

Ray Ruppert

Revelation:  
A Lay Person's  
Reflections

A Commentary

Tex Ware  
Everett, WA

## Revelation: A Lay Person's Reflections

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Revelation: A Lay Person's Reflections

To: The Lord Jesus Christ

May He be revealed and honored in this study.

To: All the email recipients of the original text that became this book

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## Forward

Many people balk when it comes to reading or studying the book of Revelation. However, they may readily pick up a book by a well-known author who relates current events to Revelation. I believe that many of these books provide a very limited view of Revelation. Unfortunately, the world changes and these books become outdated which further discourages people from studying prophecy. People then miss the many blessings that come from studying God's Word. I have attempted to look at this book without getting bogged down trying to relate prophecies to current events, even though I do mention some of the possibilities briefly.

My goal is to encourage readers to use the Bible as the primary source to interpret the Bible. To this end, I have generally quoted Scripture in the text rather than simply listing the verse. I do this so that the reader will not have to look up the verses. Many tend to take the author's word for the explanation instead of reading the verse and verifying that the author is correctly interpreting the Scripture.

Please be like the Bereans when you read this book. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11) Don't take my word for it but check out the Bible.

I originally wrote this text as a series of emails. In those emails I used a modern translation. I changed to the KJV to keep production costs low and also discovered that the KJV was not all that hard to read and conveyed the same understanding as other translations. There are some anomalies with the KJV that modern translations clarify and vice versa. These are usually noted when I discovered them. My apologies if I have missed rewording the text to account of all of these differences.

May you be blessed as you read and hear the words of this prophecy.

## Chapter 1- Revelation 1:1-3

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

### Revelation of Jesus

The whole book of Revelation is revealing Jesus to John. It isn't John's revelations as though he made it up. The whole purpose of the book is to show us more of the glory of God in Jesus as He shows John what must soon take place. The revelation is given from God to Jesus to give to John. Of course, John writes it down for any who consider themselves the servants of Jesus. Jesus sent an angel to John to convey the message. Why is all of this being mentioned at the beginning of the book? I think it is because the message of the book is complicated and without the assurance that it is from God, some people would reject it or possibly not even bother studying it.

John was sure that this message was from God, that it is His word, the truth about Jesus. Remember that Jesus said in the last days, many would say Christ is here or there - don't go looking. “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.” (Matt 24:23-25) John had to make sure that this vision was really Jesus; otherwise people could quote Jesus' words and claim that John was going off the deep end.

Many people say that it doesn't make sense to study prophecy. They think that it is not healthy or is unscriptural to try to see what is in the future and back up their opinion by quoting Matt 6:34. “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” This is not the case when we study prophecy. What we are doing is seeing what God has revealed to us and how that should affect our lives. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim 3:16-17) All scripture is useful for us to study (even genealogies?) so that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Prophecy is about one third of the Bible so we need to know how to study it, understand it, and glean from it the truth of God. Included in the opening of the book of Revelation is a promise of blessing for reading (hearing) and taking it to heart. That means we need to do something with it. Prophecy is not for idle curiosity. It has a purpose and that is to encourage us to know more about God and His nature. We know that as we get to know Him better and better, our will becomes the same as His and the holy life He wants us to lead comes closer to a reality.

## Revelation: A Lay Person's Reflections

One reason we are encouraged in our walk is that these events must soon take place. The time is near. When this was written 1,900 years ago, John believed that the time was near. The message to the churches was meant to correct problems and help them to live godly lives in light of Jesus' soon appearing. Why should we believe His return is any less a reality now? The urgency is to prompt us to holiness as well.

### His Soon Return

What does "soon" mean? Two Greek words are used. The first is *en*, which is a preposition meaning a fixed position in place, time, or state.<sup>1</sup> The second is *tachos*, which means a brief space (of time).<sup>2</sup> When prefixed by *en*, it means in haste. So what's going on? If this was written 1900 years ago, then why haven't we seen these events already fulfilled? A study of prophecy requires knowledge of God and His timing.

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:3-9)

Even before John wrote down the words of Revelation, people were scoffing at the idea that Jesus would return at all. They pointed to nature and how it seems like it has always existed, reasoning that things would go on as they always have. Sounds just like today with the theories of evolution, doesn't it? But look at what Peter says to us. He reiterates that there was a flood and that there will be a fiery end. There are two reasons that it hasn't happened sooner. The first is that God is an eternal being who doesn't measure time or "soonness" with the same clock as we do. The second is that He is patient with mankind. He wants everyone to come to repentance and not to die without salvation. As we go through the book of Revelation, when we see disaster after disaster falling on mankind, we must not forget that God has given everyone an opportunity to repent and escape the disasters that will occur.

We need to remember just how short our lives are. "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." (Ps 39:5) "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:13, 14) We really can't compare our life span with God's timing. Consider what James said. We like to think that we can plan our future and be secure in knowing how it will turn out. We lay up retirement accounts, IRAs and even depend on social security. The truth is that God can change the situation in the world overnight. How long did it take for the communist empire to crash? I certainly didn't think the political climate in the Soviet Union could change so quickly. Who thought that in six days Israel could win a war and gain control

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of Jerusalem for the first time in thousands of years? It works both ways. “Soon” in God’s timetable can be days or centuries.

There is nothing stopping Jesus from coming back today. I know there are events that must first take place before He comes, but God can work out any details in a matter of minutes. There is also the possibility that the events we think must occur before He comes back are based on our misunderstanding of scripture. As we look through the book of Revelation, I hope to point out some of the various points of view that might not be the current popular position.

One thing is certain. Jesus will be returning and it will be soon. Here are a few more facts that we need to remember as we study the book of Revelation.

1. “Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11) Jesus will return just as he left - physically and in the clouds and He will return to the Mount of Olives.
2. “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” (Matt 24:36) No one knows when He will return. Don’t listen to those who set dates.
3. “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” (Matt 24:42) Watch, we are commanded to expect him at anytime and to be ready.
4. “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” (Matt 24:46) We need to be active in our Christian walk and service when He comes back. Our wait is not an idle wait.
5. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Phil 3:20) Our attitude of waiting should be with eagerness as the NIV states. If we have a problem with that, then we probably aren’t using the spiritual gifts that He has given us.

We must be patient and realize that it could be another 1000 years before these “soon” events take place or they could be tomorrow. In the mean time we must plan and work accordingly. We must share the urgency of His coming again with others to encourage them to live a holy life. We need to share the gospel with others because after He comes it will be much more difficult for people to come to Him and the circumstances of life will be much harsher than they are now.

May you be blessed and encouraged to draw closer to our Lord as we go through the book of Revelation. May you eagerly expect His soon return and be a shining lamp for others to see.

## Chapter 2 - Revelation 1:4-6

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

John now addresses the seven churches that are specified by Jesus later in this chapter. John identifies himself, not as the author of the letter, but the scribe who has faithfully written everything that Jesus has commanded. He is concerned with getting the message across as it was given him and was very careful not to add or subtract anything from the message. Later in the book, we'll talk more out why. If you want to peek ahead, look at Rev 22:18, 19.

Grace and Peace - Just as Jesus greeted the disciples after His resurrection; He greets us with Grace and Peace. In verse 17 He tells us not to be afraid. This is the greeting to the Church, His holy people. It is significantly different from the greetings later in the book, to those who don't belong to Him. This is written shortly after Nero's persecution of Christians, yet even in troubled times it is His greeting to us. This book is full of more trouble, but the message to the believer is still grace and peace.

Earlier we said that the message was from God. Now He reveals to us the triune nature of God. The message is from the Trinity.

### The Father

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” (Rev 1:8) Generally when I think of the One who is to come, I think of Jesus, but these verses clearly identify that this is the Lord God, the Father. The phrase, “who is and who was” is repeated in verse 8 with the additional references to the Greek letters. Alpha is the beginning of the Greek alphabet and omega the end. This shows that God includes all of time. There is not a time He did not exist because He says that He is the first and the last. Three times (also in Rev 21:6 and Rev 22:13) He emphasizes that He is beyond all time and therefore has knowledge of all that has or will happen. With this concept firmly in place, the rest of the book can make sense.

“I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.” (Ps 145:1-2) “One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.” (Ps 145:4) “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.” (Ps 145:13) From generation to generation we have the same God and these verses describe His continuity through history. He is faithful to all His promises and to all He has made. As the book of Revelation unfolds, it is important to remember this because His wrath will be revealed against some of His creation. We will see His promise

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fulfilled in the culmination of the book when He restores all creation. Even as we view this Psalm with an eternal perspective, we need to view the Book of Revelation in the same way, not always in the same time order as it is written down. God reveals it this way because His kingdom is everlasting. "Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God." (Ex 3:6) The Lord speaks here in the present tense, not the past tense. Our God is beyond time and all is the present to Him. No wonder Moses hid his face, no wonder David said he would praise His name forever! When we contemplate the eternal nature of God, how can we do anything other than worship Him?

Do you remember the grace and peace He promised? We can have that grace and peace because we know that He knows exactly what will happen to us in the next five minutes as well as the next thousand years. God is never surprised. He doesn't see either a tragic or a happy ending to a problem and say to Himself, "I didn't think it would turn out that way!" He knows how it will turn out because He is in control.

### The Holy Spirit

The text says "the seven Spirits which are before his throne." The NIV translation never capitalizes references to God such as "He" or "His" like many other versions. I don't know why, because it is a help to me. Most other translations capitalize the word spirit to make it clear that it is referring to God. However, to make sure we aren't just taking someone else's word for it, a little research will clarify that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. In Rev 3:1, Jesus refers to the seven spirits as the seven Spirits of God. Again in Rev 4:5, there are seven lamps before the throne of God and they are also identified as the seven Spirits of God. Why seven? Beats me, but the following may explain it.

Seven is a sacred number to the ancient Hebrew people. The word is used often in the Bible to symbolize perfection, fullness, abundance, rest, and completion. This number was also considered holy or sacred by other cultures of the ancient world. It may have received its significance from the seven "planets" visible in the heavens-the sun and moon and the five planets known to the ancients.<sup>3</sup>

If seven represents perfection, abundance and completeness, then the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives is sufficient for all we need.

1. He is the Spirit of truth. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13) He teaches what He hears from in front of the throne about the past, present and future.
2. He is the Counselor (or Comforter in some versions). "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26) Believers certainly need counsel and comfort now as well as in the days ahead.
3. He is the Teacher. (John 14:26 and 1 John 2:27) Just as He reminded the disciples of everything so they could accurately recorded the gospels, so He teaches us today. Wherever the Word is banned or hard to find, the Holy Spirit is able to keep the Church alive and functioning.

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4. He is the Earnest - the promise or down payment on our inheritance. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph 1:13-14) There are times today when we need to remember that His Holy Spirit seals us forever, otherwise we would give up.
5. He is our Power for witnessing. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) His power is especially needed during times of persecution. For many, admitting allegiance to Christ will bring a death sentence, not only in the times of tribulation to come, but also in today's world.
6. He leads us. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom 8:14) He leads us in paths of righteousness so that we won't sin. This is vitally important for us in today's age. Think also how those living through the tribulation years will need His leading when the world will be much more evil than it is now.
7. He convicts the world. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:" (John 16:8) One way the Spirit convicts is through the Word of God. The book of Revelation is especially convicting when people finally realize that there will be a judgment and that they will be held accountable for their actions and rejecting Jesus.

Obviously there are more than seven functions of the Holy Spirit; however these are some that come to mind, as they will be important for believes that are alive during the end times as well as for us in an ever increasingly evil age.

### **Jesus - The Son**

Jesus is first of all called the faithful witness. "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." (Isa 55:4) Long before the book of Revelation was written, Jesus was referred to as a witness. When He came the first time, He said that He was here to do the Father's will. God the Father had announced through Isaiah that the Messiah would be a witness. He would speak what the Father wanted Him to say and would carry out that witness. "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." (John 18:37) It certainly makes sense that if one of the reasons that Jesus was born was to testify to the truth, then we had better listen!

He knew what God wanted of Him and He obeyed, knowing that it would lead to a horrible and painful death. In the end times as described in the Book of Revelation, many will have the same choice, expressing faith that will result in death. We are called in times of trouble to remember He was a faithful witness and to follow His example.

Jesus is the first born from the dead. While there have been several people who were raised from the dead, they all later died. Jesus is the first born from the dead because He was raised with a new and glorified body. He will never die again. Being raised from the dead was one of His rewards for being a faithful witness.

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First born implies that He isn't going to be the only one raised in this way. 1 Corinthians 15 expounds in detail about His death and resurrection as well as the fact that we can also look forward to this reward. God invented carrots - things to help get us through troubled times and this is one of them. But His rewards are eternal carrots, not temporal things with which we eventually tire. The issues in the Book of Revelation are eternal and can be applied whether there is tribulation or not. Rev 1:18 adds that Jesus holds the keys to death and this adds to our hope. We don't need to fear the things of this life - especially death. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt 10:28) We need to have an eternal perspective and remember that Jesus has been through it all and has come out victorious. This is at the heart of the getting through all tribulations, now and in the future.

Jesus is the prince (or ruler in NIV) of the kings of the earth. He has the authority to rule and it was given to Him long before His first coming. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isa 9:6) I just love this verse. It clearly identifies the Messiah with the same attributes of God the Father! I sometimes wonder how people can't see the truth in this verse and then can't admit that Jesus and the Father are one. Anyway, it was foretold thousands of years ago. "...[God] raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph 1:20-23) He is at this time exalted above all rulers. We don't see it yet, but we will see it take place in the book of Revelation when He steps forward to exercise His right as ruler of all things.

### **Praise to Jesus - The Gospel**

He loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood. Every time we share the basic facts of who God is (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and that we are freed from our sins by the blood of Jesus, we are giving praise to Jesus. The gospel is always at the heart of the Bible and is the reason there even is a Book of Revelation. However, we can become so caught up in His splendor (which is good) that we forget His purpose for coming the first time. When we share His second coming we need to point people back to the first coming so that they won't fear His second.

Verse six also summarizes our inheritance and our service. The Book of Revelation is full of kingdoms and demonstrations of authority. We have His reassurance before all this unfolds that we who know the Lord are not included in the demonstration of God's wrath toward these kingdoms since we are His priests and in His kingdom.

Today we ordain ministers to do the "work of the Lord." Jesus didn't tell the disciples to go out and ordain ministers so that they would do all the work. We often overlook the fact that we are all members of the priesthood of believers. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" (1 Peter 2:9) Priests were the intercessors between man and God; they performed certain duties that the common man was not allowed to do, and even some of the priests could

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not do all things. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and then only once a year. We are called to intercede for people in the most significant ways. First of all, we have the privilege of praying for people, sharing the gospel and hopefully leading them to the Lord. It doesn't stop there since there is nothing in the Bible that says we can't baptize or even lead in sharing the Lord's Supper. I'm not advocating that we should all run out and start our own little churches, I'm only pointing out that we often limit our service to the Lord because we aren't "ordained." Whenever we serve others, whether it is preparing for a communion service, washing baptism cloths, or teaching children, we are being priests as well. This brings glory to Him when we use the power He has given us to be priests. Giving Him praise is the way it will be - forever and ever.

May you be blessed as you ponder the Trinity and His shed blood that has freed us from sin and given us the power to serve Him as priests. May fear be far from you as you ponder His victory over death and our promised eternity with Him.

## Chapter 3 - Revelation 1:7-9

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

### Jesus' Return

It seems that Jesus' return is one thing that is acknowledged by many people, believers and unbelievers alike. You can look at the magazines at the grocery store check out stands and almost every week there is a headline promising some new revelation about the return of Christ. They claim that these revelations come from such various sources as Nostradamus or even from the Bible. So what does the Bible say about His return?

Verse 7 says that He will be coming back with the clouds and this is in keeping with the way He left. “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:9-11) I can imagine that it will be very much like running a video backwards. There will be at least one cloud in the sky and it will part, revealing Jesus who will then descend back to the earth. In Acts, Jesus had been standing on the Mount of Olives with His disciples giving them His last minute instructions. It makes sense then that He will return and stand on the Mount of Olives as is confirmed by Zech 14:4 “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”

When He returns, it will be with authority and power. “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matt 24:30) This theme is repeated in Matt 26:64 and is also recorded in Mark 13:26, 14:62. When He left, only a handful of people saw Him go. They were still unsure of what His plan was since they were still asking if “now” was the time He would restore the Kingdom to Israel. There will be no doubt that He has returned to establish His Kingdom when He comes again as all nations will be able to see Him. Some will mourn because of His arrival while there will be rejoicing for others.

Revelation 1:7 NIV says that the peoples of the earth will mourn when Jesus returns. This phrase “peoples of the earth” is a key that will later be repeated in various forms in the Book of Revelation. It refers to those who are living on the earth, but have not accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. There are only a couple of reasons why anyone would

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mourn when Jesus returns. The first is that they had not believed in Him and are now facing a terrible judgment. The other reason is that their eyes have been opened to who He is and are mourning because their ancestors had missed His first coming and were responsible for His death “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” (Zech 12:10) These Jews will receive grace from our Lord indicating that they will be saved; however, they will mourn as a people because their ancestors rejected Jesus when He came the first time. Mourning for the sins of our fathers is a concept that we don't have in our culture; however it is understood in the historical Jewish culture. (Daniel 9 and Nehemiah 9) They may also be mourning because they will be entering the millennial reign of Christ as mortals instead of having resurrected bodies. Being mortals, they will still be subject to the ability to sin. They will have to wait until the end of Christ's millennial reign before they will be free from sin. It will be interesting to find out the timing of these events to see when the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are no longer classified as “peoples of the earth” but become believers in Jesus.

There has always been a lot of speculation about the day Jesus will come back. One of the things that bother people is that every eye will see him. How can that be if He returns to the Mount of Olives? Other problems deal with the fact that He will be coming with the clouds. How can that happen when there are so many places in the world that are sunny while it is cloudy elsewhere (Seattle)? And there is this “sign of the Son of Man” that will appear in the sky. What is that and does that mean that everyone will be able to see it? The only thing that I can say is that the Lord has already told us that it won't be like anything we have ever seen before. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:” (Zech 14:6-7) We have to think “outside of the box” to fathom any part of it. He will take care of all the details of answering these questions in a way that will be unexpected.

### **John's Situation**

John was not immune to suffering. He was on the island of Patmos because he had been exiled for the Word of God and his testimony about Jesus. In the Roman Empire, John didn't enjoy freedom of religion. While we do have a great degree of freedom in the U.S., this is not the case in most of the world now or in the past. By the time John had written this, he was the only one of the original 12 apostles that was left alive. All had been martyred for their faith. Apparently the Roman government didn't want another martyr on its hands and instead, tried to minimize his influence by isolating him after he had been tortured. It is worthy of note that his exile wasn't because he was standing up for some cause such as freedom of religion, his opposition to slavery or the violence in the gladiator games. It was simply because he was preaching salvation through Jesus Christ.

Many believe that this book was written only for John's era and should only be studied as history. However, John's identification as a brother in suffering spans all ages. I think it shows that there will always be persecution. For this reason we can study the Book of Revelation as history with application for the present as well as God's plan and warning for the future. In verse 8, the eternal nature of God is described and adds to the confirmation that this book is for all ages.

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One thing is for sure; there will be suffering in the future just as there is now. We shouldn't look at the Book of Revelation simply to try to figure out whether or not Christians will escape the Great Tribulation described later in the book. The fact is that there are currently Christians who are undergoing tribulation that rivals the problems in Revelation. More important than the fact that suffering occurs throughout history is our attitude toward it. We can learn a lot from John's attitude.

He identifies with all others in the kingdom of Christ who are suffering when he states that he is our brother and companion. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Peter 5:8-9) Peter also understood our need to identify with those who are suffering. It is a kingdom thing. We belong to either Christ's kingdom or Satan's. As a part of Christ's kingdom, we will have opposition from the enemy, which in various parts of the world manifests itself in persecution. One way of being alert and resisting the devil is to remember that others have the same or worse problems than we do. We need to be holding them up in prayer.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12-13) We have been told over and over again in the Bible that we will suffer because of our relationship with Jesus. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." (Matt 5:11) However, there is joy and blessedness in participating in the sufferings of Christ and we need to be prepared for it. "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (Rev 13:10b) "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Rev 14:12) Two more times in the Book of Revelation, the phrase that John used for patient endurance (here is the patience) is used to let the saints know that they will have to be patient and endure suffering.

The battles we endure tempt us to give up, complain or fight back with worldly weapons. John suffered with patient endurance. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door." (James 5:7-9) We need to be like farmers who continue to plant and wait year after year. Some farmers watch their crops burn up in drought or destroyed by insects, yet they continue to plant because they know they won't receive a harvest if they give up. When we identify with others who are undergoing suffering, we are more apt to be able to stand firm in our faith and continue to plant seeds from the Word of God. If we start grumbling about our situation, it is likely that we will eventually grumble about everything, including other brothers and sisters in Christ and end up being judged for that instead of reaping a harvest.

John says that both suffering and patience are the results of our relationship with Jesus. What is your relationship with Jesus? Does the thought of Jesus coming back in the clouds give you joy or cause you to mourn? Are you ready to greet Him with great joy as a close friend who has been away on a long journey? Do you fear His return because He is coming back with power and authority to judge? Is it possible that you want to see Him come back again, but you don't want it to happen now because you have things to do,

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goals to achieve? If you can relate to either of these last two situations, then I would urge you to get your relationship with Jesus straightened up - something is dreadfully wrong that will have eternal consequences.

When you are suffering for any reason, not just persecution, what is your attitude? Do you consider others who are suffering? Do you suffer with patient endurance or grumbling? If you aren't suffering, are you willing to suffer for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus? You may have to.

Let's work on our relationship with Jesus so that regardless of the situation we will have patient endurance and would welcome His return right now!

## Chapter 4 - Revelation 1:10-11

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”

### The Lord’s Day

When is the Lord’s Day? Most of us set apart Sunday as the “The Lord’s Day” and others insist that we should keep Saturday as “The Lord’s Day.” “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” (Acts 20:7) They gathered for two reasons, to break bread i.e. to celebrate communion and to hear the Word of God preached. “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” (1 Cor 16:2) It also appears that the churches established Sunday as a regular day of giving, most likely in their worship service. By the time that John wrote this book, the Christian community had established the custom of gathering together to worship on the first day of the week.

Worshiping the Lord on Sunday and designating it “The Lord’s Day” is a significant departure from the observance of the Sabbath as required in the Old Testament. Why did the Church depart from observing the Sabbath and substitute Sunday? The first reason is that Jesus was raised on the first day of the week. His first two recorded appearances were on Sundays (John 20:19, 20:26). It is also a fulfillment of prophecy. “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” (Ps 118:22-24) On Sunday, Jesus rose again to establish Himself as the head of the Church. In the context of this prophecy the day the Lord has made is Sunday and we are to rejoice and be glad in it. What better way than to have our worship service on Sunday? “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” (Matt 5:17) It is only because Jesus has fulfilled the law that we are no longer required to keep the Law as the means of salvation. For Israel, keeping the law was a life and death matter. Anyone found working on the Sabbath was to be stoned. If we were to be legalistic and say that we should observe Saturday as the Lord’s Day, then we would also be obligated to observe all the law and that would include the penalty for those who don’t. Unger’s Dictionary says it better than I can.

The term “Christian Sabbath” is scarcely biblically defensible. This day of grace marks the beginning of the week with a day of privilege, whereas the Sabbath came at the end of a week of labor, an order expected under the law. It must carefully be remembered that the Lord’s Day, the term Sunday being of pagan origin, is strictly a Christian institution.

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It is not for all men, and it is scarcely justifiable to attempt to legislate its observance upon unsaved people. As Lewis Sperry Chafer points out, "Men are not justified in returning to the rules provided for the Sabbath in order to secure directions for the observance of the Lord's Day..."<sup>4</sup>

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." (Rom 14:5-6) In addition to all this, we have liberty in Christ. In many parts of the world, believers are unable to gather together on the first day of the week for worship because of the local culture. This is true in many Muslim countries where believers meet on Friday. We certainly shouldn't hold anything against any Christian group that meets together on a day other than Sunday.

The question should not be, "What day of the week do we gather to worship the Lord?" Rather it should be, "Do we gather weekly with other to worship the Lord?" "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Heb 10:25) The author of Hebrews tied our worship to the approaching "Day." He wasn't talking about Sunday, but the day that the Lord will return. Since the book of Revelation has much to say about the Lord's return, it is fitting that He gave it to John on "The Lord's Day." This reminds us that we should be gathering together regularly because we will also need conviction to go through tough times. If we neglect gathering together, we will also neglect other aspects of our Christian walk. If we don't go to church on Sunday when there isn't any persecution, what make us think we will go when there is? All backsliding starts one slip at a time.

### **In the Spirit**

What does it mean to be "In the Spirit"? This may be answered in many different ways depending on your Christian or even non-Christian experience. Many of the charismatic persuasion would conclude that John was praying in tongues at the time. A shaman would conclude that he was in a trance or on some kind of "quest." I think that it is simply a statement about John's attitude of prayer and submission to God as he worshiped. He was absorbed in prayer to the extent that his own circumstances didn't matter. There are many references that we can look up to discover a bit more about this.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;" (Eph 6:18) We are all commanded to pray in the Spirit as Paul wraps up his commands on Spiritual warfare. We are to be praying with all kinds of prayers and requests if we are praying in the Spirit. Some say we shouldn't pray for trivial things like parking spots. Praying in the Spirit means we are talking to the Lord about everything that we are doing including finding a parking spot or how to help a friend struggling with cancer. We don't know what spiritual battles are going on around us, and sometimes things that seem trivial to us may have eternal consequences. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost," (Jude 20) When we make our whole thought life a prayer - a constant conversation with the Lord - our faith will be built up. When we neglect talking with Him during the day, our faith will be more dependent on seeing the answers we want than on seeing Him.

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“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” (Rom 8:26-27) If we are praying in the Spirit, there are times when we simply won’t know what to say in our prayers. We don’t know the mind and will of God for most specific circumstances. We can usually be sure about some things when He has made it clear. For example, we know that He desires all men to be saved. (1 Tim 2:4) When we pray for the salvation of any person the Spirit doesn’t need to intercede to make our prayer in accordance with His will. However, we don’t always know His will for prayers such as healing. He hasn’t promised healing for all diseases of believers. But it doesn’t matter that we don’t know His will. We have His promise that the Spirit will intercede for us and present our prayer to the Father according to His will. This is a burden-lightening truth, especially for those of us on prayer chains. We constantly see requests for people we don’t know and whose circumstances seem beyond their ability to bear. If we are faithful to lift them up in prayer, then we can be assured that our words will reach the Father correctly, even if we aren’t asking for the right thing. It is more about our attitude and willingness to pray than what we say. This is what I would call praying in the Spirit.

“Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually.” (1 Chron 16:11) “But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.” (Deut 4:29) If we want to be in the Spirit, one thing is clear. We need to be seeking the Lord’s face. When we are seeking Him and not just what He can do for us, our minds, hearts, and souls will begin to be aligned with His. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:17-18) In turn, we are transformed into His likeness.

Do you want to be in the Spirit? If so, then seek His face continually and believe when you pray that the Holy Spirit intercedes in our prayers. By faith we believe that we pray in the Spirit since we are told to. He wouldn’t tell us to do something we all couldn’t do.

### **Out of the Body**

Some think that being in the Spirit requires some sort of out of body experience. I don’t think so because John had not identified anything like this. He did have what may have been an out of body experience later. “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.” (Rev 4:1-2) In spiritual encounters outside of Christianity many people have out of body experiences in which they talk about being able to look back and see their body asleep or unconscious. John isn’t intent on his experience, but on what God wants to convey to Him. He is focused on God and His throne in heaven. “So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness:” (Rev 17:3a) As John was moved around to other places the emphasis was always to accurately convey the message the Lord was giving him in his visions. “And I fell at his feet to worship him.” (Rev 19:10a) John’s ultimate response is to worship. At this point, he fell down before an angel who

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had to tell him to stop, but the point is that even though he was in the Spirit, he had the capability of physical movement that doesn't fit with being out of the body.

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven." (2 Cor 12:2) Paul had a similar experience. Even though he was taken up to heaven to see a vision, he could not distinguish whether or not he was physically moved or only his spirit had ascended.

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones," (Ezek 37:1) The Spirit took Ezekiel to the valley of dry bones. His description of the experience is similar to Paul's and John's.

In each of these experiences, there is one thing that is important. The emphasis is on the message that the Lord has to deliver. The emphasis is not on the experience itself. This is a primary difference between the Biblical experiences and extra-Biblical experiences.

"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple," "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;" (Matt 4:5, 8) I have always pondered how the devil had the ability to take Jesus anywhere and to give these experiences to Him. But think about it. If the devil could produce what appears to be out of body experiences for Jesus, is it not possible for him to do it to us? I am throwing this in as a warning for anyone who may seek out of body experiences as evidence that they are in the Spirit. All the cases above where the Spirit provided the experience occurred to godly men who were not seeking an experience, but the face of God. In each situation, God initiated the experience. If a person is seeking the experience, the devil may very well provide an experience to mislead and subvert God's will.

### **Loud Voice**

"Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him." (John 12:28-29) When the Father spoke from heaven, Jesus was able to hear and understand Him. The crowd of people could only hear thunder. They were spiritually deaf as is evidenced by the next few verses and by their actions. Only a few days later they called for Jesus to be crucified. If John hadn't been in the Spirit - attuned to God - he would not have recognized or been able to understand the voice just as the people couldn't understand God's voice. I wonder how many times I have missed His message to me because I have been too engrossed in every day life to set aside time to be in the Spirit.

When the Lord speaks with a voice like a trumpet, He has something important to say. "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." (Ex 19:16, 19) At this point, God came to Mount Sinai and began revealing the Law to Moses. In the same way, this message to the seven churches is vitally important to all Christians. It is coming with the authority and power of the Almighty.

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Many times the prophets wrote what the Lord had for them to say. However, there are only a few times in the Bible where God commands them to write it down emphasizing its importance. When it was, it often had to do with future events and God's judgment upon a nation or people. The fact that John was commanded to write the message down demonstrates the importance that it has to these seven specific churches that were in existence at that time. As we study the churches we can see characteristics of individual churches that are in the world today. We can also make general observations of the spiritual condition of the Church throughout history that match the characteristics of these churches.

Let's make sure that we are honoring the Lord every week whether we gather together on Sunday or some other day. We need that time not only to honor Him, but also to strengthen our walk with Him.

Let's continually seek His face so that we too, can be in the Spirit when He returns and avoid the pitfalls of false spirituality.

As He speaks to all of us in His Word, let's listen for His voice and act on what we hear.

## End Notes

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  - <sup>6</sup> Hal Lindsey, *There's A New World Coming* (Santa Ana: Vision House, 1973) 46
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- <sup>28</sup> Source:Bankole, Akinrinola; Singh, Susheela; Haas, Taylor. Reasons Why Women Have Induced Abortions: Evidence from 27 Countries. International Family Planning Perspectives, 1998, 24(3):117&#8211;127 & 152 As reported by: The Alan Guttmacher Institute Online:
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- <sup>31</sup> Tim LaHay and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Kingdom Come, The Final Victory* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 2007) page xiv
- <sup>32</sup> Ray Ruppert, *The Sovereign Reigns, or Does He?* (Enumclaw: Pleasant Word, 2007)
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- <sup>42</sup> Gary Hill, *The Discovery Bible, New American Standard New Testament Reference Edition* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987)