

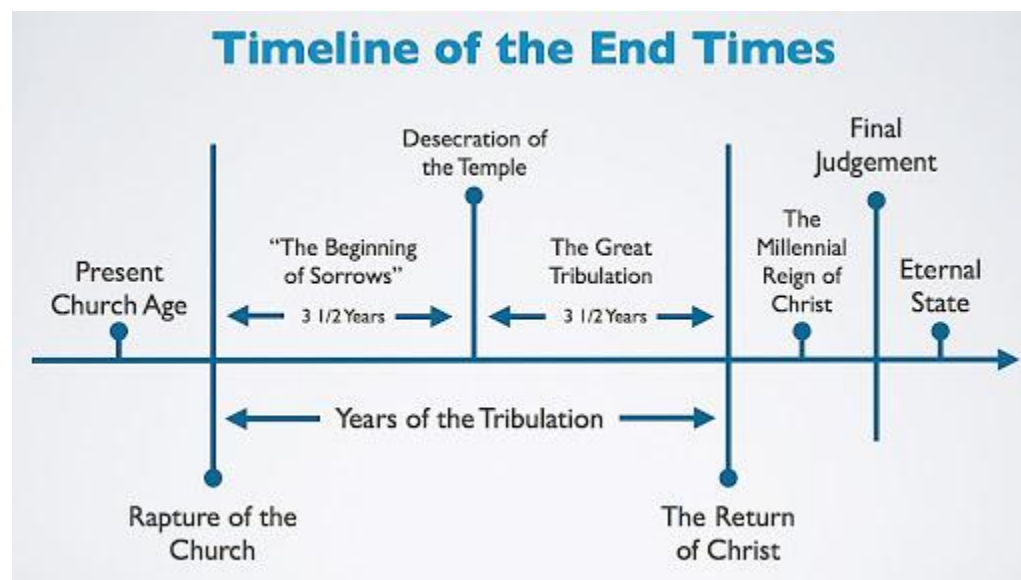
**Prayer:**

The book of Revelation begins with the words: “***The Revelation of Jesus Christ.***” It is a book both ABOUT Jesus and FROM Jesus. And the BIG IDEA is that it is the revelation of the Revelation of Jesus Christ at His Second Coming – the climactic event of the ages.

The book begins with an emphasis on imminency. What is being shown “***must shortly take place***” (v. 1) and “***the time is near***” (v. 3). Imminency is not immediacy. These things are imminent – prophetically speaking.

The next great event on God’s prophetic calendar is the Rapture of the Church, which will trigger the Tribulation Period, which will trigger the Second Coming, which will trigger the Millennial Kingdom, which will trigger the eternal state. This is an interconnected package and as a package the entire package is imminent.

**Slide # 1**



These things, which are presented, are imminent, meaning there will be no more delay, there will be no more prophetic pause. The present Church age will immediately give way to the Tribulation Period and all that follows without interruption. The package of these things will happen in immediate succession and the unfolding of them are imminently at hand.

Following the initial emphasis on imminency which drives the Revelation of Jesus Christ is the Greeting from the Triune God to the Seven Churches. It is a greeting of GRACE and PEACE.

The major subject in the Greeting is Jesus Christ – Who is the main subject of the book. He is presented as both Lord and Savior, as well as coming King. He is shown to be eternal, sovereign, and Almighty.

## **Slide # 2 – Outline**

### ***Revelation 1:19 – Inspired Outline***

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)

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

- **“have seen” – Past (Vision of Christ) – Ch. 1**
- **“which are” – Present (Church Age) – Ch. 2-3**
- **“after this” – Future (Post-Church Age) – Ch. 4-22**
  - - Scene in heaven – Ch. 4-5
  - - Tribulation – Ch. 6-18
  - - Second Coming – Ch. 19
  - - Kingdom – Ch. 20
  - - Eternal State – Ch. 21-22

This brings us to our text today in Revelation 1:9-20...

### **Revelation 1:9–20 (NKJV)**

**9 I, 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.**

John is very humble. He does not introduce himself as the GREAT apostle, but rather as their brother and companion. He is one of them – one of the believers – part of the greater family related to the seven churches.

And as such is shares with them in three things:

1 ) In the tribulation. He is not talking about the Tribulation Period to come but rather about sufferings and distresses that are common to all God’s people who faithfully serve the Lord. As Paul said, “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. 3:12).

**Slide # 3****John 16:33 (NKJV)**

**33** These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you will have tribulation**; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

2) In the kingdom. As a fellow believer he too has the kingdom hope, he too is a kingdom person headed for the coming kingdom. Paul challenged the Thessalonians to walk worthy of God “who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” (1 Thess. 2:12).

3) And perseverance. True believers persevere! They will not completely or finally apostatize. Patience or endurance in Scripture is often shown to be evidence of genuine saving faith (cf. **3:10, 13:10, 14:12**, also cf. Lk. 8:11-15. In contrast see 1 John 2:19).

These are the marks of the genuine which also defined John. Their calling is one of suffering for Christ, having a kingdom hope, and persevering in the faith. These are the traits of true believers.

Note that Tribulation, kingdom, and patience are together as a package. Yes, we share the common hope of the coming kingdom, but also in the present sufferings, which involve patient endurance. Sandwiched right in between Tribulation and Patience is the reality of the kingdom. What an encouragement and yet a dose of reality – that our kingdom hope is held in the context of tribulation and perseverance.

**Slide # 4****Acts 14:22 (NKJV)**

**22** strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, **“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”**

John writes of his experience while he was on the island called Patmos, which was about 50 miles SW of Ephesus – off the coast of modern-day Turkey. This was a small island in the Aegean Sea that was about 10 miles long and 6 miles wide at the widest point. It consists mainly of volcanic hills and rocky ground. The Romans used it to punish prisoners by sending them there.

**Slide # 5**

And John says the reason he was there was because of his stand on the Word of God and his testimony for Jesus Christ. He was clearly there because of his faith.

An early Christian historian named Eusebius said that John was banished to Patmos by the Roman emperor Domitian in AD 95, and then, after Domitian's death, he was released 18 months later. Some claim that while on the island of Patmos John worked in the mines there.

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

John uses this terminology "in the Spirit" four times in the book of Revelation and each time it refers to a visionary experience given to him by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; also see Acts 10:10; 22:17-18).

Some have tried to say that the idea here is that John in the Spirit was translated to the future "Day of the Lord". But really, it doesn't say that. The Day of the Lord and "the Lord's Day" are two different things. For another thing, John will see a vision of the coming Day of the Lord, but that comes later, starting in chapter 6. For the moment, this visionary experience centered on Christ in His glorified state in relationship to the church.

**Slide # 6**

"The grammatical construction does not warrant it to be interpreted as 'The day of the Lord'... It means, rather, 'the day belonging to the Lord'; the only similar construction in the N.T. is in 1 Cor. 11:20 describing the Lord's Supper." - **Henry M. Morris**

Therefore, many commentators believe that "the Lord's Day" here in verse 10 is really talking about Sunday. Even in other places in the NT, the early church recognized the first day of the week in a special way (cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

The Didache was an early manual of Christianity (AD 60-80), and it used this same terminology in reference to Sunday. However, some have argued that nowhere else in the NT do we find this usage and therefore don't think it refers to Sunday.

We need to keep in mind that Revelation was the final book of the New Testament. It's very possible that at the time John wrote it, the phrase "the Lord's day" had come into usage after the rest of the New Testament books were completed. – **Mark Hitchcock**

In terms of the NT this word occurs only here and in 1 Cor. 11:20 where it is used in reference to "the Lord's Supper." In both cases the Greek word translated "Lord's" (Gk. Kyriakos) is used as an adjective. Thus, this is descriptive of a special day that uniquely belongs to the Lord. Just as the "Lord's Supper" uniquely honors Him, in the same way, "the Lord's Day" for Christians became the special day they assembled in honor of the risen Christ.

There is little doubt that the Lord's day here (v. 10) refers to the day we know as Sunday. – **Wycliffe Bible Commentary**

I don't want to be legalistic – we live in the age of grace. But I do think that assembling together on the first day of the week is honoring to the Lord. That is the precedent of Scripture. I personally would not feel comfortable with consistently missing church services on Sunday unless there were extenuating reasons to do so. To me, this is THE LORD'S DAY in a special sense.

I think this was probably John's way of saying this happened on Sunday – the day he would normally be assembled in worship with the Church of God at Ephesus. I take it this was the Lord's day in the sense that it was set aside for assembling, body life, and worship.

***I know a thousand things to do when Sunday rolls around  
But most of them will interfere with worship, I have found.  
If I use the day for pleasure, I have a conscience in the lurch  
For Sunday isn't Sunday unless I go to church.***

I frankly think we probably should have an uneasy conscience if we are not assembling on Sunday unless we have a legitimate reason for not being here. It should be the PRIORITY and will be if we see it AS THE LORD'S DAY! Even if you don't take this verse in that sense, the Bible is clear that we are not to forsake the assembling, and so much the more as we see the Day approaching (Heb. 10:25).

While John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, he heard him "a loud voice, as of a trumpet." It must have startled him. It was a commanding voice of authority.

**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."**

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It's like the story begins and ends with Him. He is the First and the Last – everything begins and ends with Him. We saw this same emphasis in verse 8 in reference to the Lord and we see it here in verse 11 clearly in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This emphasizes His eternality and His sovereignty! This is a claim only deity could make! Jesus is the eternal sovereign God!

John was told to write what he saw and put it in a book (scroll) and send it to the seven churches in Asia. These were seven literal/historical local churches.

### **Slide # 7**



The apostle Paul spent three years at Ephesus (Acts 20:31), and during this time, Acts 19:10 says, "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word...". Very possibly, a good number of these churches were founded at that time.

We are not exactly sure WHY these seven churches were selected as there were more than 7 local churches in the province of Asia. However, these churches are named in the normal "postal order" that a messenger would deliver them on his circuit, starting with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea.

What Christ has to say to these churches is **very significant because it** has application to all local churches down throughout the Church Age. Note the constant refrain in chapters 2 and 3: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

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

Then John turned toward the LOUD voice of One claiming to be the eternal One. And being turned, he saw 7 golden lampstands. As we will see these golden lampstands are representative of the 7 local churches just referenced.

Gold represents that which is valuable and lampstands were light holders. Lampstands give forth light – that really is their sole purpose. Their intended function is to give forth light!

Golden lampstands were valuable light holders. This represents their witness – the light-bearing witness of the churches.

**13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.**

Right in the midst of these seven lampstands (representing 7 local churches) was One like the Son of Man which is a Messianic title going back to Daniel 7:13-14. John in the Spirit saw the glorified Christ positioned right in the midst of the churches.

We as a local church should be very conscious of Christ's presence among us. We are the temple of the living God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16).

### **Slide # 8**

#### **1 Corinthians 14:25 (NKJV)**

**25** And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and **report that God is truly among you.**

There was nothing between Him and the individual lampstands, no agency, hierarchy, or organization. Each church was autonomous.

– **William MacDonald**

He was clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band, which was a golden sash or belt.

Some compare this to the garb of the High Priest in the OT (cf. Ex. 28:4; 39), to that of a Judge, or of Royalty. It may be a combination of these realities. But note that in context, the whole of chapters 2 and 3 are given over to Christ's evaluation of the Churches. The emphasis here is that the glorified Christ is LORD of the Church which is answerable to Him! Judgment begins with the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

Here in the book of Revelation, the emphasis is on each church giving an account to Jesus. Yes, we will do so individually as stated elsewhere, but our individual service is in the context of the LOCAL CHURCH. This is largely the context of gift use, fellowship, and accountability as seen in the NT. We see here in Revelation that Jesus thinks in terms of the local CHURCH. He addresses Churches and individuals in the context of local churches!

I really don't think the N.T. knows anything such as isolated Christianity that is unplugged, uninvolved, uncommitted in regard to the local church. That is foreign to the spirit of the N.T. Christ is building a body (a forever family of believers), and in order for a body to live and thrive, it is dependent upon its members.

For too long, the evangelical church has said accepting Jesus has nothing to do with the Church. True enough, church doesn't save – but once you are saved, you are a part of God's family called the church, and the whole of the NT expects us to then function accordingly.

One evangelistic ministry encourages converts to express their faith in this way: "O God, I am a sinner, I am sorry for my sin. I am willing to turn from my sin. I receive Jesus as my Savior; I confess Him as my Lord. From now on I want to follow Him in the fellowship of His Church. In Jesus' name. Amen."

That is the spirit of N.T. conversion. In the NT, to be converted to Christ was to then join ranks with the local Christians – to be a part of the family of God. N.T. conversion – becoming a follower of Christ results in being a part of His church, and if that doesn't carry through to involvement in the local church, one might really question whether or not there has been true conversion.

### **Slide # 9**

**1 John 3:14 (NKJV)**

14 We **know** that we have passed from death to life, **because we love the brethren**. He who does not love his brother abides in death.



**I remember** sharing with one professing believer who claimed to believe but has absolutely nothing to do with the Church – I asked him, “***Do you love the brethren?***” That is telling!

We know we are saved, in part, because we love the brethren. That is seen in commitment to God’s people as seen in the local church. Christ addressed the Churches. He assumes His people are there – that they are a part of the local church. Outside of this, unbelievers are addressed. But Christ only addressed believers here in the context of a local church.

John had seen Christ transfigured during His earthly ministry on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17 (17:2), and he had seen Christ in His glorified body after the resurrection (Jn. 20; Acts 1:2-11), but it had now been about 60 years since he had seen Christ, and this vision was on a whole other level of glory!

**14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;**

This is the same imagery as was seen in Daniel 7:9 in reference to God, Who is there called “the Ancient of Days” (cf. Prov. 20:29).

### **Slide # 10**

#### **Daniel 7:9 (NKJV)**

**9** “I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And **the hair of His head was like pure wool.** His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire;

This emphasizes His eternality and His holiness. This underscores His infinite wisdom and purity in judgment (cf. Rev. 19:12).

His eyes are searing like a flame of fire (cf. 2:18). His eyes are piercing and penetrating, seeing right through everything. He has perfect knowledge, infallible insight, and inescapable scrutiny. (MacDonald)

### **Slide # 11**

#### **Hebrews 4:13 (NKJV)**

**13** And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him **to whom we must give account.**

**15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;**

His feet were like highly polished bronze, and His voice was like the rich, powerful, resounding sound of a mighty waterfall – sort of like the sound of the waters when standing at the base of Niagara Falls. It was absolutely overpowering!

Brass in the Bible is consistently connected with a type of judgment. The bronze altar in the OT was the place where fire consumed the sin offering (cf. Ex. 27:1-8; 40:6, 10, 29). Many believe that this is a picture of Christ treading out judgment, showing that His role of judicial authority is principally in view here. And the emphasis at this point is in relationship to the church.

Christ's voice was the awesome voice of final authority that overpowers and drowns out everything else. You can't overuse the word AWESOME in this context!

**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.**

He had in His right hand seven stars. The right hand is the hand of strength, control, protection, and security.

Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. Again, we believe this language speaks to Christ's role as Judge. The Word of God is said to be "sharper than any two-edged sword" in its convicting role (Heb. 4:12).

The Romans invented "the two-edged sword." The old swords were about 3 feet long, were cumbersome, and were only sharpened on one edge. The double-edged sword was sharpened on both edges and was only about 2 and ½ feet long. It could slice both ways, making for a much more fatal weapon.

The double-edged sword is consistently identified with Christ in His conquering power in the book of Revelation (cf. 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21). Christ, with the sharp two-edged sword of His judgment, cuts people to the quick. He speaks the Word and it is done! None can stand in defiance before His judicial pronouncement! All succumb to the sharp double-edged sword that proceeds from His mouth! Jesus is THE WORD (Jn. 1:1). He has the power to both speak creation and destruction. Whatever He says STANDS!

His countenance was overpowering like the sun shining in its strength. Everything about His appearance was stunning and gloriously brilliant.

The description of Christ in verses 12-16 is reflective of His Shekinah glory.

### **Slide # 12**

- Hair – white like wool
- Eyes – flame of fire
- Feet – refined bronze
- Voice – sound of many waters
- Right Hand – holds seven stars
- Mouth – sharp two-edged sword
- Face – like the sun shining

Combining all these thoughts, we see Christ in all His perfections as supremely qualified to judge the seven churches. Later in the book He will judge His foes, but “judgment (must) begin at the house of God” (1 Pet. 4:17). – **William MacDonald**

**17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.**

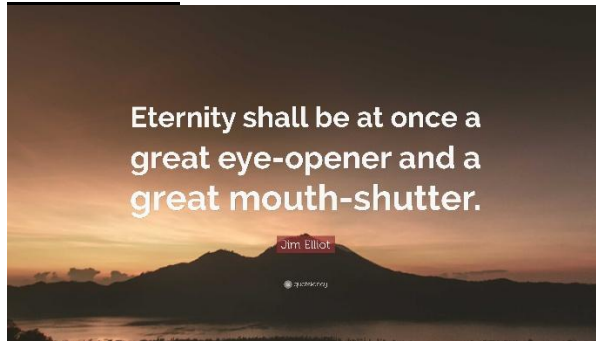
This is not the humble, lowly Jesus whom John could place his head on his breast as seen at the last supper (Jn. 13:25). This is Christ in His exalted glory! This is Christ, high and lifted up. His presence was overwhelming – dazzling in splendor – transcendent in glory and awesome beyond imagination.

People often get sentimental about Jesus and bring Him down to the “buddy” level. But there was no such thing in John’s experience. He didn’t reach out to Jesus for a holy hug – He fell at His feet like a DEAD MAN!

**John MacArthur told the story** about a charismatic pastor he knew. This pastor said to John sometimes when I am shaving in the morning Jesus comes in and puts His arm around me. He then said to John, “Do you believe that?” to which John said, “No, but what troubles me is that you believe it. And then he followed up with: “I just have one question – do you keep shaving?” And then he said, “If you keep shaving, it's not Jesus!”

This is the HOLY GLORIFIED CHRIST we are talking about in all His glory.

### **Slide # 13**



When the apostle Paul saw the risen Christ he fell to the ground overwhelmed and was blinded for 3 days (Act 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). To see Christ in His risen glory is terrifyingly awesome!

We need this attitude of respect today when so many believers speak and act with undue familiarity toward God. John's response illustrates what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:16: - **Warren Wiersbe**

### **Slide # 14**

#### **2 Corinthians 5:16 (NKJV)**

**16** Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. **Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.**

I believe that for the believer, when we see Christ, we will have something of this experience. We will be before him like a dead person, but then He will put His right hand on us and lift us up. We only stand by Him! We can only stand before Him because of Him and His amazing grace.

And then Christ spoke wonderful words of comfort and assurance, saying, **"Do not be afraid"**. It is amazing how often Christ says to His own, **"Do not be afraid"**. The night before He was crucified, He said **"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"** (Jn. 14:27). On resurrection morning He said to the women **"Do not be afraid"** (Mt. 28:10). When He appeared to the disciples later in the day, He said, **"Peace to you"** (Jn. 20:19, 21).

And realize Who is saying this: This is the voice of authority – the One who is the "First and the Last" – the Creator of all and the Final Judge of all.

He is the sovereign One Who is the beginning of all and the end-all, be-all. Everything begins and ends with Him as SOVEREIGN LORD over all!

YHWH in the OT uses this exact same terminology of being “the first and the last” to define Himself as seen in Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; and 48:12.

When He said, “***Do not be afraid***” you don’t have to be afraid! This is part of the “grace to you and peace” greeting seen in verse 4. God is FOR us, and if God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8:31). And we need not cower in fear for He has conquered death!

Death is the great FEAR for all mankind. Hebrews 2:15 says people are held in bondage to fear of death their whole lifetime until they come to know freedom in Christ. To us, as His people Jesus says to not be afraid because...

**18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.**

Jesus ever lives. He is the ever-living One! He is life – the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6). He was dead, but behold He is alive forevermore. Yes, He was dead, but now the emphasis is on His being alive – stated twice here.

Keys represent authority. Jesus holds the keys of Hades and Death. Hades refers to the realm of departed souls and Death here refers to the grave.

The ultimate concern and fear of people is death. This is humanity's ultimate problem. Only Jesus has the solution. Only He has the keys to this realm. Only He can unlock this reality.

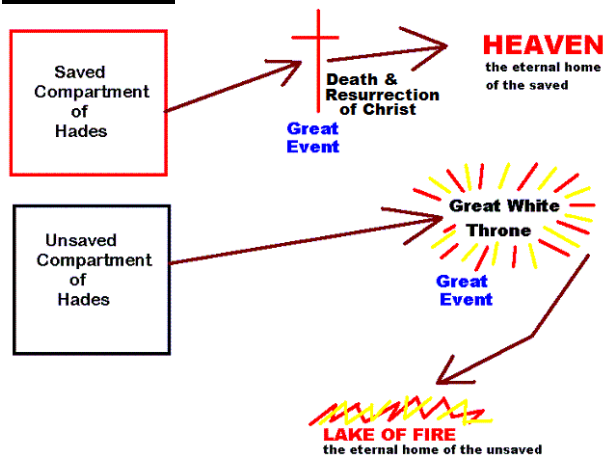
Hades corresponds to where the immaterial/spiritual part of mankind goes, while Death relates to the physical/material part of mankind. Jesus holds the KEYS of Death, having supreme authority over death (the body) and Hades (the soul). Jesus has authority over the entire realm of Death (cf. Rev. 20:11-15). He holds the KEYS! The entire destiny of humanity is under the jurisdiction of Jesus! The destiny of every person is in His hands (cf. John 5:28-29).

Hades is called Sheol in the OT. When people died in the OT their soul went to Sheol/Hades. There was both a paradise and a torment section of Hades (cf. Lk. 16).

When Christ died, He went to Hades proclaiming His victory over death, and we believe He took the souls of the OT saints back to heaven (cf. Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:31; Heb. 8-10).

Today, upon death only the lost go to Hades (the torment section) while those who die in Christ go instantly into the very presence of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:8 says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

### **Slide # 15**



Dr. Harold Berry in his book "What They Believe" (pp. 61-62) tells this story about Ron Carlson and his approach to witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses.

He likes to ask Jehovah's Witnesses to help him understand three verses. First he turns to Revelation 1:8 and asks them who is the "Alpha and the Omega" that is referred to in the verse. They are please to tell him that it is Jehovah God. Then he goes to Revelation 21:5-7 and asks them who is the "Alpha and Omega" in verse 6. Again they are quick to say it is Jehovah God. Then Carlson turns to Revelation 1:17 and asks ...the Jehovah's Witnesses to tell him who is "First and the Last." Again, they respond it refers to Jehovah God. Then he urges them to read the next verse, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore..." (v. 18). Then Carlson asks, "When did Jehovah die? When did God die?" They have no answer because they cannot admit that Jesus is Jehovah.

Indeed, Jesus as God is "the First and the Last" (v. 17) and as the God-Man He was dead but now is alive forevermore (v. 18). And as Lord over all He holds the KEYS to Hades and Death! He is Lord over all including the realm of death.

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

Verse 19 is a transitional verse but also provides the inspired outline for the entire book. The things which John has seen up to this point relate to the vision of the eternal glorified Christ he has just seen. The things which are relate to the Church Age as the next 2 chapters (Rev. 2 and 3) relate to messages addressing churches in the present. But then starting which chapter 4 he addresses “things which will take place after this.”

The very same words translated in 1:19 as “after this” (Gk. meta tauta) are used at Revelation 4:1 in introducing the rest of the book in Rev. 4-22.

**Slide # 16**



These three divisions are clear, and they do not overlap. Each division is complete in itself and distinct from the other two. This is God's own division of the book. Hold fast to it, and you cannot go astray in your quest to understand its meaning. Do not at any time lift events from one division and attempt to place them in another.

**- Lehman Strauss**

**Sometimes people hide the key** to their house by the back door.

Sometimes they hide it by the front door. Some books have the key to understanding toward the back of the book (see, for example, John 20:30-31), but here we have the key to Revelation near the front door – at the beginning of the book as found here in Revelation 1:19. This is indeed KEY!

“The threefold division is the most natural understanding of the symmetrical grammatical construction of 1:19 and fits the contents of the Apocalypse quite well.” – **Dr. Robert Thomas**

**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.**

A mystery in the NT refers to a divine secret that was previously unknown and could not be known apart from God’s revelation, but is now being made known. And in view here is the mystery of the seven stars and the seven lampstands.

In Revelation 1, Jesus Himself establishes the pattern for interpreting the book’s symbols. Jesus is pictured as the Son of Man (an allusion to Daniel 7), standing in the middle of seven golden lampstands, and with seven stars in His right hand. To understand this symbolism, we need look no further than chapter 1. Jesus provides the “built-in” interpretation, and also establishes a pattern of interpretation for the rest of the symbols in the book. Jesus says in Revelation 1 that the seven [lampstands] represent the seven churches and that the seven stars represent the seven messengers to the seven churches. By giving this built-in interpretation, Jesus tells us two things. First symbols in Revelation have a literal referent. Symbols refer to something that is literal. They are not symbols of nothing. Second, when we see a symbol in Revelation, we should look first for a built-in interpretation in the immediate context. – **Mark Hitchcock and Thomas Ice** in *Breaking the Apocalypse Code*, pp. 83-84

We were introduced to these seven lampstands in verse 12 and then to the seven stars in Christ’s right hand in verse 16, but here we have the interpretation of what they are.

The seven stars are said to be the angels (literally messengers) of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. There is discussion about how to identify these seven messengers.

The word “angels” (Gk. angelos) literally means “messengers” and can refer to angels or it can refer to human messengers (cf. Lk. 7:24; 9:52; Ja. 2:25). It is used both ways in Scripture. The same is true of the word stars. Daniel 12:3 says that those who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever. Jude 13 calls apostates “wandering stars”.



It is true that the majority of usage in the book of Revelation uses this word to refer to angels, and yet MOST of the commentaries that I read think that in this context it probably refers to the KEY human messenger in each church. There are two main reasons for this.

- 1) The established order of transmission as seen in the very first verse is from God the Father to Jesus to an angel, to John, and then to God's people. If the messengers in Revelation 2-3 are angels then the order is like this: From the Father to Jesus to John to the angel to the churches. This contradicts the order of Revelation 1:1.
- 2) "Second, the angel to each church seems to be included in the message. In most of the letters, bad behavior taking place in the church is condemned, and angelic beings cannot be charged with wrongdoing and be called upon to repent." (- **Mark Hitchcock**)

The New Testament nowhere teaches that angels are involved in leadership of the church. Angels do not sin and thus have no need to repent, as the messengers, along with the congregations they represented, are exhorted to do (cf. 2:4-5, 14, 20; 3:1-3, 15, 17, 19).

### **Slide # 17**

In the messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor, Jesus repeatedly addressed the "messenger" (angelo) of each church. Though some have taken this to refer to an angelic being, the word angelo simply means "messenger," either human or heavenly. ... The singular messenger of each church is held responsible for the welfare of the local church body. Angelic heavenly beings could never be condemned for sin and urged to repent as the messengers are in Revelation 2-3. – **Michael Svigel** in Bib-Sac, Jan-Mar 2019, p. 66-67

### **Slide # 18**

Most of the rebukes of chapters 2-3 are second person singular, messages that look first at the individual messengers and presumably through them to the churches they represent. Unfallen angels do not sin, neither are they in need of repentance as these messengers along with the churches were (e.g., 2:4-5, 14, 20, 3:1, 1, 2, 3, 15, 17, 19). -**Robert Thomas**

I agree, that is why I take it these are the key leaders, the key gifted pastor-teachers who are the main messengers to the churches.

There is a distinction between the GIFT of *pastor-teacher* and the OFFICE of *elder*. In context, the pastor-teacher emphasis in Ephesians 4:11 refers to uniquely gifted people given to the church. The OFFICE of elder is never said to be a gift in that sense. One is appointed to the office of elder on the basis of Biblical qualifications and not merely giftedness (cf. Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:22; Titus 1:5).

All elders will be gifted and need to have the ability to teach (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:9), but not all will necessarily have the gift of PASTOR-TEACHER as stated in Eph. 4:11.

I believe the seven messengers to the seven churches are uniquely gifted men (pastor-teachers) given to the individual churches. They are what we call “first among equals” as they serve with a pastoral team of elders.

These messengers have a special responsibility before God to properly lead in light as they bring the message without compromise. The churches are lampstands called to give off a witness light for the cause of Christ.

The oil lamp as a symbol for the church is logical and rewarding when it is remembered that oil is one of the symbols for the Holy Spirit. The lamps represent the churches, whose function of providing light to a darkened world is made possible by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

– ***The Believer's Study Bible***

The BIG IDEA in Revelation 1 is that Christ is presented as the glorified sovereign Lord of the Church to which the Church is accountable.

“J. Dwight Pentecost, long-time Dallas Seminary faculty member, accepted an invitation to speak at a rather small church. They asked him to speak on prophecy. He said he would. But along with five sermons on prophecy, he planned specifically in the middle of the series to give a message that he titled “The loveliness of Christ.” ... It was a message not at all about prophecy.

The five nights he spoke on prophecy, the place was packed. They even had loudspeakers outside... The night he spoke on “The loveliness of Christ,” the church wasn’t quite half full. All the meetings were equally publicized, and the same kind of encouragement to attend was given.” – ***Chuck Swindoll***

The reality of the awesomeness of the glorified Christ, the reality of His presence in the midst of the churches that are to be light bearers, and the reality of His position of authority in relation to the leadership leads right into His evaluation and critique of the Churches and how their light is shining.

How is our light shining at SBC?

Are we preoccupied with our Lord Jesus Christ Himself as Lord of the Church?

Everything is to flow out of this. It's all about Jesus! At least it is supposed to be.

God help us to continually make it all about Jesus! He is our glorious Savior and awesome Lord of the Church.

Let us live accordingly! That really is the BIG IDEA of the whole book, which is written to churches.

It's all about Jesus as glorious Lord and Savior of the Church!

Let us live accordingly!