

I am the First and the Last

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Revelation 1:17

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I am going to be speaking to you today from the book of Revelation. Now this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. I know in most Bibles when you open the Bible to the book of Revelation it says, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine." Well, the revelation was given to John and John wrote it, but this is the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is about Christ. It is about the book of Revelation is about Christ, his redemptive work, his redemptive glory.

Now here is the verse. I wish that you would take your Bibles and follow along with me today as I speak to you. I will be speaking from chapter one of the book of Revelation, Revelation chapter one.

Now, here is my text. This is the text and this is the title of the message. John said in verse 17, Revelation 1:17, "And when I saw him, when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead and he laid his right hand upon me saying unto me, 'Fear not. Fear not. I am the first and the last.'"

Now that is the title of the message, "I am the First and the Last."

You know, throughout the generations of the sons of men a few men have seen the Lord, have actually seen the Lord. A few men have had a vision and a revelation of the glory of God before their face. And without exception, absolutely without exception every one of them when they saw the Lord fell at his feet. That is what John said here. "When I saw him, when I saw him."

There wasn't any whoop de do and shouting and hand clapping and singing. John said, "I fell at his feet as dead."

And what I find throughout the Word of God, when men actually have a revelation of the glory of God, of the person of our Lord they have fallen at his feet in worship and reverence. For example Moses, 80 years of age was tending sheep up there on the mountain and he saw something very strange. There was a bush that burned, but it wasn't consumed. And Moses walked over closer to that bush so that he could get a glimpse of it and a voice spoke to him. God spoke to him and said, "Moses, take off your shoes. Come down. Humble yourself. Take off your shoes. You are on holy ground. You are in the presence of God."

Also Job, Job, you know, God talks about how righteous Job was and what a wonderful servant of God he was, but over there in the latter part of Job God revealed himself to Job in his majesty and greatness and power and Job said this. He said, "Lord, I have heard of you. I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear and now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I hate myself. I repent in sackcloth in ashes. I put my hand over my mouth. I have spoken things too wonderful for me. I will never do it again."

When he saw the Lord it brought him down.

Isaiah...Isaiah wrote so much about King Uzziah. King Uzziah was sort of his hero. Everything that King Uzziah did Isaiah wrote the Scripture says. Well, King Uzziah died. God killed him. Uzziah violated the priesthood. He went into the holy place to offer a sacrifice and God turned him into a leper and killed him. And Isaiah in chapter six says, "And when Uzziah died I saw the Lord high and lifted up and his glory filled the temple and the angels and seraphims about the throne called, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts.' And I cried, 'Woe is me.'"

The seraphims cried, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord."

And Isaiah said, "And I cried when I saw the Lord, 'Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.'"

Thomas...Thomas who doubted his resurrection, Thomas who didn't believe the disciples when they told him that the Lord had risen, our Lord appeared to him. What happened? Thomas fell at his feet and cried, "My Lord and my God."

That is where you always found Mary was at the feet of the Lord. Every time her name is mentioned it was the one who sat at his feet, who sat at his feet.

Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, God appeared to him, the Lord Jesus spoke to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

"Who art thou, Lord?" he says.

"I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest.

And Saul said, "I fell to the ground."

So this is what John is saying, "When I saw him, when I saw him in his glory I fell at his feet as a dead man."

Here the old servant, the old apostle John, the one who leaned on his breast at the last supper, John, 90 some odd years old is living in exile on the isle of Patmos. I am told that all the other apostles were dead. John was the last of the apostles alive. Peter was crucified at Rome. James the less was stoned. Andrew was crucified. Philip was stoned and

then crucified. Thomas was driven through with a spear. Bartholomew was beaten and then crucified. Matthew was slain with a halberd. James the great was beheaded. Simon Zelotes was crucified. Jude was crucified. And here John, the last of the apostles. He is on the isle of Patmos in exile for preaching the gospel and the Lord appeared to him, the risen, glorified, exalted Lord Jesus Christ appeared to his beloved disciple and John said, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead."

You know, I have no doubt...now listen to me. I have no doubt today that a true revelation of the glory and majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ...if a man...if God is pleased to reveal to our eyes of faith and to our understanding and to our hearts a glimpse of his glory, a glimpse of his majesty, a glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ, I believe it will have the same effect on us today as it did on these men. If we were permitted to behold his glory, if God is pleased to reveal himself to us in the person of his Son, I believe it would...we would be overcome with reverence and fear and awe in his presence.

You know, Psalm 46 says, "Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am God."

Here is a verse in Psalm 89. Listen to this. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints." Now listen. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." He is to be worshipped in awe and reverence and fear.

I want us to look at this Scripture here in Revelation one. Would you take your Bible and open there and follow along as I read. I am going to start with verse nine. Let's go back a little bit. Verse 17 John said, "And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead."

Well, let's go back and see what takes place here in verse nine. Listen to John. He is writing here. He said, "I John, who also am your brother and your companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. I was in the isle that is called Patmos for the Word of God or because I preached the Word of God and for the testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I was exiled out of the country, across the sea onto this little island and that is where I was, your brother and your companion.":

You know John was an apostle, one of the 12. He wrote the book of John, the gospel of John and 1 and 2 and 3 John, a great man, a gifted man, a servant of God, but a humble man. He said, "I am your brother. I am your brother. I am your companion. I am not your master. I am not your Lord. Call no man Father. You have one Father in heaven. Call no man master. Christ is our master. You are brethren." That is what John said, "I am your brother. I am your brother. I am your companion and I am your companion in trouble and trial. You have troubles? I do, too. You have trials. I do, too." John said, "I am your companion in trouble and trial and I am a prisoner for the sake of the gospel, suffering loneliness, isolation for the gospel's sake."

And then listen to verse 10. "I was in the Spirit of the Lord on the Lord's Day. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

Now listen to me. This was not the Jewish sabbath which was fulfilled and abolished. Our Lord lay in the tomb all through the sabbath day, the sabbath day.

You see that Old Testament Levitical law enforced the sabbath and the tithe and the feast and the sacrifices and the priesthood and all these things. And when the Lord Jesus Christ came here he fulfilled all the Old Testament types and patterns and pictures and sacrifices and holy days and sabbath days and all these things. And when he was buried he lay in the tomb the whole sabbath day. It is dead. It is buried. It is put away. And he arose on the first day of the week.

And John said, "On the first day of the week I was in the Spirit on the first day."

You see that is the day of the Lord's resurrection. That is the day when the disciples met to worship the Lord.

In Acts chapter 20 verse seven it says, "And on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, to observe the Lord's table on the first day of the week, to worship God, Paul preached to them."

And then 1 Corinthians 16:2 the Scripture says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God as God has prospered him."

You see Christ is our sabbath. Christ is our rest. And we don't keep the sabbath day. Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled, lay in the tomb on that day and rose on the first day of the week.

And John said, "Here I am on an island alone, exiled. But on the first day of the week..."

I know the body of Christ. I know the people of God over yonder, wherever they are gathering together to worship the Lord on the first day of the week. And John said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. I wasn't with them in body, but I was with them in heart. I was with them in Spirit and I worshipped God on the Lord's Day."

Old Roland Hill, a pastor and minister of the gospel over in England many years ago, a great preacher. Roland Hill was on his way to church one morning, riding his buggy, horse pulling the buggy. [?] started towards his...where he pastured and preached on Sunday morning and he passed this field and there was a neighbor, a farmer out sowing his seed, sowing the field. And Roland Hill stopped his buggy and he waved to the man and the man stopped sowing his seed and Roland Hill said to him, "Sir, why don't you rest yourself and rest your animals and come go worship the Lord with us today? This is the Lord's Day when the people of God gather to worship the Lord. Why don't you go and worship the Lord with us?"

And the man laughed and he said to him, he said, "I plowed my field on Sunday. I plant my field on Sunday. I reap my crops on Sunday while you people are in your church ser-

vice. And come October, come October I always have a better yield than all of you Christians. What do you think about that?"

Mr. Hill replied, "My dear man, I would have you bear in mind as you reap your abundant crops next October, I would have you bear in mind that almighty God does not always settle his accounts with me in October. It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment, pay day."

John said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and I heard a great voice, a great voice."

I'll tell you. When our Lord speaks it is in a great voice. It is a great day. And he talks about great things, a great voice. I can imagine Satan speaking in whispers in subtlety and craftiness and evil suggestions and wicked works, whispering. But our God speaks in a great voice. He has great tidings and good tidings and he says in Isaiah 40 to the Church, "Oh, Zion..."

When you read the word Zion in the Bible it is talking about the Church, God's Church.

"Oh, Zion, that bringeth good tidings, get thee up to a high mountain and lift up your voice with power and say to all the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God.'"

John said, "I heard behind me a great voice and that voice said..." Look at verse 11. "I am Alpha and Omega. I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."

You see, alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. Omega is the last. Alpha and omega, first and the last. Jesus Christ is the first and the last. And all in between. You see, my friends, this is our Lord Jesus speaking. "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."

See there was a time when this world had no being. There was a time when the world wasn't here. Scripture talks about before the foundations of the world. Well, if Christ is all, if Jesus Christ is all, where was he then?

Well, the Scripture says in John one, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

You know, our Lord prayed, "Glorify me, Father, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Well, there was a time when the world was made, when the trees and the stars and the moon and the sun and the dry land all these things appeared. If Christ is all where was he then?

Verse three says, "And all things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made."

Then was a time when man was made. God said, "Let us make man in our own image, in the image of God created he them male and female." But they didn't stand long in their holiness. They fell. And death and darkness and disease and judgment fell on that couple and God cast them out of the garden.

If Jesus Christ is all where was he then?

Listen to God speak. Listen to God speak to the serpent. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed. You will bruise his heel. He will crush your head." That is Christ, the seed of woman. That is Jesus Christ. And in that darkness God announced him as the light of the world. In that time of death God announced him as the life of the world. In that time of expulsion and exclusion God said, "He is the way back."

Well, there was a time when God came to this earth in human form, made of a woman, made under the law. There was a time when God came to the earth. The angel said, "Mary, you are going to have a son."

She said, "I don't know a man."

He said, "The Holy Ghost will come upon you. The power of God will overshadow you and that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God and God the Son, the Son of God who is God the Son."

He said to Joseph, "Don't be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. That holy thing in her is the Son of God. You call his name Jesus. He will save his people from their sins."

And then that wonderful morning the angels spoke to the shepherds on the hillside and they said, "We bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Christ the Lord." He is all. He is all.

And I will tell you. There is coming a time when this old world is going to pass away with a fervent heat. Heaven and earth shall melt with a fervent heat. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. The world shall end and all men will stand before God. The Scripture says, "The sea gave up the dead. Death and hell gave up the dead which were in them and all men small and great stood before God, stood before God and the books are opened."

Well, if Jesus Christ is all where will he be then? Listen. Acts 17:31. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man, by that man whom he hath ordained whereof God hath given assurance to all men in that he raised that man from the dead and made him Lord and Christ."

He is all. He said, "I am Alpha, I am Omega. I am the first and I am the last." He is the one with whom we have to do. All that God has to say to you and me is in Christ. All that God has to give to you and to me is in Christ. All that God requires of you and me is

met in Christ. All that God will accept from us is in Christ. Christ in you, that is the hope of glory.

Verse 12. "I turned to see that voice."

Wouldn't you? I would. "I heard a great voice behind me saying, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.'" And John said, "I turned to see the voice that spake to me. That voice as a sound of many waters and I saw him. I saw him. I saw seven golden candlesticks and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man."

What are these candlesticks? Look down at verse 20. Verse 20 tells you the seven candlesticks are the churches, the seven churches of Asia and Christ is in the midst of the seven churches.

Let me tell you something. Where two or three are met in his name that is where he is, in their midst. You find his Church. That is where he is. He is in the midst of them. You find his sheep. You will find the shepherd. You find his body. You will find the head. You find his bride and you will find the bridegroom.

John said, "I turned and I saw seven golden candlesticks. And right in the middle of them one like unto the Son of man. And he was clothed," verse 13, "he was clothed with a garment down to the foot and girt about the paps with a golden girdle."

Do you know what this is? You get your Bible and open it to Exodus 28 some time and read a description of the garments of the glorious high priest Aaron, the miter on his head, the beautiful garment, robe with which he was clothed. The breastplate with the 12 tribes, the golden breastplate, the shoulders, all this beautiful, beautiful robe.

John said, "I saw him clothed as the high priest." He is our high priest. We have a high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ who is at the right hand of God, who intercedes for us.

But you know in Leviticus 16 Aaron one time laid aside this robe and the miter and all these beautiful things and clothed himself in linen, white linen and went into the holy of holies and put the blood on the mercy seat, the atonement. And when he came out he laid the linen garments aside and put back on the robes of the high priest. And here we see our Lord in the robes of the high priest. But when he died on the cross they wrapped him in linen and put him in the tomb. And when he arose from the grave he folded up the linen and laid it aside and now he is clothed in his priestly garments, our great high priest.

Oh, and John says, "His head and hairs were white as wool, as white as the snow."

What does that mean? He is the eternal God. He is the ancient of days. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. "And his eyes were as a flame of fire." That means he knows everything. He sees everything. His eyes burn away the darkness, burn away the hypocrisy, burn away the pretense. His eyes look on the heart. His hair is white as snow. He is the ancient of days. His eyes are flames of fire. His feet like fine brass burned in a

furnace. He walked the winepress of God's wrath alone and he had in his right hand, verse 16, seven stars.

What are these seven stars? Look at verse 20. They are the seven pastors of the seven churches.

Why are God's pastors called stars?

Well, one thing as stars he puts them where he wants them. Every star is where he wants it to be. As stars they only reflect his light. They don't have any light of their own. As stars they give true direction. That is what...when I was in the navy that is how we used to get our positions off the stars. And a true minister will point you right.

And they are in his hand, his right hand, the place of honor, power and nearness and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword. That is his Word. And when I saw it, in his glory, in his greatness, in his majesty, in his power, when I saw it I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand on me and said to me, "Fear not. You don't have to be afraid because I am the first and the last. I am in charge. I am sovereign. I am he that liveth. I was dead. But behold. I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of hell and death. Don't be afraid."