

## THROUGH THE BIBLE REVELATION 1:1-20

I want to begin with a contrast... The NT concludes with a *revelation*, while the OT ends with a *nightmare*...

Zedekiah was one of the last kings of Judah. 2 Kings 25 tells his story. He sinned against God and angered the enemy God had raised up against him. Babylon was God's tool of judgment on Zedekiah's kingdom.

When the invaders breached the walls of Jerusalem, Zedekiah tried to escape. He didn't get far. He was captured near Jericho, and chained in bronze fetters.

The Babylonians wanted to humiliate their defeated foe - rub it in - make him an example. So with Zedekiah standing there, the King of Babylon executed his sons.

Then with that horrific scene fresh in his mind - he took a hot poker and plucked out Zedekiah's eyes.

Thus, the last lingering image carved into the king's psyche - *the last sight he saw before the lights went out for good* - was the bloody slaughter of his boys.

This scarred Zedekiah. The sight of his boys squirming in agony, was indelibly stamped on his soul. This is a trauma from which a person never recovers.

And yet *Zedekiah's nightmare* was no more earth-shaking and life-changing than *John's revelation*.

The Apostle is an *old man* doing *hard time* on a rock island. As the last disciple standing, he's the only person on Earth eligible to add to the canon of Scripture.

Thus, just before John closes *his eyes* for the last time, God communicates to him a revelation.

And it moves him - emotionally and physically. John writes what he sees, then sends it to the churches.

God intends for *Revelation* to be the last, lingering image burned into the collective psyche of His Church.

Zedekiah never shook his nightmare - and God wants the Church to never take its eyes off John's Revelation. It will shape our souls and inspire our faith.

Revelation is one of the few Bible books that begin with a title, verse 1, "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ...*"

The Greek word translated "*revelation*" is the term "*apocalypse*." In our culture it's become synonymous for cataclysm, destruction, impending doom. But to the Greeks it meant simply "*an unveiling or uncovering*."

Imagine walking into an Art Gallery and a sculpture by a famous artist lies under a canvas. At the appropriate moment the curator rips off the fabric revealing the beauty and genius of the sculptor's work.

This is "*The Revelation...*" Jesus Christ is alive and well, but we don't see His excellence for He's hidden behind a heavy canvass that separates the spiritual realm from the tangible world. Yet in Revelation John rips away the veil. He reveals Jesus in all His splendor.

I like how Paul Mellow translates the opening words of verse 1, “The Official Portrait of Jesus Christ...”

It reminds me of the official oil painting of the US President. The tradition began in 1796. At the time several artists attempted to paint George Washington, but it was Gilbert Stuart who painted a worthy likeness.

Well, when it comes to “The Official Portrait of Jesus Christ” God got it right the first time, when He called on John, “the disciple who Jesus’ loved,” to be it’s artist.

Before we’re done, John will paint a whole array of provocative details... We’ll talk about *falling stars, and beasts, and hailstones, and plagues, and marks, and the whore of Babylon* - and we can get sidetracked...

It’s important to remember the theme of this book.

It’s “*the Revelation of Jesus Christ.*” This book is not about the *Antichrist*, but *Jesus Christ*. One author puts it this way, “The theme isn’t 6-6-6, it’s “*holy, holy, holy!*”

The point of Revelation is not just the *unleashing of judgment* it’s the *unveiling of Jesus!* This is what God wants to permanently burned into our perspective.

John writes of “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants - things which must shortly take place.*” In other words, “*here’s what’s next... here’s what’s coming up on God’s agenda...*”

Understand what John had already seen. He was Jesus’ cousin - Mary’s nephew. He and Jesus grew up together. John was there when He began His ministry.

John saw Jesus walk on water, and multiply lunch, and heal a blind man, and supernaturally locate fish.

John writes in another place, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life...”

Jesus was the Word - the meaning of life - with God before time began. He took on flesh and blood, and came as a man. He revealed the Almighty’s humility.

And John witnessed this first revelation of Jesus .

John was there when the Roman executioners nailed Him to a piece of wood... And He was there three days later when news came that the grave was empty..

For forty days, John was there and spent time with the risen Christ... And John was there, on the Mount of Olives, when Jesus ascended back to heaven. He saw His Lord return to glory - victorious - an acceptable sacrifice - a faithful priest. *Yes, John was there for it all!*

And John did exactly what he was told. He and his fellow disciples went into all the world to tell people what they’d seen and heard and touched and handled.

But now John is alone. The other disciples are dead.

Jesus has been gone 60 years. And he’s wondering what’s next. *What’s next for him... for Christianity?*

Jesus had come preaching, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” John was there when Jesus launch this kingdom, but now it’s running headlong into the kingdoms of man. Christians were being attacked by the Roman empire. Emperor Nero had cruci-

fied Peter, and had Paul beheaded, and others were on the chopping block as well. *What's next for this kingdom?*

John needed a **new revelation** - a fresh perspective.

He knows Jesus is no longer a bloody corpse. His sacrificial work is finished. He's risen and ascended.

*But what's next?* The answer is this *Revelation!*

“And (Jesus) sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.” Notice, Jesus “*sent and signified*” this message. “*Signified*” can mean “to express by signs.”

This word has led some Bible teachers to see this book as a message encoded with signs and symbols.

When John received this prophecy he was a prisoner of Rome. The Romans weren't too fond of manifestos that predicted the coming of kings and kingdoms that threatened to usurp Roman rule. Thus, to avoid censorship, John's letter employed signs and symbols.

You could call this book a “*cryptogram - a coded message.*” Its symbolism enabled it to slip past Roman security, yet still be understood by Christian readers.

And what better code to use than OT symbols...

This is why the key to interpreting Revelation is to familiarize yourself with Hebrew idioms and imagery.

Of the book's 404 verses 278 quote OT references - that's 70%. There're another 360 OT inferences.

It's been said, "The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself." That's especially true with Revelation.

Verse 3 attaches a special promise to this book.

"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near." Any attempt to read and obey this book will be met with a blessing.

Though parts of Revelation are tough to interpret, God always rewards a sincere effort. He wants *this book especially* branded on our hearts. It's *what's next*.

John continues his introduction, "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace..."

Here's the common NT greeting, "*grace and peace.*"

But not only does John greet the members of these churches, so does the Triune God... *God the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus*, all issue a greeting...

This Revelation is "From Him who is and who was and who is to come..." God doesn't just have lots of time, He dwells outside of time. He occupies the past, present, future. God sees the end from the beginning.

Think of it, God *“was”* - He is the God of history. In fact, *“history”* is *“His Story...”* But God also *“is”* - He is always in the moment. Psalm 46:1 calls Him as *“a very present help in trouble...”* And God also *“is to come”* - His presence, purpose, and power fill up our future.

A central theme of Revelation is the second coming of Christ, but God is always coming... *To a troubled marriage He comes... to a heart-broken teenager He comes... to a depressed housewife He comes... to an out-of-work dad He comes... to a believer struggling with doubt He comes... to the rebel on the run God comes...* This is God's favorite posture - *He's coming!*

And John also brings greetings from the Holy Spirit. *“From the seven Spirits who are before His throne...”*

Admittedly, this is difficult terminology. We know from the rest of Scripture there is only one Holy Spirit. He's a individual, not seven different Spirits. This seems to be a reference to the seven-fold ministry of the Spirit...

Isaiah 11:2 tells us how the Spirit empowered Jesus, *“The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”* This is also how the Holy Spirit works through us, the Church - *He supplies wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the LORD.*

And last, but not least, the readers of Revelation are greeted *“from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness...”*

In all that Jesus did and said He represented His Father. He is the faithful witness - *the truth-teller*.

This was a true *no-spin zone*. Jesus gave it straight.

Jesus is also “**the firstborn from the dead.**” His human body was first to undergo the metamorphosis...

Paul describes it - “**this corruptible (body) must put on incorruption, and this mortal (body) must put on immortality...**” Jesus was first to escape decay. Now His resurrection gives the same hope to His followers.

Jesus is the *truth-teller*, the *grave-robber*, and the *ultimate ruler*... John calls Him “**the ruler over the kings of the earth.**” This was important to believers in Asia.

At the time Christianity was an oppressed minority.

Yet the Revelation received by John and passed on to the churches was so convincing, those who read it knew it was only a matter of time before the rulers of this world bowed before Jesus. He will ultimately reign.

Jesus is the *truth-teller*, *grave-robber*, *ultimate ruler*.

He’s also the *soul-lover*, and the *sin-washer*... John writes in verse 5, “**To Him who loved us...**” Jesus loved us at His first revelation, and He loves us now...

So much so, He “**washed us from our sins in His own blood...**” Jesus didn’t offer a proxy sacrifice. It wasn’t the blood of a lamb or a goat - it was His own blood!

And He “has made us kings and priests to His God and Father...” Jesus is also the *glory-sharer* and the *priest-maker*... Our destiny is to rule with King Jesus.

He'll end the long-running revolt of Satan, and strip the devil of all authority... then He'll share it with us.

And He'll make us priests! There'll be a priestly caste in heaven. For all eternity the followers of Jesus, you and I, will enjoy unrivaled proximity and access to God.

It's interesting like the Holy Spirit, Jesus also has seven functions... He's the *truth-teller*, and *grave-robber*, and *ultimate-ruler*, and *soul-lover*, and *sin-washer*, and *glory-sharer*, and *priest-maker*...

*And how should we respond?* John shouts it out, “To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Praise Him! Shout “*Amen.*” It means, “*I agree!*” When John thought it all through he couldn't help himself...

I miss Anna's daddy. Some of you might remember him. In a stiff Caucasian-bred crowd he stood out... He wasn't bashful. He wasn't afraid to express approval.

I'd be preaching and make a statement He knew was true, and he'd shout, “*Amen.*” The truth moved him.

*We all need to be moved by the truth!*

And one truth is certain, Jesus is not done moving...

John writes in verse 7, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him.” Jesus is coming back to this Earth.

Technically, there are two second comings of Jesus.

In 1 Thessalonians 4 Jesus comes “in the clouds” for His Church. It’s a covert operation. This lost world won’t know what hit them. Instantly, we’ll all be gone.

But here Jesus comes “with clouds, and every eye will see Him...” This is an in-your-face coming. He’ll also return to settle scores and judge all wickedness.

We’ll talk more about this later... but Jesus comes “in the clouds” at the rapture - He’ll surprise the world and take His Church. Then He’ll come “with clouds” on the final day. He’ll touch down on the Mount of Olives to end man’s rebellion, and establish a political kingdom.

And notice the addendum to verse 7, “every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him.” This refers to Zechariah 12:10 and the Jews. It’s a prophetic irony.

In the end the Jews will realize their mistake. *They crucified their Savior - they wounded their Healer!*

And that’s only one of the reactions on the final day...

Since Jesus ascended to heaven, He’s been sitting at God’s right hand. He finished His work of salvation, and His Spirit has been busy gathering-in His Church.

But once the Church is *caught up* – God’s wrath will *come down*. A Christ-rejecting world will be punished.

Today, folks around us might mock the idea, but they won’t escape... Vance Havner writes, “Some of us get laughed at by the swivel-chair experts in eschatology, but when God splits the skies and the stars fall, and the moon turns to blood and men cry

for rocks and mountains to fall on them, it's going to be pretty hard for some of us to keep from saying, "*I told you so.*"

Jesus came to Earth the first time to **pardon**. But He is coming a second time to **punish**... The Lamb of God that was laid on the altar is also the Lion who will roar.

It's a jungle out there! Because of man's sin and rebellion, the Garden of Eden is now overgrown, and over-run with weeds, and full of dangerous predators...

But Jesus is **King of the Jungle!**

Jesus will return to *flex His muscle* and *fulfill His will*.

It'll be an "*I told you so*" kind of day." Right now the skeptic scoffs, "If He's alive, **where is He?**" On that day every eye will see Him... *Only then, it'll be too late.*

This is why John writes in verse 7, **And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.**" They'll *mourn*, but they were *warned!* They just never took heed.

For many people history will have an unhappy ending. John sighs himself, verse 7, **"Even so, Amen."**

And here Jesus interjects, **"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord...**

**"Alpha"** and **"Omega"** are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. Jesus is saying **"I'm the A to Z."** He's the beginning, and end - and all that's in between.

Then Jesus takes the title that was earlier attributed to the Father... He's the One "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." Obviously, Jesus is making the claim to be God. He's equal to the Father.

They hold the same exalted name and traits.

Verse 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."

Around 90 AD a second wave of persecution washed over the Church. Emperor Domitian decided to follow in Nero's footsteps. This time John was arrested and sentenced to be boiled alive in oil. But God intervened.

John miraculously survived the ordeal. And since he couldn't kill him, Domitian banished John to Patmos.

Patmos is an island in the Aegean Sea. It's 10 miles long, by 6 miles wide - 15 miles off the coast of Turkey.

It's barren, rocky, and desolate. In the first century it held a penal colony where Roman prisoners were sent to do hard labor. Patmos was the first century Alcatraz.

Understand, John is now 90+ years-old - frail and feeble. He has scars over most of his body, souvenirs he picked up from his brush with death in the boiling oil. Now he's pounding a hammer in a rock quarry.

And John was not the only believer suffering under Domitian's reign of terror. All across the empire Christians were being persecuted for *“the word of God and the testimony of Jesus...”* And it made John think...

Remember to this point, all John had seen was the first revelation of Jesus. The Son of God became a baby. He came to Earth through the lowest door.

I mean, *“Deity in a diaper?”* Could God have made Himself more vulnerable than to come as an infant?

John knew *Jesus had experienced all our human limitations...* He was God, but He laid aside its perks.

And Jesus came as a servant. He could've thrown His weight around, and intimidated us into compliance.

Instead He overwhelmed us with His grace.

His mercy and tenderness disarmed us, and slipped past our defenses. Our hearts were won by His love.

And to bear our punishment, Jesus made Himself defenseless. He laid bare His back to take our stripes.

But John now has some stripes of his own! *Ever seen a burn victim?* Imagine, John covered with scars.

He's thankful Jesus has won His heart, *but who's going to win this war?* John is in fight - a deadly battle.

Good and evil - God and Satan - are slugging it out.

*It's a jungle out there...* John believed in Jesus, but He needed more than a Servant to model - or even a Savior to rely on. For John to endure the hardships He and His friends needed the hope of a conquering King.

John and the persecuted Church needed *a second Revelation* - the unveiling of an exalted, glorified Christ.

They needed a Savior who's heavy-weight champ!

Once a middle-age woman with an incurable disease checked into the hospital. Her days were numbered.

One night she had a vision - a visit from her guardian angel. He told her that she would live 30 more years. She was so excited. She thought, *"Well if I'm going to live for three more decades I should do so in style."* So she ordered a face lift, liposuction, a tummy-tuck...

As she left the hospital, she was headed to her car, when suddenly she got hit by a truck. She died instantly. When she got to heaven, she saw her angel.

She was mad, *"You told me I'd live 30 more years."* The angel answered, *"Yea, but I didn't recognize you!"*

I'm afraid this is most people's problem with Jesus. *They don't see clearly the first revelation of our Lord.*

Over the years artists have painted some pathetic portraits of Jesus! *He's depicted as weak and frail... He glows in the dark... He's wearing pearly-white robes, and*

*takes a sissified posture... He uses curlers in his hair, and looks suspiciously effeminate... It's tragic!*

We've mistaken the guy who got angry at the Pharisees... who took a whip and bounced the crooks from the Temple... *as gentle Jesus meek and mild!*

The real Jesus was a carpenter who liked to fish. He was a man's man - a blue-collar guy. He pounded nails before power tools. And he sure wasn't afraid of a fight.

And if Christians today have confused what Jesus was like when He lived among us - they have no clue as to what He's like today - and how He'll appear when we see Him! This is why we need a *second revelation!*

Certainly, Jesus is still a man, but He is a glorified man. Jesus' humility was temporary. Now He's back on the throne, but with the new authority He won on Earth.

Realize the Person we serve and follow no longer *walks on water* - that's kid's stuff. Today, He *rides on clouds*. He rules in heaven, and commands an army, and doles out justice, *as well as mercy*. This is the Revelation John received on Patmos and sends to the seven churches. *What's next?... It's a glorified Christ.*

John recalls when this revelation came. Verse 10, **"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day..."** It was a Sunday!

Already, the early church was living in the wake of the resurrection. Jews held services on the Sabbath, but Christians met on the first day of the week - the day Jesus rose. *Sundays were treated like a mini-Easter!*

The first Church preached the cross, but didn't leave Jesus there - *Jesus rose to reign!* After this Revelation they all knew to live in the light of the Exalted Christ.

John was *“in the Spirit.”* He was dialed in - logged on. He was worshipping and communing with God...

When he *“heard behind (him) a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last...”* At His first revelation Jesus launched God’s kingdom spiritually, and He’ll finish what He started. But He’ll also bring His kingdom to Earth in power and glory. He’s the *beginning and end!*

*And this shapes our duty as Christians...*

We’re part of the spiritual kingdom that’s still serving and saving, and we’re called to help. But we’ll win over temptation and opposition, only if we know *what’s next!*

Ultimately, all wrongs will be righted. Good will triumph. God’s people win in the end! **The triumphant Christ is next - this is the theme of John’s Revelation!**

Then Jesus said to John... *“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.”* This isn’t an exhaustive list of the churches in first century Asia.

There were more. But Jesus chose these seven churches for a reason - *we’ll talk it about it next week...*

For here in verse 12 the plot thickens, *“Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midsts of the seven lampstands One like the Son of man...”*

John will describe Jesus, but before we read it, note where He hangs out... *“in the midst of the lampstands.”*

Later we learn the seven lampstands, or the seven-branch Menorah, is a symbol for the seven churches.

In the OT Temple the priest was in charge of lighting and tending to the Menorah. Likewise, the Church is the NT Temple, and Jesus is our Priest. Thus, He works among the churches to keep us filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit. His keeps our light shining brightly.

What's next in God's Kingdom is Jesus, but it's interesting to see where He hangs out - *the Church*.

This is why I'm always saying if you love Jesus you'll love His Church. *The Church is where the action is!*

Where is Jesus is working in the world today? *In His Church*. He doesn't promise you'll find Him at the Rotary Club, or Little League, or PTA, or the political action committee - or whatever else you're involved in.

Jesus prefers to work in and through His Church. He told His disciples, *“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

John sees Jesus. He's still a man. *“Son of man”* speaks of His humanity. But John recognizes Him as only *“like the Son of man.”* His visage was different.

The Revelation John now sees doesn't stack up to the Jesus He heard, saw, and His hands handled. This is the *Warrior and Ruler*, not just *Servant and Savior*.

John is about to describe **the King of the Jungle!**

And he starts with what Jesus wears to work... He's "clothed with a garment down to the feet." Commoners and peasants wore knee-length robes. Only a king's robe drag the ground. At His first revelation Jesus hung naked on a cross - now He's clothed in royal robes.

And He's "girded about the chest with a golden band." Or priestly breastplate. Jesus is king and priest.

Ancient Israel observed a separation of church and state. The king was forbidden to be priest. But Jesus abolishes "the separation clause." He rules on *God's throne* - and He works in *God's Temple*, the Church!

Verse 14, "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength." Years ago I had an album cover that tried to replicate this portrait of Jesus. The result was grotesque. Don't try to envision this portrait literally. Again the key is to see Jesus through OT eyes!

And for starters, Jesus' hair isn't a bleach job. It's not graying. White speaks of His moral and spiritual purity.

And His eyes aren't bloodshot. "Like a flame of fire..." speaks of their searing scrutiny and search-ability.

Jesus doesn't **look past you**, as if you don't matter. He cares about you deeply... He doesn't **look at you**, as if He's sizing you up to figure you out. He knows you perfectly... And He doesn't **look to you**, as if He needs anything from you. Jesus is sufficient in and of Himself.

But Jesus does **looks through you!**

His stare penetrates and uncovers the real you. You can't hide sin, or play the hypocrite under His gaze.

And Jesus' **brass feet** don't mean He has a lead foot.

Brass is a mixture of iron and copper. Iron is strong, but it rusts. Copper keeps its shine, but it bends. Brass is a mixture of strength *and* endurance. Thus, when Jesus puts His foot down, He means it - it's emphatic.

And the voice of Jesus is like the "**sound of many waters**" - literally a waterfall. I'll never forget standing at the bottom of Niagara Falls. You can scream into the ear of the person next to you, but it doesn't register.

Jesus had spoken to John while on Earth... For 60 years John heard "**the still small voice**" - the whispers of the Holy Spirit... *but now this is different from either.*

The Lion roars... Jesus' voice is like a waterfall. It drowns out all other voices. Today we're surrounded by competing opinions - media blares - *talk shows, and pundits, and blogs and spin.* But when Jesus speaks He muffles all other influences. He gets our attention.

And in His right hand, Jesus holds seven stars.

Jump ahead to verse 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.” The “*lampstands*” are the seven churches - the “*Stars*” are their angels.

It could be that every church has a guardian angel. If that’s true, I have no doubt we work our guy overtime.

But the Greek word translated “*angel*” means “*messenger*.” Some folks translate the term, “*pastors*.” Not to say that your pastor is an angel - *not hardly* - but pastors are the messengers of Jesus to His church.

Either way, whether “*stars*” are “*angels*” or “*pastors*” the point is they’re both in the Lord’s “*right hand*.”

And this is the hand that speaks of authority. Thus, any authority vested in the Church comes from Jesus.

**Every pastor is accountable to that right hand!**

And what’s up with Jesus’ breath! Verse 16 tells us, “*Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword...*”

Even people with just a little bit of Bible under their belt recognize this imagery. The two-edged sword is the Scripture itself. It’s sharp and incisive - cuts coming and going. It opens us up, lays us bare, fillets our pride.

Jesus always works powerfully through His Word.

Finally, John describes Jesus' overall countenance. It "was like the sun shining in its strength." Eyeballing the glorified Christ was like looking directly into the sun.

His glory blinds us to every other interest!

John writes, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." On Earth, Jesus and John hung out. They were fishing buds. But now John sees Jesus and His knees wobble. He hits the deck. The Exalted Lord has taken His breath away. John is speechless, motionless.

I'm sure when President Obama plays basketball with his aides, it's lots of fun. But in the final seconds of a game, nobody is going to hack the president. If he's on a break-away you'll let him have the basket.

You don't risk injuring the Commander and Chief. Even if he's your pal, you treat a President differently.

And the same is true of Jesus. At His first coming we learned that Jesus wants to be our friend. But this second Revelation reminds us *He's not like any other friend*. Don't call Jesus your "Homie." He's nobody's "Homeboy." Jesus expects and deserves our respect.

John collapsed at His feet and worshipped Him!

And notice Jesus' reply to John. It's beautiful. "But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen." Jesus picks John up and encourages him.

Jesus' clothes, and hair, and eyes, and feet, and mouth are very different than at His first revelation. But the one thing that hasn't changed is *the heart of Jesus!*

That's when He says, **"And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."** If you're concerned about heaven and hell, and what happens after you die, Jesus is the go-to-guy! Buddha, Mohammed, Oprah have no say in the matter. Jesus has the keys to *Afterlife and End of life.*

He alone decides *when you die, and where you go.*

John closes the chapter with a helpful outline of the book of Revelation. The angel says to him, **"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."**

**"The things which you have seen"** is chapter 1. It's the vision John received of the risen, glorified Christ.

**"The things which are"** is chapters 2-3 - Jesus' seven letters to the seven churches. John was living in the Church-age. And it has lasted now some 2000 years.

Then the rest of the book, chapters 4-22, are **"The things which will take place after this..."** Once the Church is caught away - then sweeping judgments will pave the way for the ultimate triumph of King Jesus!

So *what's next* in God's plan? **Jesus is next!**

He's the A to Z - the beginning **and** the end. Let this revelation burn into your heart. Look to the Glorified Christ, and you'll find what you need for victory!