstands.

it comes from the oil lamps themselves.

The stands merely make the light more visible.

So the lampstands are a good picture of the church.

We don't produce the light, we simply display it. ^[6]

In the midst of the lampstands John sees One *like* the Son of Man.

This was Jesus's favorite title for Himself.

But notice John doesn't say the One he say WAS the Son of Man – he was LIKE Him.

As we read on we find that this was indeed Jesus John saw, but His appearance, while reminiscent of the Jesus John had come to know so well, was markedly different as well.

In the Incarnation, Jesus glory had been veiled – here it's revealed in all it's splendor.

John sees a man, the glory and majesty of this man is awesome, but He is still a *man*.

He's clothed with a long garment and a golden band encircles his chest.

This was the garb of the High Priest of Israel.

The high priest wore a robe that reached to the feet with a sash made of golden thread.

Exodus 28 describes the high priest's garments. ^[7]

They were elaborate and costly.

It's safe to say that no one was more majestically arrayed than the high priest.

Some of the items he wore were unusual as clothing but were deeply symbolic of his role as high priest.

While the high priest's sash was made with golden thread, the band that encircles Jesus' chest is solid gold!

The idea is that Jesus' priesthood is finer and more glorious.

John here sees Jesus as our High Priest who has entered the presence of the Father to serve on our behalf.

One of the duties of the Old Testament priests was to tend the golden lampstand in the temple.

Every day they had to fill the oil, clean the soot, and trim the wicks.

They had to closely inspect and care for the lamps so they would burn continually before the Lord.

Here John sees Jesus as our High Priest, in the midst of the seven lampstands, carefully inspecting and caring for the lamps, helping them to always burn brightly before the Lord

and the world. ^[8]

14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 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.

All these images are meant to portray the *majesty and dignity* of Christ as God.

His head and hair were white like wool and snow.

Unlike today, age was *honored* in the ancient world.

They considered the aged to be *wise* and looked to them for counsel and guidance.

White hair was greatly esteemed because it was seen as a badge of honor and wisdom.

In Daniel 7:9, the prophet sees the *Ancient of Days* and describes him as having white hair.

In that passage, the Ancient of Days is clearly meant to be understood as God the Father to whom the Son of Man comes.

Here the Son of Man is seen as the one with white hair – showing the essential equality between the Father and the Son.

White also represented purity, as John indicates when he says that His hair was as **white as snow**.

The well known passage of Isaiah 1 comes to mind,

18 “Come now, and let us reason together,” says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

John sees both the *eternity & purity* of Christ.

Jesus's eyes were **like a flame of fire**.

Note the use of the word “*like*” again.

John didn't see actual flames shooting out of Jesus eye-sockets.

What he saw was a piercing light in Jesus's eyes.

His eyes were absolutely clear and his vision keen.

In Heb 4: 13 we read –

There is no creature hid from God's sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

I had a friend many years ago named Mark Clear.

In fact, he was my first roommate when I moved out on my own.
Mark was way too good looking!
His face and figure were beyond hunkish, but the most striking thing about him was his eyes!
They were a bluish gray that was not too different from the color you see in a Siberian Husky.
And the whites of his eyes were ultra white!
He was of Italian ancestry and every Summer he would get a dark, dark tan that made his eyes appear to jump right out of his head.
Many, many times I would purposely walk behind him as we went somewhere, just so I could watch the reaction of girls as they walked past him.
I kid you not – when he looked at you, you felt he was looking into your very soul.
Few people who just met him casually could look at him for very long.
Fire is often used symbolically in scripture of piercing and searching judgment.
In 1 Corinthians 3:13 we read –

each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

John sees Jesus's perfect vision.
He not only sees *what's* done, He sees *why*.

Jesus feet were **like fine brass**, meaning *pure* brass!
But even more, John sees them as though they are still in the furnace – they are *white hot*.
Whenever we find brass used in the OT, it's always connected in some way or another to *judgment*.
The main altar in the tabernacle and temple was made of brass as were all the utensils that were used in attending to the sacrifices that were offered there.
It was upon this brazen altar that the people would offer their sacrifices as *substitutes* on their behalf, symbolizing their forgiveness as God poured out His *judgment* on the sacrifice.
The base of the fence that framed the tabernacle, as well as the pegs that held the panels upright were all made of brass.
The symbolism of judgment here is that there was only *one way* to enter the Lord's presence and that was through the gate.
Every other way is barred, and anyone who tries to enter by some other way will be judged.

When John sees Jesus's feet **like white hot brass**, he sees a picture of His role as Judge.
Brass was also the *most durable* metal of the ancient world, meaning Jesus's judgment is stable and permanent.
It won't be overturned by a higher court for He is the Highest Judge.
In ancient warfare, the victor would place his foot on the neck of the conquered ruler as a sign of victory.
You remember the reason the Israelites of the Exodus refused to enter in and take the Promised Land was because of their *fear* of the Canaanites.
Their cities were too strong and their armies too fierce.
40 years later, when their children finally did enter, their leader, Joshua led a brilliant campaign against the Canaanites.
In the south there was an alliance of 5 kings that stood against the children of Israel.
But they were roundly defeated and the 5 fled to hide in a cave.
Joshua found them and routed them out.
In Joshua 10:24 & 25 we read –

²⁴So it was, when they brought out those kings to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings." And they drew near and put their feet on their necks. ²⁵Then Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the LORD will do to all your

enemies against whom you fight.”

The name *Joshua* is the same as the name *Jesus*.

One day, our Joshua will come to Earth, will round up the kings who have opposed Him and put His foot on their necks.

Then He will turn to His saints and say – “Do not be afraid nor dismayed. Rather be strong and of good courage, for the reign of evil is over and My Kingdom of Righteousness has finally come.”

John described Jesus’s **voice like the sound of many waters**.

Have you ever been to the beach when the big waves are coming in?

It’s an awesome experience to watch those waves crash, but the sound is incredible!

Better yet, have you ever been to the bottom of Vernal Falls in Yosemite?

Jesus’s voice is like a winter storm on the north shore of Hawaii & Niagara Falls all rolled into one. His voice drowns out all other sound.

Some time back during one of our Fall Bible Conferences, we had David Hocking come out and speak.

Dave’s got a great big, deep booming voice, and when he sings, well, no matter where you sit in the room, you can hear him!

He doesn’t need a PA system; his lungs are enough!

As deep and resonant and loud as Hocking’s voice is, he sounds like Truman Capote or Mike Tyson compared to Jesus.

Psalm 29:3-4

³The voice of the LORD is over the waters; The God of glory thunders; The LORD is over many waters. ⁴The voice of the LORD is powerful; The voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

I’m reminded of a rather silly comedy sketch that was quite popular when I was a teen – Sister Mary Elephant.

It was an unruly high school class in a Catholic private School and a substitute teacher named Sister Mary Elephant.

She kept losing control of the class.

The noise would build and build until it was completely out of hand, then she would scream at the top of her lungs to restored order – but then things would slowly get out of hand once more.

When Jesus comes – He won’t need to scream.

And no one will keep talking once he’s spoken.

He is and has the Last Word!

In v. 16, John sees **seven stars in Jesus’s right hand**.

In v. 20 we find that the 7 stars represent the 7 angels of the 7 churches.

Since 7 is the number of completion, this likely symbolizes that Jesus has the whole church and its leaders in His control.

It doesn’t take a genius to see that there are a lot of problems in the Church.

But it’s still Christ’s church and we need to be very careful about our attitude toward it.

In Zech 2:8, God refers to His people as the *apple of His eye* whom He will protect.

He says that the one who reaches out to harm His people is like poking their finger in God’s eye!

There’s a good chance that Jesus is comforting John here as well.

You see, John was on the island of Patmos because of Domitian’s decree.

Domitian claimed to be the sovereign God.

A coin, minted by order of Domitian in 83 AD showed Domitian’s son sitting in heaven, playing with seven stars.

It was an image drawn from Greek mythology about how Zeus controlled the heavens and the earth.
Living each day as he did on that barren and desolate island, John might be tempted to think that the rule of Domitian was indeed sovereign and that he was god-like in his power.
So Jesus reminded John who *really* controls things.

Then John sees **a sharp, two-edged sword coming out of Jesus's mouth.**

This is the *rhomphaia* (*hrom-fah'-yah*) or *long-sword*, not the *machaira* (*makh-ahee-rah*) or Roman *short-sword*.

One commentator says that John didn't necessarily *see* a literal sword coming out of Jesus' mouth.

Rather, "He heard him speak; he felt the penetrating power of his words; and they were *as if* a sharp sword proceeded from his mouth."^[9]

The idea is that this sword is His *word*.

In Hebrews 4:12 we read -

¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The sword John sees coming out of Jesus's mouth is two-edged.

Spurgeon says, "There is no handling this weapon without cutting yourself, for it has no back to it, it is all edge. The Word of Christ, somehow or other, is all edge."

In Ephesians 6:17, Paul says that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.

In Revelation 19:15, we will see Jesus smiting the nations with the sword of His mouth.

It's a picture of the final conflict.

Jesus doesn't need to come and wage war with the violence of weapons; His word is enough to end the battle.

He who spoke a word of creation and the universe leapt into existence, needs only to speak the word of victory and the rebellious kingdoms of this world will be defeated.

Martin Luther wrote – "The prince of darkness grim, We tremble not for him His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure; one little word will fell him."

Then John describes the appearance of His face - **His countenance was like the Summer Noon-day sun** in a cloudless sky.

From the time we are all just little tykes, we're taught a very important lesson about the sun – DON'T LOOK AT IT!!!!!!

It is too bright and will blind you.

The glory of Jesus is a light too bright to look at with these eyes.

The only way John could have beheld His glory was for him to have *been in the Spirit*.

In 1 John we're told that it is only when we are changed from these corruptible bodies that we'll be able to see Him face to face. [3:2]

First, John saw 7 stars and 7 lampstands but now he sees the face of Jesus like the sun.

You can't see the stars during the daytime because the light of the sun is too bright.

Charles Spurgeon writes - "What do you see in Christ's right hand? Seven stars; yet how insignificant they appear when you get a sight of his face! They are stars, and there are seven of them; but who can see seven stars, or, for the matter of that, seventy thousand stars, when the sun shineth in his strength? How sweet it is, when the Lord himself is so present in a congregation that the preacher, whoever he may be, is altogether forgotten! I pray you, dear friends, when you go to a place of worship, always try to see the Lord's face rather than the stars in his hand; look at the sun, and you will forget the stars."

In Matthew 17, we read about the transfiguration, when Jesus's glory was momentarily revealed to

Peter, James, and John.

Their reaction then was the same as John's here -

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.

John's reaction when confronted with the glory and splendor of Christ is the same as others in the Bible who catch a glimpse of God's glory; he falls as though dead - he's wiped out!

Last night I went to a meeting of clergy with the OPD.

They went over some of the new non-lethal weapons the OPD is using.

One of them is the new and improved Taser.

It shoots 50,000 volts and 26 amps of electricity into a person which temporarily overwhelms their nervous and muscular systems – causing them to shut down and pass out.

That's kind of what happened here except the shock to John's system was the simple revelation of the glory of Jesus!

It was so overwhelming that the only reaction was to shut down.

But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

Jesus came to the wiped-out John and laid His right hand on him, that hand that holds the 7 stars.

He told him to not be afraid, which is a sure sign that's precisely what John was!

God doesn't waste words; He only speaks the Truth and the Word that is needed.

Notice that Jesus comforts John with something He's already said.

In fact, this is the 7th time Jesus has called Himself the First and the Last, the Alpha & Omega, the Beginning and the end, the One Who was, Who is, and Who is to come.

Why does He repeat this so much?

These were difficult days for the church and Jesus wants to remind them He is the Lord of history!

He wants you & I to know that today as well - He is still the Lord of history.

Don't be afraid of the things that are happening in the world.

While it may be difficult to discern – Jesus still holds the 7 stars and still walks in the midst of the 7 lampstands.

Everything is proceeding according to His Master Plan.

Just last night I was watching TV, well actually, I wasn't really watching TV – men don't watch TV – they watch *what else* is on TV – an that's what I was doing, channel surfing, flipping between all the cable news channels which on *Americast* are all in a row.

On every single channel, there was either a new report or special story about Israel!

I mentioned to Lynn that all one has to do to realize the incredible relevance of the Bible is to watch the news!

Zechariah foretold the day would come when the eyes of the entire world would be focused on that tiny piece of and that all the nations of the earth would burden themselves with the City of Jerusalem.

Against every kind of odd, we see that prophecy fulfilled before our very eyes!

The coming days are going to see Zechariah's prophecy even more clearly fulfilled.

18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.

There could be no clearer designation for who this is – this is Jesus!

And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

Keys are emblems of authority.

If you have the key to something, it means you've been designated with the authority to open or close it.

Jesus has authority over **death and hades** - the devil, *Jesus* does!

Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us that Jesus *destroyed* Satan's power at the cross.

Satan is not the master of hell.

In fact, as we'll later see, he doesn't even live in hell.

The last chapters of Revelation will show us that he *becomes* hell's chief prisoner but that isn't till after the Second coming of Christ.

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

This verse provides the *outline* for the entire book.

John is to **write**. . .

1) about what **he has seen** - the things of ch. 1

2) about **the things which are** - the things of the churches in chs. 2-3

3) and about **the things which shall be after this** - what's that? The things of the future: chs. 4-22

We'll see how *important* this outline is in the weeks to come.

20 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.

At several points in the book, the symbols and visions are explained.

Where they aren't, we can determine what they mean because the clues have already been given to us in the rest of the Bible.

To study Revelation is to study the rest of the Bible.

In fact, it isn't till you've studied the book of Revelation that it can be rightly said that you've studied the Bible.

For it's in Revelation that we see the goal and end of all creation.

You can only rightly understand a thing when you see it completed.

So all the things we see begun in the rest of the Bible find their destiny in this last book of the Bible.

This is why in v. 3 we read -

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.

CONCLUSION

I began tonight by asking what your image of Jesus was.

I trust it's been through a major re-working tonight.

How often I've thought, "I wish I could see Jesus. What a difference it would make!"

Yeah, it sure would - It would wipe me out!

What a difference this vision of Jesus is from the picture we get of Him in the gospels.

There we see a suffering, humble servant.

But that was for then; that was necessary to the Incarnation.

What John has shown us here in vs. 9-20 is the way Jesus is now!

He is the Lord of Glory - the King of kings.

He is the Perfect Judge whose voice overthrows all the counsel of wicked men.

He is the Ancient of Days and the God of Eternity.

Though John had come to know Jesus extremely well during his earthly ministry, he was unprepared for this revelation and fell as dead before the Lord.

Jesus then came to him, comforted him, returned his strength and spoke a word of peace to him.

"Do not be afraid," He said.

I'm confident that after this vision, John was never afraid of anything ever again.

For fear is relative.

We're usually afraid of something when we're unfamiliar with it, but repeated exposure to it results in our fear diminishing.

Before you rode a bike the first time, you were probably fearful.

But after learning how to drive a car, no bike holds any fear for you.

You were probably a bit anxious about learning how to swim in a pool, but after surfing the big ones in Hawaii, swimming in a pool holds not the slightest bit of fear for you.

The first time Ricky Ryan taught a home bible study he was very nervous, but now that he's spoken to tens of thousands at *Promise Keepers* Stadium events, speaking to a home group holds not the least bit of anxiety for him.

And John, having seen the glory of Christ and realizing just who Jesus is in relation to him and all creation, meant that from that point on, nothing held any terror for him.

Well does the Book of Proverbs say that the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

We can't live well, we can't live successfully, until we've dealt with the paralyzing effects of fear.

The fear of God drives away all other fears and sets us free to live the life God intends us to live.

[1] *Church History*, III.18, 20 - from the *Nicean and Post Nicean Fathers Series 2*, Volume 1, pages 1480-149

[2] Walvoord, pg. 42

[3] cf. Isaiah 41:4 & 48:12

[4] 2 Cor. 12:4

[5] Exodus 25:31-37

[6] Guzik

[7] Exodus 29:5, 39:1-5

[8] Guzik

[9] Barnes