

THE SETTING AND THE SUBSTANCE OF THE VISION, REVELATION 1:9-11

Let's turn in our Bibles, please, to the book of Revelation chapter 1. We're going to read together verse 9 through verse 20. Revelation chapter 1, verses 9 to 20:

“⁹ 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. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ 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. ¹² And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; ¹³ and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the [chest] with a golden girdle. ¹⁴ His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; ¹⁵ and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. ¹⁶ And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. ¹⁷ And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: ¹⁸ I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. ¹⁹ Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; ²⁰ the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

Now having completed the study of the prologue of the book of Revelation in verses 1 to 3, and having completed the study of the introduction of the book in verses 4 to 8, today we come to the body of the book of Revelation, which begins with verse 9 and carries all the way through to chapter 22.

We saw that the author of this book, who was John the Apostle, was barely mentioned in verse 1. He just mentioned his own name in verse 1, and that was it. But now in verses 9 and 10, John gives us significantly more information about himself. We're going to look at that information in more detail in a little while, but what we see on the surface as we look at verses 9 and 10 is that John was suffering severe persecution from the Roman Government because of his work for Christ and because of his witness for Christ.

It has always and ever been the case that believers are persecuted by Satan and his helpers, and the book of Revelation describes and documents that persecution in a very powerfully descriptive way. It clearly tells us that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God. The world hates the church and the world relentlessly persecutes the church. And we much expect that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

But the good news about this persecution that John speaks of himself going through in verses 9 and 10, is that we do not face that persecution alone and we do not fight it alone. Beginning with verse 11, and all the way through the end of the chapter at verse 20, we are presented with the glorified, exalted King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Almighty God, who has conquered death, and who has the keys to hell and death, to assist us in fighting these battles, and indeed, to fight these battles for us. Jesus is the one who fights for us, and He will give us victory over all of those who fight against us.

It says in Revelation 17 and verse 14, “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” Our job in this world is to faithfully bear witness to the word of God and to the Son of God. His job is to defeat and destroy all of our enemies and to secure our victory over Satan and over his servants. The Lamb will overcome them and He will lead us into triumph. In this is our peace and our perseverance in the spiritual warfare that lies ahead of us. So then, when you begin to become discouraged with the unrelenting intensity of spiritual warfare, meditate on the Christ that John portrays before us in this vision.

As John is engaged in spiritual battle on the Island of Patmos, he is given this wonderful vision of the Lord Jesus, and it’s this vision of the Lord Jesus that strengthens his hand for the battle that lies ahead of him and gives him the encouragement and the optimism and the hope that he will prevail in this battle. The sight of Christ strengthens us for the battle, because we know that in Him we will prevail. So we have John’s suffering, we have Christ revealed, and we have confidence as the result and the outcome.

In the first place then this morning, let us consider together the setting of the vision. The setting for the vision of the whole rest of the book of Revelation is set before us in verses 9 through 10a. Verse 9: “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. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.”

Here in verse 9, John tells us several things about himself. It’s interesting to note that he does not call himself, “John the Apostle.” Instead, he calls himself, “your brother and your companion.” In other words, he places himself on the same level as his fellow believers, and he states that he stands on common ground with them. He thereby reveals his humility and his sense of unity with all of his Christian brethren by the terminology that he uses.

Now he may, and indeed does, possess a higher office than his Christian brethren. Make no mistake, he is an apostle. But though he possesses a higher office than his Christian brethren, he also stands on equal ground with his Christian brethren, at the same time, especially with regard to being fellowcitizens in the Kingdom of God, and with regard to being fellowsufferers for the cause of the Kingdom.

All believers have an equality among themselves, as well as a hierarchy between themselves. There are those who possess office and those who do not. And that's a distinction. But all of God's people are equally children of God and they all equally share in suffering for the Kingdom of God. Notice that he says not only, "I John who also am your brother," but he also goes on to say, I am "a companion" of yours "in tribulation."

John was undergoing great tribulation at this point in time. He had been exiled to the Island of Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Tribulation is something that is a common experience of all believers, and no believer is exempt from tribulation, no matter their giftedness, no matter their maturity, and no matter their office. John was highly gifted, highly mature, and in the highest office that the church had ever provided. And yet, he was not exempt from suffering and tribulation. We are all fellowcitizens of the Kingdom of God. We all suffer for the cause of the Kingdom of God, and we all must exercise patience in that suffering for the cause of that kingdom.

He says to them in verse 9, "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation," notice, "and in the kingdom"—and here it is—"and patience of Jesus Christ." John was not only in a state of suffering and tribulation, he also was saying, I'm being patient—just like you have to be patient—in the context of that suffering for the Kingdom. Now being patient under suffering is something that's extremely difficult. "How long, O Lord?" is question that frequently arises in our thoughts. As we do spiritual battle, we suffer spiritual persecution, and it seems like there is no end to it. Decade after decade rolls past, and still the Evil One and his human agents viciously assault the people of God. We patiently endure, but it seems that relief never comes.

John understood this. John began to follow Jesus as a very young man. In fact, the Bible specifically describes him in the Garden of Gethsemane as being a young man. And now here he is, a very old man—this was written in about 95 or 96 A.D—and yet he is still in a state of tribulation. It's not like you ever grow out of it. It's not like you ever escape it. When he was in the Garden of Gethsemane, they sought to arrest him and they laid hands on him, and it says, He left behind his robe and fled away from them. They wanted to arrest him at the time they arrested Jesus. And now here he is, in his old age, under arrest by the Roman authorities.

John tells us in verse 9 that he has been exiled to the Island of Patmos by the Roman authorities. This island is off the southwest coast of what is modern day Turkey. It was an island where there were mines, and slaves were sent there by the Roman government to labor in the mines. So it may very well have been the case that when John was exiled to Patmos, it wasn't just to sit around and stare at the stars, but that he was forced into labor in the mines.

He tells us that he's been exiled to the Island of Patmos by the Roman authorities because of his faithful teaching of the word of God and because of his consistent testimony of his faith in Jesus Christ. He refused to worship Caesar as lord, and the Roman government was persecuting him for his fidelity to Christ as Lord.

Notice what he says here: “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,” not for a vacation. He says he was on that island “for,” or because of, “the word of God, and [because of] the testimony of Jesus Christ.” John preached the word of God, John bore faithful testimony to Jesus Christ, and *that’s* why he was on this island. He refused to worship Caesar as lord. So the Roman government was persecuting him for his fidelity to Christ as Lord.

It is ever and always the case that when you do not worship what the world worships, the world will hate you, the world will persecute you, and the world will exile you out of their company. The Romans threw John out of their society and out of their company. And people will throw you out of their society and out of their company, as well, when you do not bow to their gods of pride and selfwill and materialism and immorality. These are all the things the world worships. And they say to you, Come along and party with us! Worship the things we worship! And when you say, No, I’m not going to worship that, what do they do? They exile you out of their lives.

Believers who do what John did, believers who proclaim the word of God in their speech and who give testimony to the saving work of Jesus Christ in their lives, will wind up living in social exile from the world. Just count on it. You can’t be everybody’s friend and be the friend of Christ too. Your faithfulness to Him will cause you rejection by those who are His enemies. So there is a sense in which we all live on our own Isle of Patmos, that place of rejection and reviling, for simply preaching the Scriptures and preaching Christ.

But notice what John was doing during his exile. He was not indulging in selfpity. He was not bemoaning how poorly others had treated him. No, it says he was observing the Lord’s worship on the Lord’s Day. He says in verse 10, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” So though John was persecuted, John was persevering. He was persevering, in particular, in observing the Fourth Commandment to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.

Now the Christian Sabbath, of course, is on Sunday. You recall what Jesus said in Mark 2 and verse 28. Jesus says, “the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.” So when Jesus said, I am Lord of the Sabbath, He’s saying, The Sabbath is *my* day. It belongs to me. So when we say it’s the Lord’s Day, what we’re saying is that it’s a day that belongs to the Lord. The Sabbath was therefore the Lord’s Sabbath, that is, the Lord’s Day. So when John says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day,” that is that one day out of seven that belongs to God—it does not belong to us—in which we spend the whole day in the worship and service of God.

Now under the Fourth Commandment in the Old Covenant, this one day out of seven was appointed to be Saturday, the last day of creation. But now under the New Covenant, this day has been appointed to be Sunday, the first day of creation. The permanent moral principle in the Fourth Commandment is that we worship God one day out of seven, and it is a positive command as to which day that is. We’re not free to decide for ourselves. God decided it would

be the last day of the week from Creation until Christ; then He decided it would be the first day of the week, from Christ until the Consummation.

The Lord's Day was changed from Saturday to Sunday because it was on Sunday that Jesus rose from the grave, and because it was on Sunday that Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. His postresurrection appearances to His disciples always occurred on Sundays for those forty days He appeared to them. Finally, it was on Sunday that the Day of Pentecost occurred, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church, in Acts chapter 2.

What do we see the church doing in Acts chapter 20 and verse 7? We see them gathering for worship on the first day of the week, which is Sunday. In First Corinthians 16 and verse 2, once again, we see them gathering as a church on the first day of the week, which is Sunday. This is the reason why we worship on Sunday, which we call, "The Lord's Day."

Now it's unlikely that there were other believers on Patmos when John was there. We read of none. And yet, John still observed the Lord's Day anyway. He certainly seems to be alone here when he received these visions.

The point is simply this: If you are traveling, if you can't be in church, even if you're out in the wilderness all alone by yourself, still observe the Lord's Day. Set that day apart for reading, for prayer, for meditation, for worship, for singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. This is what John did when he was exiled away from the church. When he was in the midst of his persecution, he worshiped. He observed Sunday as the Lord's Day, giving himself over to the worship of God, and as he worshiped in the midst of his persecution, God came to him and God ministered to him in a way that He didn't minister unto him on any other day of the week. As he worshiped in the midst of his persecutions, he received tremendous comfort in the form of this revelation and this book which was given to him, and in the promises that it contained.

Do you suppose that because John was observing the Lord's Day, spending that day in private worship because there was no public worship available to him, do you suppose he was comforted by it? How many times is it that when we are suffering persecution that we go to church on the Lord's Day, and in the worship of God receive a word from God that greatly encourages us and strengthens us for the battles that we are in?

We all have tribulation because of our preaching of the word of God and because of our testimony for Jesus Christ. We have to be patient in that tribulation. It's part of what happens in the Kingdom. And observing the Lord's Day and spending time with God on His day is the surest way to obtain that patience and that strength we need to keep persevering through the persecution we are experiencing, and be able to overcome it.

So it was as John was worshiping the Lord on the Lord's Day that he received this wonderful revelation of Christ. And you know, as you come to church and as you sing and as you pray and as you hear the Scriptures read and as you hear the Scriptures preached, you gain a sight of

Christ that you never get during the week. Christ comes and meets with you and ministers to you and reveals Himself to you in the public means of grace in a profound way. That's what He did for John. That's what He does for us when we respect and honor His day and give ourselves wholly over to our focus and worship of Him on it.

That brings us then to our second major point this morning. Having seen the setting of the vision in verses 9 to 10a, notice secondly the substance of the vision. This is found in verse 10b to 20, that is, the rest of the chapter. The setting of the vision—Patmos, John alone, suffering, exiled, observing the Lord's Day. Now the substance.

We're obviously not going to proceed all the way to verse 20. We're only going to go to verse 11. So we're going to look at verse 10b to 11. But we want to see, and we will look at, the larger context in which those verses sit towards the end of our message.

Now John tells us in verse 10 that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. Notice verse 10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ 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."

When it says to us that "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," what this means is that John began to enter into a prophetic trance in which the reality of the world around him faded into oblivion and his eyes then were opened and his ears were opened to see and hear the spiritual world that is ordinarily invisible and inaudible.

When was the last time you heard a conversation between a couple of angels? When was the last time you saw the throne of God and with God sitting on it? Now these things are realities. There are angels and they do talk to each other. And there is a God, and He does sit on a throne. But you can't see it, and you can't hear it. But because John was "in the Spirit"—that is, he entered into this prophetic trance, enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit—his eyes were opened to see the spiritual world, and his ears were opened to hear the spiritual world, which is ordinarily invisible and inaudible. In a word, he began to have a vision.

Now this vision that he was having is something far more sharp and far more clear than things that people see, for example, when they dream. When you're asleep, the visible and audible world fades away, you go into sleep, and then you start dreaming and you see things and you hear things. And they're really not there, are they? But it's all kind of hazy and foggy and it jumps around and it doesn't make any sense, and it's nutty and crazy. Sometimes it's terrifying, other times you do impossible things, like fly.

This is not what John was experiencing. This wasn't a dream, this was a vision. This vision is as clear and as sharp to him as the reality that you are now seeing is to you as you sit in your pew

listening to this sermon. Can you see me and can you hear me? Is that sharp and clear? That's how sharp and clear it was for John in this vision that he had as a result of being "in the Spirit."

What John experienced is the same thing that Peter experienced in Acts chapter 10, verses 10 to 17. It says Peter went up to the rooftop to pray, you remember, and that he fell into a trance, and he began to see things. There was this sheet knitted at the four corners, and it was let down, and God opened it up, and it was full of all manner of animals. God said to Peter, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." And he says, I can't eat those animals—they're unclean. And God says, "¹⁵ ... What God hath cleansed, call not thou common."

You recall, this happened three times, then it was all taken up, and Peter came back to his senses and his awareness of the normal world around him, and it says he wondered what the vision meant. Then, of course, the Gentiles came and said, Cornelius is calling you. Go and preach the gospel. And Peter says, Oh, *that's* what it meant! The Gentiles are no longer unclean. I can go preach the gospel to them. I can enter into their house.

So Peter had this vision, very similar to what John is having here, though much briefer, different content and substance, but the same idea where they see things and they hear things in a crystal clear fashion, as though they were actually there, while being transported, as it were, out of the world that they're ordinarily functioning in.

Now this also happened to Old Testament prophets. Turn in your Bibles please to Ezekiel chapter 1. Ezekiel had many, many of these visions. Notice Ezekiel 1:1. It says, "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." So this is the same thing. He's sitting by a river bank, but suddenly it's like the river bank isn't even there anymore, and now he's seeing a whole new world. He then describes this vision of God in heaven, and it's quite an amazing description. This is all the result of the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

We see the same thing in Daniel. Turn to Daniel chapter 8, verses 1 and 2. It says, "In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar"—now notice—"a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. ² And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. ³ Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns." So he has a geographical location physically, but then in his vision, he's moved to a different geographical location. He was in the palace, but now he's out by a river, and now he sees a ram, and the vision goes on.

The point I want to make is that what was happening to John in the book of Revelation is exactly the same thing that happened to the prophets in the Old Testament. It was no different. This idea of seeing visions is something that is pervasive throughout the Scripture, and occurred to the prophets. Now it didn't occur to all of them, but it did occur to many of them.

So John then falls into this prophetic trance and he has a vision in which he hears Jesus speaking, and he sees Jesus standing, and the remainder of Revelation chapter 1 tells us the substance of this vision of Christ. Turn back, please, to Revelation chapter 1.

In considering together the substance of the vision, which is our second major point, we want to look first of all at the voice John heard. This is all we're going to look at this morning, for lack of time, and then next Lord's Day we'll look at the sight John beheld, we'll look at the response John gave, then we'll look at the instruction John received, which will take us all the way through to the end of the chapter. Even though this is a unit, there is no way we can cover all of that, so we're going to break it up.

In the first place, then, in considering together the substance of the vision, let's look at the voice John heard. This is in verse 10b and 11. It says, "and [I] heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ 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," and he identifies them all by name.

Now it specifically says here that John heard behind him a great voice like a trumpet. Trumpets are very often associated with the appearance of God to people. In particular, they are associated with the appearance of God to His people when He's giving them a new revelation of Himself.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Exodus chapter 19. In Exodus chapter 19, Israel has come out of Egypt. They have now come to Mount Sinai, and there God appears to them and God makes the Old Covenant with them. Exodus chapter 19, we'll start reading together at verse 9.

⁹ And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.

¹⁰ And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, ¹¹ and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. ¹² And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: ¹³ there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live:"—notice—"when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount," that is, to the edge of the mount. ¹⁴ And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵ And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.

¹⁶ 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." See that? "The voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ And

Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount,” that is, at the edge of the mount, “¹⁸ And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. ¹⁹ And when the voice of the trumpet”—there it is again—“sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. ²⁰ And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. ²¹ And the Lord God said unto Moses,” etc.

What we see is this trumpet sounding, and it’s sounding very loud and it’s announcing the presence and the revelation of God Himself. So when John says, I heard the voice as of a trumpet, it’s like God is showing up to speak to His people. You recall that when Jesus returns, it will be with a voice of the archangel and—what?—the trump of God. First Thessalonians 4:16. So when John heard the great voice like the sound of a trumpet behind him, he knew this was no ordinary voice. This was an appearance of God like appeared at Mount Sinai when the trumpet sounded there.

Turn back, please, to Revelation 1. We’re going to see the trumpet being sounded on several occasions in the book of Revelation as we proceed through it. In fact, the trumpet is spoken of far more in the book of Revelation all by itself than it is in the rest of the New Testament put together. So this trumpet sounding is an announcement: God has showed up. God is revealing Himself.

The person speaking to John in verse 10 leaves him with no doubt as to who He is. He identifies Himself in verse 11 as God Himself. Notice the terminology that he uses to identify Himself in verse 11, “saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.” Now we would expect that it would be God that was showing up, because there’s this great trumpet, right? Then the person who shows up and speaks says, in essence, I am God. He does that by taking to Himself the names of God.

Notice the terminology he uses. First of all, He calls Himself the Alpha and the Omega. Now the Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, and the Omega is the last letter in the Greek alphabet, like our A to Z, and it comprehends everything inbetween. So God is the one who is the beginning of all things and He is the ending of all things, and He’s the one who manages and controls everything between the end and the beginning, right? What’s interesting is that these terms Alpha and Omega occur only in the book of Revelation, and nowhere else in the Bible. And they occur in four places.

Notice Revelation chapter 1 and verse 8. “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.” So what we see from chapter 1 and verse 8 is that the Alpha and the Omega is the eternal, almighty Lord. That’s plain right on the face of it. The Lord is speaking; He says, I’m eternal, and He says, I’m Almighty. That’s who the Alpha and the Omega is.

Then notice chapter 21 and verse 6. What's interesting is how so much of this stuff in chapter 1 is also spoken of in chapters 21 and 22. Notice chapter 21 verse 6, starting reading at verse 5: "5 And he that sat upon the throne said"—who do you suppose that is?—It's God. He's the only one that ever sits on the throne. "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. 6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God." So clearly, whoever this Alpha and Omega is, He is God. He's speaking in the first person. He says, I am God. I am also the Alpha and the Omega.

The next place it's used is in Revelation 22, starting at verse 12, someone's speaking in the first person. I wonder who it is. Verse 12: "And, behold, I come quickly." Now who's coming back? Jesus is, right? So the "I" is clearly a reference to Jesus. It's speaking of His second coming. He says, "I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." There's His judging work. "13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." So Jesus takes all of these titles to Himself. He says, I'm Alpha and Omega. I'm the beginning and the end. And I am the first and the last.

Well, what do we know about the Alpha and Omega from chapter 21 and verse 6? That the Alpha and the Omega sits on the throne and is God. So very clearly, the Alpha and the Omega in chapter 1 and verse 8 is the eternal Almighty Lord. In chapter 21 and verses 6 and 7, He is God on the throne. And in chapter 22 verse 13, He is Jesus Christ, the coming Lord. There is no clearer or more powerful declaration of the Deity of Jesus Christ than this title that is given to Him of the Alpha and the Omega.

So in Revelation 1 and verse 11, when He says, "I am Alpha and Omega," He is saying, I am Jesus Christ, the Almighty God, because that's how that phrase, Alpha and Omega, is used in those other three passages.

But a second term is used in Revelation 1 and verse 11. Not only does He say, I'm Alpha and Omega, He also says, I am "the first and the last." This term, unlike the term Alpha and Omega, is drawn out of the Old Testament, and this term is used repeatedly as a title and name for Jehovah, the covenant keeping God of the Old Testament.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Isaiah chapter 41. In Isaiah 41 and verse 4, God is speaking here. He says, "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?" Now here it is: "I the LORD,"—and notice "LORD" is all in caps there. It's a translation of "Jehovah." I am Jehovah, which is God's special personal name for the God of Israel. He says, I am Jehovah, "the first, and with the last; I am he." So Jehovah applied the title to Himself of being the first and the last.

Turn to Isaiah 44 and verse 6. It says, “Thus saith the LORD,” notice it’s all caps. “Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his redeemer”—that is, Israel’s redeemer—“the LORD [Jehovah]”—notice all caps again—“of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.” How many firsts and lasts are there? Just one. He is God, He is Jehovah.

Then notice Isaiah 48 and verse 12. It says, “Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.” And in the context, it’s clear once again that Jehovah is speaking.

So three times in the book of Isaiah: in 41:4, 44:6, and 48:12, Jehovah says of Himself, I am the first and the last, I am the *only* first and last. There is no other first and last, except me. There is no God beside me.

You can turn back please now to Revelation 1. This voice that John hears identifies Himself by the title that Jehovah uses of Himself in the Old Testament. But notice, it’s also a title that Jesus uses to identify Himself. Notice Revelation 1 and verse 17. John says, “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not;”—here it is—“I am the first and the last: ¹⁸ I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

Now who is it who is alive and died and came to life but Jesus Christ? And yet this Jesus Christ says of Himself, I am the first and the last. I take to myself the title of Jehovah God. He does this in chapter 1 and verse 17, and He does it in chapter 2 and verse 8. Notice chapter 2:8: “And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.” And then of course, He said it in Revelation 22:13, which we just looked at, when He said, I am the Alpha and the Omega, I am the beginning and the end, I am the first and the last. So as we tie these verses together, it becomes undeniable that Jesus Christ is God, and that He is the God of the Old Testament as well as the God of the New Testament. He is the God of the past, He is the God of the future, He is the God who always has been there, who is here now, and who shall always be here.

Jesus identifies Himself as God, as equal with the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and as equal with God the Father in the New Testament, in terms of His attributes. Now this doesn’t mean that Jesus *is* the Father, it just simply means that Jesus is completely equal with the Father. He shares all the attributes and all the essence of the Trinity. No clearer claim to Deity could be made by Christ, and no clearer ascription of Deity to Christ could be made by John, than to use and record these titles of Him.

This person speaking to John, who is clearly none other than the Son of God, now tells him to write all he sees in his visions in a book. Notice Revelation 1 and verse 11, He says, “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.” So Jesus specifically required John to write these things

down, and He didn't just say that once. Notice He says to him in verse 19, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

So twice He tells John, Write this stuff down. And he did. And what he wrote was the book of Revelation, which you have in your hands. It was to be sent to the seven churches in Asia, who represent the whole church and all the churches that are called into existence between the first and the second coming of Christ.

Well we have to stop here now for the sake of time. I just want you to take away two points today. The first point is this: We suffer for the cause of the Kingdom of God. When you bear witness to the word of God and what it says, and when you bear testimony to the Son of God and what He has done for you, you will be exiled by the world, you will be rejected, and you will suffer persecution and tribulation, and you've got to be patient with that. And the way you're able to be patient with that is you observe the Lord's Day, you stay in close contact with Jesus Christ through His appointed means of worship.

The second point I want you to take away is this: You have God the Son speaking to you, revealing Himself to you, and saying to you, Fear not. I have the keys of hell and death. I will fight your battles for you. You will overcome, because I am King of kings and Lord of lords, and no one can stand against me and ever win or succeed.

And so we have this wonderful person showing up when we are on our Patmos, saying to us, Fear not. I'm here. Don't ever forget that. And when you feel like you don't have a friend in the world and you've been exiled out of everybody's life because you've stood for Jesus Christ, remember that Jesus is standing with you, He's standing near you, He's standing for you, and He is fighting on your behalf, and He's saying to you, Don't worry. I'll take care of it. You just be patient until I do.

This is the voice John heard. We haven't even gotten to the sight John beheld. What happens, then, when he turns around and he *sees* the glorified Christ? He falls on his face. And then Jesus gives him some instructions: I want you to write to my churches. Here is what I want you to say to them.

So where is Christ's heart and concern? It's with His suffering saints. It's with His churches. He's determined that they will overcome, and He provides them with His presence and with His teaching that will enable them to do so. So don't be discouraged in the midst of the spiritual battles you're fighting. You have an exalted, glorified, resurrected God the Son speaking to you, standing with you, and fighting for you. And He will triumph. Well, let us pray together.

Our Father, we're so grateful for this wonderful book and the blessed message it contains. And Father, I pray that as we suffer our own individual exiles as a result of speaking the word of God and preaching the Son of God, that we might just focus our eyes, not on our place or circumstances of suffering, but on our Savior, and find in our gaze upon Him a receding away of

all of the troubles of this life and an entering into a meditation on the things above and the things of heaven that would fill us with joy and peace and confidence.

Father, we thank you for this wonderful book, and may the lessons it contains be to us a source of great comfort and great strength in the days ahead. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.