

## 2. Introduction and Vision of the Son of Man (Revelation 1)

### **Prologue (Revelation 1:1-3)**

*1:1 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, 2 who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 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.*

Paul described how revelation occurs:

2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. Eph 3:2-5. See 1 Cor 2:6-16.

We can understand the Revelation of John. "What must soon take place" places a time constraint on all who read this writing. The events must soon take place, and in verse 3: "... for the time is near" makes the events of the Revelation imminent to all those who read. Paul placed the limits on time:

8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. 2 Tim 1:8-12

Everyone who reads the Revelation confronts the imminence of the events of the book. All readers are inextricably tied to "that day" about which Paul speaks. The plan under which we live was before the beginning of time. In the meantime, the life we live is "just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." James 4:14-15. All humankind faces the imminence of the end of time whether by death or by the coming of the Lord. Everyone, from the time of the writing until the end, faces exactly the same situation. The events of the Revelation are near and must soon take place in all our lives.

The Revelation spells out the major event that is to take place in Rev 10:6-7:

6 And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay! 7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

In Rev 11:15, the seventh angel sounded his trumpet and identified the completion of the mystery of God with the establishment of Jesus as king over his kingdom:

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Of course, God resurrected Christ to sit at his right hand as described in Eph 1:22-23. Paul also described this event as the event by which he destroyed death. [See 2 Tim 1:8-12 above.]

Who is the speaker? The angel speaks but he speaks the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. *Angel* is literally a messenger or one who delivers a message. The message in this case is the very word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

To whom is the angel speaking? The angel speaks to the one who reads, the one who hears, and the one who keeps those things that are written.

What is the dramatic situation? The dramatic situation is that God has revealed to us his prophecy and the one who reads, hears, and keeps what is written shall be blessed. Christ's earthly ministry began with a pronouncement of blessings in Matthew 5. Commonly called the beatitudes, these blessings use the word *bles`sed*, just as here in verse 3. The word, used here and in the beatitudes in Matthew 5, appears seven times: Revelation 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14. The uses of *blessed* in the Revelation are so powerful as to track the development of the great single theme of the book:

- 3 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.
- 13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." Revelation 14:13.
- 15 "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." Revelation 16:15.
- 9 Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God." Revelation 19:9.
- 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:6.
- 7 "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book." Revelation 22:7.
- 14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Revelation 22:14.

The introduction to these notes showed how Epicurus used *blessed* to describe the state of those given to pleasure: "The aim and end of life for every man is his own happiness, and happiness is primarily defined as pleasure. 'Wherefore we call pleasure the **Alpha and Omega of a blessed life.**'" [Emphasis added]. In truth, the state of blessedness comes only through the Christ and his gospel. The Revelation attacked the decadent pleasure-seeking lives of those caught up by Satan in their own lust of the flesh, lust of eye, and pride of life. The conflict in the Revelation is a conflict between the Godhead of God, almighty, Jesus Christ, the Lord and King, and the Holy spirit of God and the triad of evil composed of the dragon or Satan, the beast, and the false prophet.

The dramatic situation takes added importance as the word prophecy shows us that God is the moving force behind the situation revealed in the Revelation. The apostle Peter explained how the power of God works in men who prophesy:

19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came

about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:19-21

The Revelation reveals that our eternal reward in Christ Jesus the Lord will soon take place.

### **Greeting and Doxology (Revelation 1:4-8)**

4 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, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

7 Look, he is coming with the clouds,

*and every eye will see him,*

*even those who pierced him;*

*and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.*

*So shall it be! Amen.*

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

John identifies himself as the writer. In Rev 1:9, he describes himself as "on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Nelson describes the situation:

[PAT muhs] -- a small rocky island to which the apostle John was banished and where he wrote the Book of Revelation (Rev 1:9). The island, about 16 kilometers (ten miles) long and ten kilometers (six miles) wide, lies off the southwest coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Because of its desolate and barren nature, Patmos was used by the Romans as a place to banish criminals, who were forced to work at hard labor in the mines and quarries of the island. Because Christians were regarded as criminals by the Roman emperor Domitian (ruled A.D. 81 AD - 96 AD), the apostle John probably suffered from harsh treatment during his exile on Patmos. An early Christian tradition said John was in exile for 18 months.

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He is writing to the seven churches of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea." Rev 1:11. These churches become the recipients of specific messages

in chapters two and three. As pointed out in the Introduction, this region was also the initial sphere of the influence of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.

John begins with a blessing of grace, which is unmerited favor, and peace, which is from God. It includes a harmonious relationship with God and man, plus inner peace that comes through Him who is, and who was. It comes through Christ at ones obeying of His gospel. The blessing is from Him who is eternal: He is now, He was, and He is before the beginning, and He is forever and ever.

Not only is the grace and peace from God, but from the seven spirits before Him and from the throne. The term seven spirits is unique to the Revelation. Appearing here with God, seven spirits makes the seven spirits before his throne have power in extending such great blessings. The Greek word for seven is *hepta* and implies fullness:

Hepta... corresponds to the Hebrew sheba' (which is akin to saba', signifying "to be full, abundant"), sometimes used as an expression of fullness, e. g., Ruth 4:15: it generally expresses completeness, and is used most frequently in the Apocalypse; it is not found in the Gospel of John, nor between the Acts and the Apocalypse, except in Heb 11:30 (in Rom 11:4 the numeral is heptakischilioi, "seven thousand"); in Matt 22:26 it is translated "seventh" (marg., "seven"). (From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Revelation uses the word *seven* over 100 times. It uses the term seven Spirits only four times in the Bible and each use is in Revelation:

- 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. Revelation 1:4.
- "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Revelation 3:1.
- From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Revelation 4:5.
- Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Revelation 5:6: 6.

The seven spirits of God are sevenfold in the sense of the sevenfold blessing in Ruth. The fullness of the word seven is similar in meaning to the fullness of the spirit given to Christ "34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit." John 3:34. [See notes below.] Christ has the seven spirits (3:1); the seven spirits are before the throne of God (4:5); the seven spirits are the eyes of the Lamb sent out unto all the earth (5:6). The seven spirits represent the Holy Spirit of God.

Isa 11:1-3 speaks of the Spirit of God metaphorically where the parts stand for the whole:

- 11 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;  
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
- 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him –  
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of power,  
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord –
- 3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

Beyond the issue of the lineage of Christ, this passage foretells a pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the Holy One beyond what has ever happened before or since. There are seven Spirits of God foretold here: the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of knowledge, and the Spirit of fear (respect) of the Lord. All of these, in their totality comprise the Spirit of God, or as John the Baptist explained in John 3:34-35, how Jesus was endowed with the full measure of the Holy Spirit: "34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit." Isaiah's prophecy uses the parts for the whole of the unlimited and all-powerful Spirit of God – the Spirit that he gave his son without limit.

Finally, the grace and peace come from the third person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ. He is the firstborn from the dead. "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the faithful the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." Colossians 1:18. His preeminence extends as ruler over even the kings the earth.

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Eph 1:19-23

Jesus is the fullness of the godhead (deity) bodily: "9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority." Col 2:9-10.

Christ is now reigning at the right hand of God and all things are under his feet. Any true reading of Revelation must accept that both Christ and the church are complete in the victory won at the cross and the resurrection of the Lord. The final victory in Jesus will be the resurrection of the saints:

- 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."
- 55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"
- 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 15:53-57.

Jesus is now "above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come."

Praise to him who gave himself for us and made us free from all sin. In Matt 26:28, Jesus said: "28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." To this the Hebrew writer added in Heb 9:14: "14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"

We are now a kingdom, and we are now priests. This is not something deferred to the second coming. Revelation repeats this status of the saints throughout the book. In Rev 5:9-10, they sing a new song:

9 And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,  
because you were slain,

and with your blood you purchased men for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

There is no idea of a future kingdom yet to come in the entire Bible. In fact, the teaching is emphatic:

- 6 Mark 9:1: And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."
- Colossians 1:13: 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.
- Hebrews 12:28: 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

There is no teaching in the Bible about a kingdom yet to come.

He also made us to be priests to serve his God and father. Peter describe our priestly duties: "4 As you come to him, the living Stone-rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him- 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:4-5.

"To him be the glory and power" describes the exalted and empowered saviour. Just as the exaltation and empowerment are complete, so is the duration-"forever and ever." Forever and ever is literally into the ages of the ages. The power and glory of the Lord are complete in his resurrection and complete forever and ever.

Christ is coming with the clouds and all shall see him—those who are now living and those who have gone before. Every knee shall bow:

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:9-11.

Nowhere does the Bible say that Jesus will set foot on the earth again:

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thess 4:16-17.

"I am the alpha and omega," or we would say, "The A and the Z." This verse is the thematic statement of the book. All that follows demonstrates now and forever that God is truly Almighty: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." The dragon, the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and all who follow them will suffer defeat before the power to God, Almighty, and His Lamb.

## **One like a Son of Man (Revelation 1:9-20)**

9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. NIV

John identifies himself as a companion in the suffering and the kingdom. As noted before, the kingdom is present and not to be established at some future time. See the note on verse 4 for Patmos, where John was imprisoned because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

The Lord's Day receives significance throughout the New Testament:

- I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26:29.
- When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. Mark 16:9.
- Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. John 20:1
- When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Acts 2:1
- The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Acts 2:20-21
- On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. Acts 20:7: 7.
- On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 1 Corinthians 16:2
- Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25

The time of John's vision was on the Lord's Day and, by most scholars, around 96AD. This day is not to be confused with the last day when the Lord shall come again and the end is upon us:

- Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved

on the day of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 5:5.

- As you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus. 2 Corinthians 1:14.
- For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 1 Thessalonians 5:2.
- Not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. 2 Thessalonians 2:2
- But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 2 Peter 3:10.

John describes himself as in the spirit. The Lord and Paul describe this state as the state of true worship:

- God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. John 4:24.
- So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. 16 If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? 1 Cor 14:15-17
- And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18
- And who also told us of your love in the Spirit. Colossians 1:8

It was during this period of worship that the following visions occurred as illustrated by the subsequent uses of the phrase in the spirit:

- At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. Revelation 4:2.
- Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. Revelation 17:3.
- And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. Revelation 21:10

The loud voice was like a trumpet, and this phrase introduces figurative language that begins to describe what John heard and saw. *Like* and *as* are the signal words of the simile—a figure of speech that compares two things that are essentially unlike. The trumpet and the voice are essentially unlike. The voice is not a literal trumpet, but only has the characteristics of a trumpet: perhaps it was loud and with great clarity as one often thinks of the trumpet sounding. One thing is for sure—the voice was a voice and not a literal trumpet. The voice ordered him to write what he was to see and send the message to the seven churches.

Verse 20 identifies the symbolic meaning of the seven golden lampstands: "the seven lampstands are the seven churches." "Like the son of man" is a phrase often used in the Old Testament to describe mankind. The phrase is a favorite of Ezekiel. Prophetically, it is used of the Christ:

- Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. Psalms 80:17.

- "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. Daniel 7:13.

Jesus used the term "son of man" of himself many times during his earthly ministry – most likely to indicate his humanity. Phil 2:6-8 tells of his human nature:

6 Who, being in very nature God,  
 did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing,  
 taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.  
 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself  
 and became obedient to death- even death on a cross!

But again, like a son of man is not a son of man. The characteristics of Christ present a human form: he is dressed, he has feet, a chest, a head, hair, eyes, etc. Each specific characteristic receives a metaphoric description of its own, thus the metaphor extends. The extended metaphor of Christ is beauty, power, glory, brilliance. This not the first time that the Bible describes the Christ in glory and beauty beyond ordinary imagination and words:

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. John 1:1-5.
- He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. Col.1:15-18.
- In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. Heb 1:1-4

Garments and clothes characterize good works. They are used of the saints in Rev 3:4, 18; 16:15 and of Christ in 6:15; 19:13; 19:16. Hair white like wool, white as snow is used of God in Dan 7:9.

9 "As I looked,  
 "thrones were set in place,  
 and the Ancient of Days took his seat 10  
 His clothing was as white as snow;  
 the hair of his head was white like wool.

Eyes like blazing fire and feet like bronze repeats in Rev 2:18: "These are the words of voice was like the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished the sound of bronze." His voice was the sound of rushing waters. The seven stars are the angels of rushing

waters. the seven churches (1:20). Out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. The 16 In his right. double-edged sword is the word of God: '12 For the word of God is living and active. hand he held Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, seven stars, and joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. II Heb 4:12. His out of his mouth face was bright as the sun at its brightest.

The influence of seeing the Lord provoked John to sudden worship as he fell at his feet as one dead. The Lord comforted John by describing his victory:

I am the first and the last (alpha and omega).

I am the living one.

I was dead and I am alive for ever and ever.

I hold the keys to death and Hades.

The resurrection of the Lord gave him keys to death and Hades. He prophesied this in Matthew 16:18-19: "18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." He fulfilled this prophecy in Acts 2 with the establishment of his church: "24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him (Acts 2:24-25)." Acts 2:33-34 adds, "33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." A major part of the Revelation story is that Christ has overcome death and Hades for all of us who are children of God, and he will put an end to death and Hades: Rev 6:7-8: "Come!" 8 I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Rev 20:13-15: Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Paul describes this final victory 1 Cor 15:54-57:

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John's charge is to write "what is now" and "what will take place later." The letters to the seven churches of chapters two and three are immediate, and the end of death and Hades are to take place later. There is no more valuable tool in reading the Revelation than that of correctly identifying what is now and what will take place later. For example, we have already seen that we now are a kingdom and priests. No interpretation can change this fundamental principle and say that the kingdom is still to come.