

**Do not interpretations belong to God?
Genesis 40:8**

Chapter One

1:1-2 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

The word ‘revelation’ is transliterated *apocalypse* in the Greek. It means “a revealing of something previously hidden.” What is the Holy Spirit trying to reveal? The text is clear: it is the *revealing* of Jesus Christ. It is not the Revelation of St. John, as the King James Version (KJV) titles the letter. Nor is it the revealing of the distant future. It is “the mystery which for ages *has been hidden* in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might *now be made known* through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.” (Eph 3:9-10) It is “*the mystery which has been hidden* from the past ages and generations; but has *now been manifested* to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” (Col 1:26-27) The mechanics and pageantry of this mystery are thus set forth in the book of Revelation.

Revelation divides the world into two groups: the *called* (the saved, the Christians, the church) and those within the kingdom of darkness. Through God’s plan of redemption, hope for mankind is manifested through His Son. Revelation portrays a widespread rejection of God’s way of redemption, describing those who choose a different path. War—the violent opposition of two groups—is thus a dominant theme of the book.

Notice how this revealing was passed down the “chain of command.” God gave it to Jesus Christ, who then communicated it by His angel, who then passed it to John, who ultimately gave it to the church.

Communicated by His angel is key to interpreting Revelation since the Greek word *semaino* means ‘to give a sign’ (Thayer). Signs in scripture were not always plain but were proof of God’s hand or word. Any approach to the book, therefore, must bear this rule in mind. As stated earlier, it is not to be understood as literal, but by *sign* language. Some of the symbols are obvious metaphors, such as creatures made up of different animal parts, swords protruding from mouths, and so forth. However, this rule must also be applied to everyday things, such as light, smoke, locusts, women, etc.. We can’t arbitrarily interpret some images to be symbols and others as literal unless the text clearly supports it.

Dr. J Vernon McGee¹ was dogmatic in his literal interpretation of the book. He picked and chose which symbols were literal and which ones were symbolic, depending on how he wanted things to line up with his premillennial views.

The argument that anyone can tell a symbol from an actual entity stems from human pride. We must humbly follow the bible's interpretations, regardless of our IQ.

For example, even the most mundane of symbols such as grass, sitting, standing, and fire must be understood as symbolic *principles* supported elsewhere in scripture. Violation of this basic rule has led to Revelation being the most misunderstood and misapplied book in the bible. Men have come under Peter's indictment concerning "things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." (2 Pet 3:16)

John's bearing *witness to the word of God* may refer to what he saw in the visions contained in the book, or it relates to his apostolic testimony, witnessed during Christ's tenure upon the earth.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and *we beheld His glory*, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1, 14)

The phrase *testimony of Jesus* appears six times, and only in Revelation. In 19:10, it states, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." John clarifies this testimony by the phrase, *even to all that he saw*. The word 'even' should be understood as *specifically*, which we will discuss shortly.

1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

The blessing is given to certain ones—readers and hearers. The Greeks and Romans had an educational advantage over the unlearned parts of the world. Although reading and writing were jobs left to the scribes, the Jews also had a long history of literacy. We find in Nehemiah that the Levites "read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading." (Neh 8:8) Some of the apostles were fishermen and "common" folk, yet were able to write the New Testament.

A qualification is given to this reading and hearing, namely that of *heeding the things which are written in it*. This agrees with what the apostle James wrote in his letter:

One who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not

¹ Dr. McGee ruled the Christian airwaves for decades with his *Through the Bible* radio broadcast. Even though he died in 1986, his messages are still widely heard on Christian radio today.

having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, *this man shall be blessed in what he does.* (James 1:25)

Thus, the blessings come on those who take heed to what they read or hear. For those churches in Asia Minor, the blessings would have resulted from a reading and heeding of the calamities in Revelation, giving them comfort to endure what was to come.

When initially presented, Revelation was rejected by many in the church. Those who did accept it did so with caution.² Many in the church today believe the following, based on many conversations I've had with many congregations:

- It's meant for personal study, not public consumption.
- It's too obscure and esoteric and therefore cannot edify the church assembly.
- It has nothing to do with the Christian "walk."

Surprisingly, these opinions came from older, more conservative Christians, who could have used their higher wisdom to help others unravel the book. Unfortunately, most are content to let Revelation remain closed in the backs of their bibles. This attitude has allowed wild speculation to abound. As a result, more time is wasted *un*-explaining the book than in seeking out its truths.

Blessed is he who reads. Why? The time is near. Here we have our first clue as to Revelation's historical context. This admonition is also found at the end, where John is told, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, *for the time is near.*" (22:10) What meaning would this have had for 1st Century Christians? Did they understand it to mean that *the time was close at hand*? Time for what? What was close at hand? Jesus wanted people to repent during His earthly ministry since the kingdom of heaven was *at hand*. (Matt 3:2) This phrase, "at hand," is used throughout scripture, and is always in the context of those living *at that time*. If they believed it was meant for the distant future, to what purpose would the book have served? Could they have been sure God meant what He said? If "the time is near" meant something else, how can we be sure of anything else the bible says? Perhaps the "third woe is coming quickly" (11:14) means it has yet to happen!

There are those who are quick to seize Peter's words: "Do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." (2 Pet 3:8) However, one day is as a thousand years *to the Lord*—not to man. The revelation was written to the *saints*. The context in Peter's letter refers to a Final Judgment, while Revelation deals with Christ's (and to a lesser extent, the church's) revealing. This is what was close at hand, and it had to do with the imminent coming kingdom promised by Jesus. That kingdom is the church, which was established

² A concise analysis of this attitude is finely written in Adam Clarke's *Introduction to Revelation*.

on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

The phrase, “one day is as a thousand years,” comes from Psalms 90:4—*For a thousand years in Thy sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night.* It refers to God’s relationship with Time. A single brick (one day), when placed next to a skyscraper (a thousand years), shows a vast difference in respect to their sizes. When viewed from a hundred miles out in space, however, both brick and skyscraper fade into insignificance; they are both invisible specks. *This is how God sees Time.* He sets His agenda and is not influenced by Time like we are. Both past and future are simultaneous and insignificant in His eyes. This is not to say that Revelation was meant solely for those living in the 1st Century. All of the NT letters were written to real congregations existing at that time. These same letters provide guidance and counsel to Christians living today.

1:4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne

Here is the second clue that the book of Revelation is historical instead of futuristic. It seems to have been written to seven specific churches located in Asia Minor. Although the churches listed were closest to the isle of Patmos, these were not the only churches in Asia Minor. Phrygia, Pamphylia, Galatia, Pontus, and Cappadocia were some others not on the list.

The number ‘7’ implies spiritual perfection, completeness, or maturity, which will be explained later. The congregations mentioned represent the full spectrum of spiritual conditions existing within the early church. Congregations in today’s culture find the same situations existing in the ranks. Although our problems may wear newer clothes, so to speak, they are the same ones extant in the early church.

An excellent example of this is seen in the NT letters. The epistles addressed specific issues and specific congregations. However, they are also our legacy. Indeed, that’s why the letters were preserved. Our edification and education come from the *principles* outlined in the NT: loving your brothers and sisters, helping the needy, acting decently in the world, watching out for and helping one another, learning the mind of God, and so forth.

Take the church in Laodicea, for example. We can see that Christ dislikes Christians who think they’re in good shape but are in fact, lacking zeal. (3:19) This *principle* is sound advice any modern-day church would do well to heed. Likewise, while the book was written to seven specific congregations, we too can glean spiritual nourishment from it, as with any other book in the bible.

From Him who is and who was and who is to come is a reference to the Eternal God, and also shows up in 4:8—*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and*

who is and who is to come. What is from Him? Grace and Peace. The grace and peace to these churches are also *from the seven spirits who are before His throne.*

These seven spirits also appear in the fourth chapter—*seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.* Bearing in mind that we're dealing with symbols, these are not seven literal spirits, but a concept of the perfect and complete Spirit of God. The number represents perfection, completeness, lacking nothing.

Numbers in Scripture

There is no reference to numerical gematria—the symbolic use of numbers in the bible. Their existence can neither be positively explained nor verified by scripture.³ On the other hand, most scholars see in scripture a consistent use of numbers, which seem to bear significance over and above their regular arithmetical values.⁴ This is especially true of the number 7.

Since '7' occurs so frequently throughout Revelation, we need to investigate its usage as a symbol. As stated, it denotes *completeness, maturity, or perfection.* How do we determine this to be a valid understanding? Through consistent use of it in scripture.

- The 7th day completes the week. (Gen 1)
- Seven days after filling the ark, the Lord brought rain. (Gen 5:4)
- Jacob worked 7 years to marry Rachel (Gen 29:18), thus completing the agreement between him and Laban.
- The years of feast and famine in Egypt each lasted 7 years (Gen 41), both phases completing the prophecy.
- Joseph's mourning was completed 7 days after his father's death. (Gen 50:10)
- Many of the Mosaic laws required a 7-day period to complete. (Exo 13:6; 29:35; 34:18)
- Leviticus is full of instructions where things were done in 7's before they were determined to be complete or finished.
- Israel had to wipe out 7 nations before they could inherit the Promised Land. (Deut 7)
- God's words are refined 7 times. (Psa 12:6)
- There are 7 things that God hates. (Prov 6:16)
- Complete wisdom is built on 7 pillars. (Prov 9:1)
- Seven abominations fill (complete) a man's heart. (Prov 26:25)

³ "Gematria" *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Isidore Singer, ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1905), V, p.589.

⁴ *Biblical Numerology*, John H. Davis, Chap. 5, p. 103.

- After 7 days of sacrifice, God promised to accept Ezekiel. (Ezek 43:27)

These seven spirits later become seven horns and eyes in the description of the Lamb of God:

I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, *which are the seven Spirits of God*, sent out into all the earth. (Rev 5:6)

Their purpose is to keep watch over the whole (complete) world. Their watching over the earth signify a *complete* understanding or knowing what is going on in the world. Horns represent power (more said later). Seven horns indicate a complete and perfect power.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. *His understanding is inscrutable*. (Isa 40:27-28)

In other words, God knows *everything*. It is a *complete* or inscrutable understanding. In a prophecy concerning Christ, Zechariah wrote,

Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; *on one stone are seven eyes*. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it, declares the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, declares the Lord of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree. (Zech 3:8-10)

Zechariah shows that God’s sovereignty, truthfulness, justness, and other attributes are complete. There are no “loose ends” or things God has failed to consider. This thread is woven throughout Revelation.

1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood

Grace and peace are also extended from Jesus, who is described in these terms. *To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood*. This introduces the result of the Christian’s freedom from sin in the next verse.

First-born of the dead: Christ is called “the first-fruits of those who are asleep.” (1 Cor 15:20) Jesus Christ is the first human who rose from the dead to die no more. As such, He is the first fruit of resurrection. Human beings will follow Him likewise at what is called the *general* resurrection. In the OT, the first fruits were considered a pledge of the harvest. (Exo 23:16; Deut 18:4) Thus, the resurrection of Christ is God’s promise that believers will also rise from the dead.

Ruler of the kings of the earth: This title is peculiar to Revelation. It appears here first, indicating that Jesus Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth. However, the next seven times John uses the phrase, it is connected to evil. At Revelation’s conclusion, these same kings turn from evil and bring their glory into the New Jerusalem. (21:24)

The term ‘earth’ does not mean the ground, water, or trees and animals; it refers to the people who live on the earth. These are kings ruling over people, not the planet. The term is used arbitrarily to mean both land and those living in it. Scripture says the *earth* was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way *upon* the earth. (Gen 6:12) The physical ground and plant life were defiled *provisionally*. But in God’s eyes, the sins of the inhabitants had turned it into an undesirable place *judicially*. (Kurt Simmons—*Consummation of the Ages*)

David’s words are taken from Psalms 2:2—“The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed.” They are repeated and thus defined in Acts 4:26. They are rulers of nations. (1Kgs 4:34) “All the kings of the earth will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, when they have heard the words of Thy mouth.” (Psa 138:4) In a prophecy against Jerusalem, Isaiah said, “the Lord will punish the host of heaven, on high, *and the kings of the earth*, on earth.” (Isa 24:21) Jesus considered the Romans to be kings of the earth. (Matt 17:25) Simply put, they are heads of worldly governments.

1:6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

In diametric opposition to earthly, world-bound kings, Christians comprise the heavenly kingdom of Christ. It is repeated in 5:10—*Thou hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth*. Translators have added the words “to *be* a kingdom,” implying a coming kingdom. The KJV correctly renders it, “He has made us kings and priests.” It is not a future state, but a present condition—a completed transaction, if you will.

The seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world *has become* the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.” (Rev 11:15)

Christ rules the earth. How? Through believers' hearts. It is not a physical kingdom, made up of "eating and drinking," but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom 14:17) God's kingdom cannot be shaken because it is not part of this creation. (Heb 12:27-28) This all ties to Ephesians 1:4-5:

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.

1:7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.

This verse is perhaps the most misunderstood and misapplied verse in the entire Bible. Even respected Bible scholars seem to stumble over the simple grammar. We can thank God for the fact that those who translated the original language were Greek scholars first and English speakers second.

The OT was written for our instruction and example. (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11) While the *stories* instruct us in the form of examples, the OT is also a tool to help us understand NT *prophecy*. For example, clouds cannot be symbols in the OT and suddenly turn literal in the NT. This is an inconsistent interpretation of scripture. To the Jewish mind, a mind steeped in the OT, a cloud signified God's presence when He led the children of Israel out of Egypt and during their 40 years in the wilderness. It protected the children of Israel. (Psa 105:39) This same cloud is referred to in the Pentateuch, Nehemiah, and Psalms. Paul also mentions it in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. Clouds, therefore, speak of *God's deliverance of His people out of bondage* and are a *sign* (symbol) of His presence.

The baptism into Moses that Paul speaks of signifies Israel's being brought into an obligation to Moses' Law and covenant. This agreement (covenant), accompanied by the Law, was designed to keep the Israelites under God's protection. As long as they stayed within the rules of the covenant, they were guaranteed the Lord's blessing and protection.

In the NT, it is not a cloud, but *baptism* that brings us into the body of Christ and His New Covenant. The OT cloud signified protection and covering for *Israel*. Baptism protects *us* now since it is the singular event that seals a Christian for the day of redemption. (Eph 1:13; 4:30) In a secondary sense, baptism is a grave, where the old nature is covered (buried).

It is imperative then to distinguish the difference between the singular and plural form of *cloud* since they represent two different concepts. A *cloud* signified a covering or protection, while *clouds* meant God's judgment.

“A day of clouds” meant a sign and a time of God’s coming judgment. (Ezek 30:3; Joel 2:2) Clouds are indicative of armies (Jer 4) and multitudes of people. (Heb 12:1) In Revelation, an angel is clothed with a cloud. (10:1) Four references in Revelation show various manifestations of God sitting on “the cloud” or a white cloud. Finally, the two witnesses are transported to heaven in a cloud. (11:12) Clouds are also depicted as God’s chariot (Psa 104:3), conveying His interdiction into history. (Dan 7:13; Matt 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Rev 1:7) This “appearance” is usually to mete out judgment. Revelation uses the plural form (judgment) only once (1:7), while the other six occurrences are singular (protection).

Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him. Christ’s coming in the clouds, therefore, refers to judgment, which everyone concerned in the context will reap. This phrase is popularly understood to mean, “Every eye will see Him, *including* those who pierced Him.” However, the word ‘even’ is used differently in scripture. This is where most folks trip and fall in their premise. ‘Even’ is used as an antecedent—it points *backward* and clarifies the context. This can be proved consistently throughout scripture, thus my comment on the translators not being English scholars first and foremost. Note:

As for the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land and who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing out a bad report concerning the land, **even those men** who brought out the very bad report of the land died by a plague before the Lord. (Num 14:36-37)

Notice how ‘even’ clarifies who the men were—those whom Moses sent to spy out the land. The same holds true for Psalms 119:79: “May those who fear Thee turn to me, (who fears God?) **even those** who know Thy testimonies.” Note the following scriptures supporting the use of ‘even’ as an antecedent:

...the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant; **even those** (the foreigners just mentioned) I will bring to My holy mountain... (Isa 56:6-7)

“Then afterwards,” declares the Lord, “I shall give over Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people, even those—i.e., *specifically* those—who survive in this city from the pestilence, the sword, and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.” (Jer 21:7)

Behold, I am against your magic bands by which you hunt lives there as birds, and I will tear them off your arms; and I will let them go, **even those** lives whom you hunt as birds. (Ezek 13:20)

They will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land, burying those who were passing through, **even those** left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. (Ezek 39:14)

“In that day,” declares the Lord, “I will assemble the lame, and gather the outcasts, **even those** whom I have afflicted.” (Micah 4:6)

The **word** which he sent to the children of Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all): that spoken word you yourselves know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; **even** Jesus of Nazareth... (‘even’ defines Jesus as the Word) (Acts 10:36-38)

When he had gone up, and had broken bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, **even** until break of day, he departed (‘even’ defines the “long while” referred to). (Acts 20:11)

So when we read *every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him*, we need to be consistent. Who will see Him? *Even* those—*specifically* those—who pierced Him—the *Jewish Nation*. Although the verse has been interpreted, “*including* those who pierced Him,” this doesn’t square with the rest of scripture. You can’t nod your head in agreement with the verses listed above and then balk at using the same grammatical rule for Revelation 1:7. Setting aside the grammar issue, scripture must be interpreted by scripture, not by what we’ve learned in school.

NOTE

Most English Bible translations fall short regarding punctuation and good grammar, which is why we don’t use the Bible as a writing reference. Insisting that verse 7 refers to everyone on planet earth seeing Christ at some point in time is to patently disregard how words are used throughout scripture.

The word ‘see’ has also been taken literally, while the bible generally uses the word to mean *understand*. (1 Sam 14:29; Job 35:5; Psa 37:34; 115:5; Ecc 2:3, *et al*) Interpreted correctly, the verse means, “Jesus is coming in judgment, and the Jews will understand, specifically those who killed him.” Zechariah makes it clear that the Jews would be the ones who would “see” Him, not earth’s inhabitants at some future date:

I will pour out on the *house of David* and on the *inhabitants of Jerusalem*, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that *they*—Who? Jerusalem’s inhabitants

just mentioned—*will look on Me whom they have pierced*; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. (Zech 12:10-11)

This scripture also implies that Revelation was written *before* 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed:

“Truly I say to you, there are some of those *who are standing here* who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” (Matt 16:28)

Jesus was speaking to His disciples and said that some of them would see Him coming in His kingdom before their deaths. Other verses mention Christ’s coming on the clouds as part of the destruction of Jerusalem. (Matt 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27) Any Bible student knows different scriptures treat the same subject with slight variations. Therefore, ‘coming in His kingdom,’ and ‘coming in the clouds’ represent two descriptions of the same event. One emphasizes the Christian victory, while the other emphasizes the judgment of those who rejected Christ.

This is seen where Jesus told the High Priest, “*You shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*” (Mark 14:62) The High Priest was one of those included as part of *those who pierced Him*, and who would be condemned.

We know that Jesus is the Vine and His Father is the Vinedresser (John 15), and have no trouble seeing this as figurative language. We don’t have any problem understanding Him as a Lion *and* a Lamb. Much of the OT language drips with figurative style, designed to describe spiritual events in words a lowly shepherd could grasp. As an example, David wrote, “Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.” (Psa 97:2) It is clear that righteousness and judgment are spiritual *principles* that makeup God’s seat of power; they are not literal entities. The same rule of interpretation needs to be applied to *seeing, clouds, and thick darkness*. They are *spiritual* concepts, not physical reality.

The tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him implies God’s judgment on the Jews. It seems to be referring to the 12 tribes of Judah, not every nation on the planet. Later on, we will see how ‘earth’ relates primarily to the Jewish nation, while ‘sea’ symbolizes the Gentile nations. ‘Earth’ does not mean ‘planet,’ and it has been suggested that the concept of a ball hanging in space wasn’t known at this time. It is more properly understood as ‘land.’ Depending on context, it typically means the ‘land of Judah.’ Again, taking how scripture uses the term:

For thus says the Lord, “The whole land shall be a desolation, yet I will not execute a complete destruction. For this *the earth shall mourn...*” (Jer 4:27)

The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all *the tribes of the earth will mourn*, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. (Matt 24:30) (Speaking of Jerusalem’s destruction.)

Concerning the day of the Lord, the prophet Joel wrote that it would be *a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness*. (Joel 2:2) Again, describing God’s coming judgment upon Israel. Jesus’ declaration here that the *tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him* gives further proof that this was yet to happen, meaning Jerusalem’s destruction was still a future event at the giving of Revelation.

It’s important that we ever keep before us that Revelation was written to 1st Century Christians facing a time of terrible persecution. It is a crate chained to a pallet. It makes no sense for us today to seek to break those chains and move the pallet to another dock for shipment to a different port of entry. It’s unfortunate that what we’ve sometimes been taught gets in the way.

1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

This title of *the Alpha and the Omega* is only used in Revelation and is synonymous with God and Christ being the Beginning and End of all things. The end is viewed by God as no different than the beginning, as He can see both just as clearly as if they were one. (Isa 46:10) In prophecy, the end signified God’s judgment (Ezek 7:2, 6; Hos 1:4), and a time where God would establish His kingdom. (Dan 2:44) The harvest will occur at the end of the age. (Matt 13:39) Jesus compared His coming in the kingdom to the end. (Compare Luke 21:9; 27)

1:9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Patmos was a small rocky island to which the apostle John was banished and where he received the Revelation. The island, about 10 miles long and 6 miles wide, lies off the southwest coast of modern-day Turkey. It is known today as Palmosa. Because of its desolate and barren nature, the Romans used Patmos as a place to banish criminals, who were forced to work at hard labor in the island’s mines and quarries. John probably suffered from harsh treatment during his exile on Patmos. Christian tradition claims that

he was in exile for 18 months.⁵

The apostle states his relationship to the churches to whom he is writing. He is, first of all, their *brother*. He is part of God's spiritual *family*. Second, he is a sharer with them in three things: the tribulation, the kingdom, and the perseverance *that are in Christ*. The tribulation should be understood as tribulation in general, not a specific time of trouble. The indefinite article 'the' is not in the Greek. There is only one place in the bible that speaks of *the* tribulation, and it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem:

But immediately after *the tribulation* of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Matt 24:29)

Revelation 7:14 refers to *the Great Tribulation*, where a great multitude has their robes washed in the Lamb's blood. John is referring, however, to a general tribulation, perhaps under Nero, Domitian, or even Diocletian. Secular history and scriptures (2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 1:8; James 5:13) support this view.

Resist (the devil), firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (1 Pet 5:9)

The reference to being a fellow partaker in the kingdom refers back to verse 6: *He has made us a kingdom*. Paul wrote that the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but *righteousness and peace and joy* in the Holy Spirit. We are to pursue the things that contribute to peace and mutual edification. (Rom 14:17-19) Conditions such as righteousness, peace, and joy apply to *human* interaction and experience, not only a place in heaven. We are in the kingdom *now*, and we are to be promoting harmony within that kingdom *now*.

Perseverance is also a state the Christian is to strive for. If we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. (Rom 8:25) Suffering and perseverance are primary means in obtaining our completion (maturity) in Christ. Note:

We ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. (2 Thess 1:4, 5)

Because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. These were John's "crimes" for which he was consigned to Patmos.

⁵ Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, © 1986

1:10 – 11 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

In the Spirit refers to being in a state of godly reflection or spiritual frame of mind. Christians are said to be *in the Spirit* (Rom 8:9) as opposed to being *in the flesh*. Paul said that we are to be renewed *in the spirit* of our minds, to become like God in regards to righteousness and truth. (Eph 4:23-24)

The Lord’s day is understood by most to mean Sunday. Since Jesus rose on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9), early Christians also met on this day to partake of the Lord’s Supper. (Acts 20:7) Some have interpreted the OT phrase “day of the Lord” to mean “the Lord’s day.” This is not supported by the context of those scriptures.

Although the Lord’s Day was a time when Christians came together, John is here alone, excluded from that fellowship. However, he still took the opportunity to be in a spiritual frame of mind, even though he could not partake of any corporate worship. It is during John’s misery that God brings him the Revelation.

The bible was not written on fancy word processors in comfortable offices. Many of Paul’s letters were done while he was in a jail cell chained to a Roman guard. This shows that God “causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” (Rom 8:28) Joseph being sold to traders, Pharaoh’s hardened heart, Herod’s scheme of destroying all first-born males, the persecution of the church—all were used as vehicles to carry out God’s eternal purpose and will. Today’s church gets wrapped up in trying to carry out God’s will through countless agendas and busywork. Although the endeavor is well intended, we sometimes forget that it’s through obscure and difficult times that His will is carried forth.

Voice like the sound of a trumpet: The trumpet was used to announce great things (1 Kgs 1:34; Matt 6:2) and calls to war. (Job 39:25; Jer 4:19; Zeph 1:16) It sounds the cry to assembly (Jer 4:5) and resurrection. (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16) It is the sound of warning. (Jer 6:17) Thus, John was commanded by this voice to assemble these visions and give them to seven congregations. He was to write in a scroll what he was to see and deliver it to them.

1:12 And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands

John turns to see a *voice*, yet once he turns, he sees golden lampstands, which are the seven churches of Asia Minor. The number ‘7’ demonstrates the completeness of

Christ's church. It is a perfect, or complete body made up of His faithful followers. These candlesticks (KJV) or lampstands (NAS) are golden, indicating the church's purity and value.

The Jewish part of John would have expected to see the God of Israel. Instead, he sees the Son of Man, standing in the midst of the New Testament church. Israel is no longer. She has been replaced by the Bride of the Lamb, a significant theme in Revelation.

1:13 and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle.

We have the picture of Christ being at the epicenter of the church. Not only is Jesus the Head of the church (Eph 5:23), He is also the True Vine from which the branches come. (John 15:1) The main stalk of the vine is the center, and the branches have their root in it. So it is with the Son of Man being in the center of these lampstands. The Lamb is also in the center of the throne (Rev 7:17), implying His centrality to God's authority.

The picture here of Christ wearing a robe and golden girdle (belt) refers to being clothed in righteousness and being ready. The angel told Peter, "gird yourself." (Acts 12:8) In other words, he was to "get ready."

Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Thy godly ones sing for joy.
(Psa 132:9)

I will rejoice greatly in the Lord; my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a *robe of righteousness*, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isa 61:10)

The girdle (belt) kept the clothes secured to the wearer so that they wouldn't fall off or come undone. The righteousness worn by Christ is not going to be removed by outside interference.

Anything in Revelation that is made of gold signifies something precious. Jesus advised the church of Laodicea to buy gold refined by fire. (Rev 3:18) Gold tested by fire (refined) refers to God's people. (Zech 13:9) Refined gold is compared to righteous offerings presented to the Lord. (Mal 3:3) Thus, we have a picture of Christ clothed completely in righteousness, and that righteousness is secure and immediate.

Gold in scripture is tied to the office of king and priest. The wilderness tabernacle used gold throughout its construction. (Exo 25) Solomon used a great quantity of the precious metal in his construction of the temple. (1 Kgs 6) He also had his drinking

vessels and other containers made of gold. (1 Kgs 10:21) Nebuchadnezzar built a gold statue to lay claim to adoration. (Daniel 2) Many offerings to kings were paid in either gold or silver. Gold was one of the gifts given by the Magi to baby Jesus, signifying their acquiescence to Him as King.

1:14 And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire

White symbolizes purity. It describes the color of manna (Exo 16:31), garments (Ecc 9:8; Dan 7:9), robes of the righteous (Rev 19:8), forgiven sins (Psa 51:7; Isa 1:18), a refined remnant (Dan 11:35; 12:10), the beloved one (SOS 5:10), the shining garments of angels (Rev 15:6), and the transfigured Christ. (Matt 17:2) In Daniel's vision of God on His throne, the Ancient of Days had a vesture and hair like pure wool. (Dan 7:9) Only God and Christ are depicted with hair white as wool.

Eyes like a flame of fire: The eyes of God discern men. Since fire is a metaphor for judgment and testing, Christ's eyes are as "flames of fire." His eyes judge and discern.

Thou also dost open Thine eyes on him, and bring him into judgment with thyself. (Job 14:3)

His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps. (Job 34:21)

The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. (Psa 11:4)

(God) poured out on him the heat of His anger and the fierceness of battle; and it set him aflame all around, yet he did not recognize it; and it burned him, but he paid no attention. (Isa 42:25)

In the Final Judgment, Peter says that the elemental things of the earth will melt with intense heat. (2 Pet 3:10-12) Fire is thus symbolic of God's anger. (Psa 78:21; Ezek 22:21) Sinners will be terrified of God's continual burning. (Isa 33:14-15) Jesus said that all lawless people and stumbling blocks would be cast into the furnace of fire. (Matt 13:41-43) When fire is set, sin is said to writhe in anguish. (Ezek 30:16) As the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. (Matt 13:40)

1:15 and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

Feet: The lowest part of the body, being in the position of humility and service. (1

Sam 25:41; Psa 8:6; 18:38) Feet are portrayed as the body's foundation, where the righteous stand or walk without slipping. (2 Sam 22:37; Job 12:5; 18:8; Psa 17:5; Psa 40:2; 66:9) They are the place of one's enemies. (2 Sam 22:39; Psa 110:1; Heb 10:13) Satan was crushed under the feet of the Christians. (Rom 16:20)

Burnished bronze: Most of the ark of the covenant's utilitarian objects and furnishings within the tabernacle was made of bronze. These included shovels, fire grates, sockets, utensils, basins, and firepans. (Exodus 27) They were *working* utensils. They did the heavy lifting.

Moses made a bronze serpent that healed those bitten by snakes. (Num 21:9) The four beings in Ezekiel's vision had legs and feet of burnished (fine) bronze. (Ezek 1:7) Christ's feet are shown here to indicate that His feet are *working* feet, like the shovels, grates, and other tabernacle utensils. They take care of *business*, and depict Christ's walk as one of duty and denote their strength to crush enemies. They are burnished, meaning they have been put through the furnace of testing. The bronze snake also points to Christ. As the Israelites who were bitten by snakes would live by looking at the snake, so also do people live when they look upon Christ to remove the bite and poison of sin. (John 3:14)

Voice like the sound of many waters. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord is over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is majestic. (Psa 29:3) Ezekiel 43:2 repeats the same description of God's voice. *Mighty waters* convey the mighty *sound* of God's voice:

The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their pounding waves. More than the sounds of many waters, than the mighty breakers of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty. (Psa 93:3-4)

1:16 And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

The hand is a symbol of the will being carried out to its conclusion. (Exo 15:17) The hand of a person or group can mean power. This gives rise to such expressions as "the hand of Saul," "the hand of the Egyptians," and "the hand of my enemies." (Exo 3:8; 1 Sam 23:17; Psa 31:15) Because hands carry out the person's desires, they represent one's being. (Psa 24:4; Acts 2:23) The expression, "hand of God," refers to His great power. (Deut 2:15; Ezek 1:3) The emphasis is often on God's power in creation. (Psa 8:6; Isa 64:8) His power in judgment is underscored, such as in the phrase, "His hand is outstretched." (Ruth 1:13; Isa 9:12, 17) However, God may also extend His hand in mercy and forgiveness. (Psa 37:24) God's hand is also called the "good hand." (Ezra 6:6, 9)

The *right hand* is significant in scripture. When blessings were bestowed from the father to a son, the right hand was placed on the head of the first-born, while the left hand was placed on the younger brother. (Gen 48:14-18)

Thy right hand, O Lord, is majestic in power, Thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy. (Exod 15:6)

Other verses refer to God's right hand as a place of *stability* (Psa 16:8), *life and joy* (Psa 16:11), *salvation* (Psa 17:7; 20:6), and *judgment*. (Psa 21:8) Thus, Jesus holds these seven stars (angels of the churches) in the hand of blessing, power, salvation, and so forth.

The hand describes these messengers' relationship to the Lord as His *tool*. In the Bible, angels were typically used by God to deliver messages (Matt 1:20), strike enemies (Acts 12:23), perform miscellaneous tasks (John 5:4), or destroy. (2 Sam 24:16; 2 Kgs 19:35) Sometimes, they posed as God Himself. (Judges 2:1) The church is now God's tool for delivering His Word (Matt 29:16), taking care of the needy (1 Cor 16:2), being the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13), being the light of the world (Matt 5:14), and is the primary means of defending the faith against false teachers. (Jude 1:3)

Mouth; two-edged sword: God's mouth speaks truth. (1 Kgs 17:24) His promises are sure. (2 Chr 6:4; Acts 3:18-21) God's speech is the spiritual food that man is to live on. (Matt 4:4) However, when these words are depicted as a sword, they imply *battle*. God's words are truth. (John 17:17), so this sword strikes the camp of liars. (John 8:44) Everyone in Galilee loved Jesus until He opened His mouth. Note how truth and judgment go hand-in-hand:

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them *the judgment written*. (Psa 149:6-9)

Truth is portrayed as bitter reality, as in the case of those who engage in adultery. (Prov 5:3-4) The Word of God is depicted as "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Heb 4:12) Ephesians 6:17 defines the sword of the Spirit as the Word of God.

His face was like the sun shining in its strength symbolizes God's *countenance*. The word 'face' means *presence*. (2 Sam 3:13; 2 Chr 7:14) God knew Moses "face to face."

(Exo 33:11) When God set His face against someone, it meant judgment. (Lev 17:10) The sun is synonymous with light (Mal 4:2), and in this verse, it is the sun shining at its highest point in the sky during the day (noontime). This signifies a lack of shadows, where everything is exposed to the light.

1:17-18 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”

While Christ lived in the flesh, John was known as the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” Now, John was fearful of this “new” Christ and is the only place in the bible where someone falls at the Lord’s feet in such fear. Usually, it was out of anguish or pleading (Mark 5:22; John 11:32) that people fell at Jesus’ feet. The appearance of the Lord had the same effect on Ezekiel (Ezek 1:28), and when the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel. (Dan 8:17)

He laid His right hand on me offers the first glimpse of Revelation’s dynamic symbolism. Initially, there were seven stars in Christ’s right hand; now this same hand (minus stars) is placed on the apostle in reassurance.

The first and the last is the same as *the Alpha and the Omega*. The title was given to God in the OT. (Isa 41:4) Here, it is given to Christ.

The Living One who was dead and is now *alive forevermore*. This term is defined in Luke 24:5, where the angels at Jesus’ tomb told the women from Galilee, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead?”

...concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was *declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead*, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 1:3-4)

I have the keys signifies Christ’s power and authority over life, death, and the grave (Hades) itself. This is the understanding of His words, “I am the resurrection (power over the grave) and the life (power over death); he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.” (John 11:25-26) This concept was taught in Matt 16:19, where Jesus told Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Binding and unbinding refer to making lawful or making unlawful.

Death and Hades appear several times in Revelation, typically as a team. They first appear in chapter 6, where Death is riding the pale horse, and Hades is following. This implies that *after* death, one is soon *buried*—one supports the other. In chapter 20, these two give up the dead *that is in them*, signifying a release of their *authority* or *power* over those in their embrace. Finally, Death and Hades are thrown into the Lake of Fire, bringing full circle Christ’s authority (keys). Only He has these keys; no one else can save us from death and Hell. (Acts 4:12)

1:19 “Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things.”

Things which you have seen covers the preceding nine verses.

Things which are imply current conditions, and probably refer to the state of the seven churches as they currently stood in relation to the Head of the Body. (Eph 5:23)

Things to take place after these things. Wheels were to be set in motion (*things to take place*). Yet the churches in Asia Minor had to correct some deficiencies (*these things*). Those churches that were found short were told to repent, or there would be consequences. Their obedience or lack thereof (*things that are*) would not necessarily affect what was to happen (*things to take place*). It may be debated that the predictions and consequences made here pertained only to these seven congregations. God determined that Revelation would be disseminated to other churches in Asia Minor, where they too could understand they could not expect a different outcome if they too were involved in those sins.

Have you not observed what this people have spoken, saying, “The two families which the Lord chose, He has rejected them”? Thus they despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in their sight. Thus says the Lord, “If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them. (Jer 33:24-26)

Have seen, which are and to take place may also be interpreted in light of verse 8: *I am the one...who is and who was and who is to come*. Past, present and future.

1:20 “As for 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 are the seven churches.”

Angels (messengers) in the right hand may allude to a common practice of wearing a signet ring, which was used as a seal of authorship. Scripture shows these to be rings worn on the hand. (Gen 38:18, 25; Exod 28:11; Dan 6:17; Hag 2:23) Coniah was symbolized as a signet on God's right hand. (Jer 22:24) The ring was pressed into warm wax, leaving the wearer's peculiar sign. The *signature* was the *message*, which here is denoted as angels (messengers).

The ancient Hebrews considered the heavenly bodies as those things created and controlled by the One Powerful Creator. The sun, moon, and stars described the order of things, an order established by God, and therefore, immutable and immovable. This celestial army suggested a comparison with the angels, called the "host of heaven." (Jer 8:2; 33:22; Luke 2:13) It was this "rule of heaven" wherein the Jews saw stability in a succession of seasons, planting and harvest, and so forth. God asked Job, "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set up their ruler-ship on the earth?" (Job 38:33) The Hebrews recognized that no answer could be given since these ordinances of heaven were the sign and evidence of the Almighty's wisdom, power, and unchangeable nature. "So says the Lord, who gives the sun for a light by day and the laws of the moon and the stars for a light by night...the Lord of hosts is His name." (Jer 31:35)

The Bible's purpose is not scientific but is a revealing of God's will to mankind. Therefore, the lessons to be drawn from the observed ordinances of heaven is that God is faithful to His purpose to mankind, not that the earth rotates on its axis or revolves around the sun, and so forth. The glory of God which the heavens declare (Psa 19:1) is not only His almighty power but the image of order and perfection seen in the law He has revealed to man. The "speech" that they "declare" and the knowledge that they "show" is this: The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul. (Psa 19:7)

Because of their position in the heavens, stars are considered to be spiritually exalted entities established through God's will. The stars are light, proving Christ's authority over the churches *through His message*. They are subscribed to leaders who are connected to the churches by His hand (will). Don't confuse this as being human mediation between people and Christ, for "there is one mediator between man and God, the man, Jesus Christ." (1 Tim 2:5)

Indeed, the messenger is so closely connected to the church that they are inseparable. This is seen in the letters, each beginning with, "to the angel of the church..." Each diagnosis and prescription is directed at the angel. For example, "To the *angel* of the church...I know *your* works and *your* labor and *your* patience..." The punishment threatened seems directed to the congregation itself: "I will remove *your* lampstand from its place." The connection between the angel and the congregation is one of spirit and word. Seven times we read the phrase, "Hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The stars, therefore, represent the *characteristics* of Christ's message and authority, which are immutable and unchanging. The lampstands describe the nature of the church's light. The feature of the angel/messenger is that they have Divine Authority

concerning God's plan for the church. The characteristic of the church, on the other hand, is that of a light shining in a world of darkness. This light is how any congregation is to appear on the earth. As the lampstand is the container for the oil and flame, so too is the church the support and pillar of the truth. (1 Tim 3:15) While these stars may very well be pastors or evangelists, no undue importance is given them.

Divine Authority placed the church in the world. Since it is made of gold—representing the precious value of the church—any congregation not shining its light in the world will be removed from the world. (2:5) The building may still exist, and people may still assemble there, but its value to God as a beacon is worthless. The 7 stars symbolize complete leadership that resides in His right hand. It portrays God's righteousness done on earth. The 7 angels are the complete message, while the churches are the carriers of that Word on earth.

Thus we have messengers within Christ's *hand*, who are within *churches*. This goes back to the church being God's tool. Although a sword comes from His *mouth* as an instrument of war and judgment, truth also comes from His right *hand* as a message of deliverance. This message is portrayed as the light of the gospel and demonstrates the purpose of the church in the world.

The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the *light of the gospel* of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor 4:4)

(It) has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to *light through the gospel*. (2 Tim 1:10)

The idea of the church showing light (truth) is seen in the individual. Jesus told His disciples, "Let your light shine in public so that men may see your good works." (Matt 5:15) Unlike the Pharisees, who wanted men to see them, Jesus' reason for this public display was so that people would glorify the Father in Heaven. Even the early church's simple fellowship was significant enough to be viewed with favor by society. (Acts 2:46-47)

Today, most tend to see their light in the world as attending Sunday morning service. While corporate worship helps to build each other up in Christian love, focus also must be put on outside evangelism by drawing others to Christ. Some knock on doors, while others live quietly, "different" from those around them. Like moths drawn to a flame, sinners are drawn to a Christian living a godly life.

Although the Great Commission of Matthew 28 was directed primarily to the apostles (Rom 10:18; Col 1:6, 23), we should be motivated by love of our fellow man to try and bring them the Good News when the opportunity presents itself.