

# **JESUS: THE ALPHA AND OMEGA**

*SERIES: JESUS: LORD OF HIS CHURCH*

**by Ron Ritchie**

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We who live and work in the modern industrial nations are becoming more and more familiar with the terms "evaluation," "down-sizing," and "change." As commercial markets become more competitive, doing business the old-fashioned way, while it sounds wonderful, is not very profitable. With the Cold War over, our government has been forced to take a hard look at our military forces, and we have watched it evaluate, down-size, and change. Then on a more personal note, now that summer has arrived, many of us find ourselves standing before a full-length mirror dressed in last year's swim wear thinking, "It's time to evaluate, down-size, and change!"

But the concept of evaluation is not new for Christians. Since the church first began on the Day of Pentecost (33 AD), our risen Lord Jesus has been evaluating the body of believers with words of encouragement, correction, and comfort in every generation up to this present moment. This spiritual evaluation will continue until our glorified Lord Jesus comes again as the bridegroom to take his bride to himself "...in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but...holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:27).

To encourage your hearts, we want you to know that our Lord Jesus is currently evaluating this church, the elders, and the staff by his Spirit and his word. Two years ago the elders began to study together our Lord's evaluation of the seven churches of Revelation. We then studied several passages that helped us evaluate our role as elders and shepherds. Subsequently we began an evaluation of ourselves, our families, our ministries, our doctrinal statement, our vision statement, our programs, and our financial setup. At the same time, our staff has been studying the early chapters of Acts in order to evaluate our ministries against the Biblical background of the early church. We are praying that this time of evaluation will bring glory to the Lord of the church and spiritual health to his people.

It will help us to stay on the same page with our Lord Jesus during this time of spiritual evaluation if we study together the first three chapters of the book of Revelation. The book as a whole is an unveiling of Jesus as the risen and glorified Son of the one and only living God. It is also an unveiling of many mysteries of the future. In chapters 1-3 we will see Jesus fully revealed as the glorified Son of God and his personal relationship with his church. In chapters 4-19 God uncovers the mystery of several events that will occur in heaven and on earth during the time of "the last days," or "the great tribulation." In chapters 20-22 God uncovers the mystery of Christ's second coming and his thousand-year reign on this earth, followed by the unveiling of the new heavens and earth and the joy that all believers will experience in eternity with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation is a book filled with hope for Jewish and Gentile believers alike. Our hope is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his sovereign rule over the political and social events occurring around the world, especially in relationship to Israel. Revelation is also a book filled with encouraging instructions to believers on how to live out their faith, as fallen humanity rapidly slips into moral darkness. Finally, it is a book written to warn unbelievers that the day of judgment is coming for all who refuse to bow their hearts to Jesus as King of kings.

Our goal in this series will be to focus on our risen and glorified Lord Jesus and his words of encouragement, correction, exhortation, and promise to the seven churches that were located in Asia Minor (Turkey) at the end of the first century. If we take away just one thing from this study in Revelation 1-3, it should be the overwhelming truth of seeing our risen Lord Jesus in his full glory. At the same time, we will discover many spiritual truths that we will need to apply to our church in general and our own hearts specifically. Eugene Peterson, in his commentary about revelation entitled *Reversed Thunder*, wrote, "The intent of revelation is not to inform us about God but to involve us in God." (1) The first thing that will help us become involved in God

is to come to a deeper understanding of his glorified Son Jesus Christ.

## **Jesus is unveiled**

Revelation 1:1-3:

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw---that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

The apostle Paul and his disciples entered the city of Ephesus around 53 AD (see Acts 19). Ephesus was a major Roman city, albeit of fading glory, located on the western coast of Asia Minor. Within a period of some two years, through the teaching of the word of God, not only was the apostle able to establish a church ruled by a group of elders, but "...all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). Out of that ministry several new churches were planted in the surrounding area and watered over the next forty years by Paul, Peter, Timothy, and finally John. Revelation 2-3 addresses seven of those churches.

In 90-96 AD, John, by then the last living apostle, was ministering to the second generation of Christians in the city of Ephesus. Around the same time, the Romans elected their ninth Caesar, Domitian (81-96 AD) and gave him the title "Our Lord and God." He was a vicious and cruel man who continued the persecution of the Christian churches that had begun under Nero in the sixties. John and many other disciples refused to bow their hearts to Caesar as God, so many were either killed or placed in prisons. The Romans took John aboard a ship in chains and sailed some fifty miles from Ephesus to a small island in the Aegean Sea called Patmos. This island, only eight miles long and four miles wide, had been turned into a penal colony where poorly fed and clothed prisoners were forced to work in the rock quarries. But this imprisonment did not stop our risen Lord from communicating with his beloved apostle.

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place." When the disciples were with Jesus on the Mount of Olives (see Matthew 24), he gave them many "unveilings" of the future based on the prophets Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and others. But when they heard Jesus speak of the future, what they saw was his being declared the Messiah and setting up his kingdom on earth at that time. It appears that they went into some form of denial when he spoke of his death and resurrection. Even after the resurrection, shortly before his ascension back to heaven, they were still hoping he would then set up his kingdom. After the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, they slowly began to understand the near view and the long view of prophecy, the double interpretation by which some events occurring in their lifetime were but a shadow of the same kind of events that were to occur sometime in the future, more intensely and on a grander scale. For example, the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD was but a shadow of the coming destruction of Jerusalem in the great tribulation.

Sixty years after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, God the Father gave him some new revelations to give to John on the island of Patmos. These revelations were of events that were to take place soon, before Jesus' second coming. John was to show these new "unveilings" to Jesus' servants on earth.

"He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw---that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." The unveiling of Jesus Christ was made known to John by an unnamed angelic being who served Jesus. The apostle then gave witness to everything that he saw, to the word of God, which is the testimony of his Son Jesus Christ. Not one word of this vision originated from John the apostle. Jesus is the center of the whole revelation as he relates to his Father, his church, Israel, the nations, Satan, the great tribulation, and the new heavens and earth.

"Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." The Greek word for blessed (*makarios*) means happy. Since John was Jewish, he may have also been thinking of the Hebrew word for blessed (*ashar*), which is used of "one who finds the right path in light of the wrong path" (2) as stated in Psalm 1:1: "How blessed is the man

who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...but his delight is in the law of the Lord." How blessed, then, is the one who not only hears but takes to heart what is written in this prophecy, because it is always the right path in the face of the many wrong ones. This word is from the heart and mind of God and his Son Jesus. It speaks not only of their awesome character of love and power, but also about the future, because the time of its fulfillment is near in terms of prophetic revelation (see 2 Peter 3:8-10). Obedience to this truth results in personal blessings of comfort and courage, for in this prophecy are the secrets of how to live for Jesus in the difficult days ahead.

As God the Father knew who John was, where he was, and the difficult circumstances he was living in, so he is aware of who we are, where we are, and the difficult circumstances many of us are in at this moment. We are now living in a spiritually dark and immoral world system, with enemies who hate Jesus on every hand. And yet our living Lord wants to bless us with comfort and courage when we are willing to hear and take to heart the words of this prophecy.

Jesus is unveiled not as the humble carpenter of Nazareth but as...

### **The truth, the life, and the way**

Revelation 1:4-8:

John,  
To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father---to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Look, he is coming with the clouds,  
and every eye will see him  
even those who pierced him;  
and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.

So shall it be! Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

"...To the seven churches in the province of Asia...." John is told that the prophecy is addressed in part to the seven churches located in the province of Asia. In reality there were at least six other churches in this area including those at Colosse and Patara, to mention a couple. These seven churches were located on a horseshoe-shaped postal route about 250 miles long. This route began with the seaport city of Ephesus located at seven o'clock on your watch, so to speak, extended north to Smyrna and Pergamum, then east to Thyatira, southeast to Sardis and Philadelphia, and finally to Laodicea at five o'clock.

Jesus chose these seven as a symbol of completeness; that is, what he said to these seven churches is all that is necessary for him to say to every church in every part of the world in each generation until he comes again. Some scholars even see these seven first-century churches as symbolizing seven different ages from the Day of Pentecost until Christ's second coming, the present one being the last. Some scholars see that the characteristics of all seven churches appear to exist in every generation, including the present one. The main thing to keep in mind is that Christian churches in every age since the beginning have been made up of individual believers, not buildings or denominations, not Catholics or Protestants. This prophecy is addressed to the hearts of believers in every age up to this moment and in the days ahead until Christ comes again. It is an

evaluation from the Lord of the church; words of encouragement, exhortation, admonishment, and promise.

"Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come...." John told the readers that grace (unmerited favor) and peace find their source in God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son Jesus. (Grace is the love of God offered to those who are worthless, mercy is the love of God offered to those who are helpless, and peace is the love of God offered to those who are restless.) John was also telling the seven churches that this prophecy was from God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son Jesus. In this introduction to the suffering churches, the apostle broke out with some of the attributes of the Godhead in order to encourage them.

First he talked about the attributes of God the Father. This God of whom John was speaking is "him who is, and who was, and who is to come." He is the great "I AM" whom Moses met at the burning bush. He is the eternal Self-Existing One, and there is no other God. This is the same God Isaiah met in the temple and Ezekiel met among the exiles in Babylon: the glorious, eternal God of Israel.

Then John talked about the attributes of the Holy Spirit. The eternal Holy Spirit was given to the church on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is described as seven spirits by the prophet Isaiah (11:2):

"And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him [Messiah Jesus; see Luke 4:18]  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding  
The spirit of counsel and strength  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."  
(See also Zechariah 4:1-10; Revelation 3:1; 4:5; 5:6.)

Then John talked about the attributes of the Son of God. First, Jesus is "the faithful witness" ("I am...the truth...." [John 14:6]); this was clearly seen in his consistent testimony before the world, his disciples, the Jewish nation, and Pilate in his incarnation. John had written, "In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it...The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...." (John 1:4-5, 9-12).

Second, Jesus is "the firstborn from the dead" ("I am...the life" [John 14:6]). Jesus is "the firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 1:15). This speaks to the hope and reality that he was raised from the dead by the power of his Father, is now alive, and has become, in the words of Paul, "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Third, Jesus is "the ruler of the kings of the earth" ("I am the way...." [John 14:6]). This speaks of his ascension and his place at the right hand of the Father, giving him all power and authority to rule the kings and lords of this earth. This will be fully realized when he sets up his kingdom on this earth and rules with righteousness and justice. He now rules in the hearts of all who love him as Lord with truth and justice (see Isaiah 9:6-7; Revelation 19).

Then John listed three blessings Jesus bestows on his disciples because of his incarnation, resurrection, and ascension. This may have been an early Christian hymn of praise.

First, Jesus loves us: "To him who loves us [present tense] and has freed us [past tense] from our sins by his blood...." What a word of encouragement and power in a time of suffering! God the Father sent his Son Jesus to this world as an innocent lamb to die for the sin of mankind. Then the Father raised his Son from the grave, and in that act he defeated the power of Satan and sin over our lives. All of us who have placed our faith in Jesus as the Son of God and our one and only Savior have been given the gift of eternal life, which we have already begun to enjoy (see John 17:3).

Second, Jesus "...has made us to be a kingdom and priests...." This could mean that Jesus has made us to rule on this earth as kings and by his power to defeat the forces of darkness; or it could mean that we have been

placed into the kingdom of light (see Colossians 1:12-13). Other translations seem to imply that we have been made a kingdom of priests to serve God. At the same time, Peter reminds us that we are part of Jesus' royal priesthood on this earth in order to reconcile men and women to God (see 1 Peter 2:9). Our message is one of good news: God in Christ is reconciling men and women from all walks of life to himself. As a merciful God he is willing to forgive their sin when they place their faith in his Son Jesus as their Savior and Lord. "...To him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen."

C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*: (3)

...The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose. It says in the Bible that the whole universe was made for Christ and that everything is to be gathered together in Him...What we have been told is how we can be drawn to Christ---can become part of that wonderful present which the young Prince of the Universe wants to offer His Father---that present which is Himself and therefore us in Him. It is the only thing we were made for.

Third, Jesus is coming again. Jesus came into this world the first time as a helpless baby in human flesh, and he left this world as the slain Lamb of God hanging on a cruel Roman cross. His first coming was very quiet, in a backwater village stable, where some humble shepherds worshipped him (accompanied by a billion angels)<sup>1</sup> His second coming will be such that not one person in the whole world will miss him as he arrives in the clouds. He will arrive as Lord of lords and King of kings and the righteous Judge. Even those who pierced him will see him (see Zechariah 12:10; Matthew 24:30). Those who pierced him in the halls of Pilate and on the hill of Calvary are dead, but according to Zechariah, this appears to mean that the Jewish children living in Jerusalem when he comes back will understand that their fathers pierced him, and they will mourn in grief as one mourns over the loss of a firstborn son, because they rejected their Messiah on his first visit. And the world will mourn when they realize for the first time that Jesus was really the Son of God who came to bring salvation to the nations at his first coming and yet they rejected him. What a day that will be for those who love his appearing, and what a day that will be for those who have rejected him all their lives.

Our living and glorified Lord Jesus is unveiled as the truth, the life, and the way---the only hope for all of humanity as they face eternity. And then Jesus declared to John, "I am the Alpha and the Omega...who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." So all that he has spoken has come to pass, is coming to pass, or will come to pass. And then it gets even better....

## **Jesus the Prophet, Priest, and Judge**

Revelation 1:9-16:

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

The apostle identified with all those believers on the mainland who were suffering because they were Christians. He was in chains by the power of Rome, and yet free in the heavens by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Revelation 4:1-2). His crime was teaching the word of God and giving witness that Jesus was the resurrected Son of God. He was able to patiently endure because he believed that God would provide for him the same strength he had provided for his Son during his trials before the cross. For Jesus knew that in time his suffering would turn into the most wonderful and eternal victory for all who placed their faith in him as their Lord and Savior. The best was yet to come; first the cross and then the crown.

As John was worshipping the Lord, he heard a voice that was like a trumpet commanding him to write on a scroll what he saw and then send it to the seven churches, where it was to be read out loud. This letter would

reveal hidden mysteries of present and future supernatural events that related to "the day of the Lord." It was prophecy in its purest form.

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

As John was worshipping in the power of the Holy Spirit, he heard a voice like the sound of a trumpet addressing him. And then he saw a heavenly Being standing among seven golden lampstands. Now remember that John had been a friend and follower of Jesus in his humanity. He remained faithful to him up to the cross and then after the resurrection. John saw Jesus in his glorified body before he ascended into the heavens to be with his Father. But now what John was about to see was not Jesus in his humble humanity or even his glorified body, but Jesus in all his glory as the Son of God, wearing robes of the great High Priest, full of power and authority, ready to walk among his people in order to purify them, so that his gospel of redemption would be clearly heard in a fallen world.

There are 518 references from the Old and New Testaments in the 404 verses of the book of Revelation. God through Jesus is unveiling his message to John for the churches with the assumption that they know the writings of the prophets and apostles. John began by describing this awesome Being using Old Testament references. He first made a statement that only those who understood the descriptions of the Messiah from the prophets would grasp.

(1) "...Someone 'like a son of man'" is a reference to the description the prophet Daniel gave the coming Messiah (7:13) in 700 BC. Jesus is the "last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45), man as God intended mankind to be when he created them. John had written in his gospel that Jesus said to Nathaniel, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51).

(2) "...Dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest." The golden sash and the robes symbolize the role of a high priest and judge (see Exodus 28). This is speaking of Jesus not as a priest out of the line of Aaron, but as a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (see Psalm 110:4), who not only saves us but lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7). "...We have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens..." (Hebrews 8:1). Jesus is not only our High Priest, but he is also the Son of God who is willing to bring man and God together again.

(3) "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow...." Our glorified Lord Jesus takes on the same characteristics as his Father, the Ancient of Days, as seen by the prophet Daniel (see 7:9-14), and is given power and authority to walk among the churches in all purity and wisdom as the divine Son of God.

(4) "...And his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace...." This symbolizes searching righteousness and divine judgment upon all the sin in the churches (see Exodus 38:30).

(5) "...And his voice was like the sound of rushing waters." This symbolizes the majesty and power of the Son of God (see Daniel 10:6).

(6) "In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword." The right hand is a symbol of power, possession, protection, and sovereign control, which the Lord Jesus has over the seven stars. We will see that these are seven angels, messengers to the seven churches. The sharp double-edged sword in this case will issue forth devastating judgment based on truth (see Isaiah 49:2).

(7) "His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance"---the glory of our risen Lord experienced by Abraham, Moses, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, as well as the brilliance of his second coming.

Jesus is alive and glorified with the Father, and he is unveiled as the only truth, life, and way. He is, further, the Prophet, High Priest, and Judge of his church; he stands in the center of his churches in every generation and is the central source of life for all who love him. And in the midst of all his glory and power, he continues to be for his sheep...

## **Jesus the Chief Shepherd**

Revelation 1:17-20:

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

The Good Shepherd of Psalm 23 and John 10 reached down to John, his beloved friend and faithful apostle, who had never seen his Lord in his full power and glory, and offered him comfort: "Do not be afraid." These were the same words our Lord spoke when he appeared to the disciples walking on the waters beside their sinking boat during a storm on the sea of Galilee: "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). But why should John not fear his risen and glorified Lord?

(1) "I am the First and the Last." Jesus is the risen Messiah, the Son of God, the eternal one, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. All of life---history past, present, and future---is in his sovereign power (see Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; Revelation 22:13).

(2) "I am the Living One...." He experienced a physical death by the hand of evil men driven by the will of the evil one. He became the Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (see John 1:29). But his resurrection opened the door of eternal life for all who place their faith in him. Jesus had told Martha at the grave of her brother Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life; 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). As he is alive forevermore, so they shall be alive forevermore.

(3) "And I hold the keys of death and Hades." When Jesus was raised from the dead, he defeated Satan and whatever power he had over death. Our resurrected Lord now has all the power and authority over death and Hades, and no one has to experience either one if they place their faith in him as Lord (see Hebrews 2:14-15). Christ has the power over life and death on this earth, and he is sovereign over the eternal life to come.

"Write, therefore, what you have seen...." Our risen Lord wanted John to write all that he had seen in these verses (chapter 1), as well as present (chapters 2-3) and future events (chapters 4-22). Then our Lord unveiled the mystery of the seven stars and the seven lampstands: The seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the churches that hold Jesus as the Light of the world, so that his message of love and redemption can be seen and heard in a spiritually dark world.

The unveiling, the revelation from God to Jesus and then to John and the seven churches at the end of the first century, is of equal importance to us who are living out our lives at the end of the twentieth century. We need to review our image of Jesus. He is no longer the baby in the manger, the carpenter from Nazareth, or the beaten and wounded prophet in Jerusalem; but the resurrected, ascended, and fully glorified sovereign Son of God. He now stands as the central figure in the universe, and all men and women who name him Lord must bow their hearts and acknowledge him as the only truth, the only source of eternal life, and the only way. He is the only true Prophet, and the only High Priest who can intercede for us before the Father. He is also the final righteous Judge of all those who reject him. And finally, our fully glorified Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is our Chief Shepherd who has the right and power to walk among us and evaluate our lives so that we will

remain pure in mind, heart, and spirit, so that we can continue to be used as a lampstand to hold him as the Light of the world. This process of evaluation will continue until he comes again as the bridegroom to take his bride to himself in all her glory.

"The intent of revelation is not to inform us about God but to involve us in God." The question we need to ask ourselves is, "Are we preparing our hearts and minds to become involved in God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son of God? If the answer is yes, our eyes will be opened to see Jesus in all his power and glory, and our hearts will be opened to fall at his feet in worship. If we become involved in God, then we can expect his Son Jesus to evaluate our hearts and our motives toward him, each other, and those living in the surrounding community. We can expect Jesus to evaluate our personal lifestyles, the use of our time, talents, gifts, and money. I don't know all the changes that may have to be made to help us in our process of becoming spiritually mature, but once we become involved in the life of our glorified Lord Jesus and he becomes involved in our lives, there will be change, to his glory and our personal joy.

Notes:

1. Peterson, Eugene, *Reversed Thunder*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988, p. 13.
2. Palmer, Earl, *The Communicator's Commentary: Revelation*. Dallas: Word Books, 1982, p. 113.
3. Lewis, C.S., *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1952.

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Catalog No. 4501  
Revelation 1:1-20  
First Message  
Ron Ritchie  
June 23, 1996

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