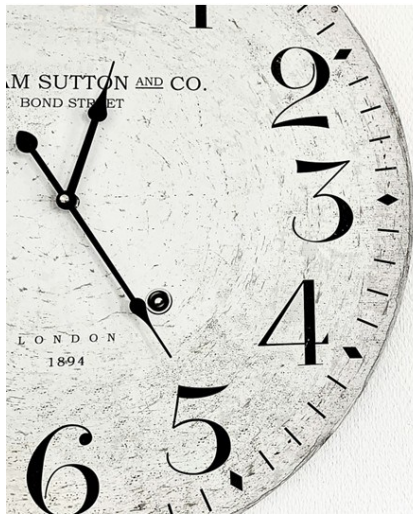




"...the First and  
the Last,  
...the Kings and  
the Priests"

Revelation 1:4-20

# "The First and the Last...the Kings and the Priests."

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
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in Menomonie, Wisconsin  
on August 30, 2026

4 John, to the seven churches which 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, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him [be] glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, [the] Beginning and [the] End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." 9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send [it] to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands [One] like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. 14 His head and hair [were] white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet [were] like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance [was] like the sun shining in its strength. 17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 "I [am] He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. 19 "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. 20 "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

**Ray Bradbury's commented in his novel *Fahrenheit 451* saying: "...you can't make people listen. They have to come round in their own time, wondering what happened and why the world blew up around them."**

Such has been a glaring truth in Christianity and the greater church now for a millennium. Ironically, that quote also speaks a great deal to the book of Revelation, and certainly to the period in history in which Revelation will unfold in real time. I have often sadly conceded that it seems the only real thing people understand...the only true and consistent motivator in our day is *pain*. Paul wrote to Timothy in his second letter, chapter 3, describing those days ... "in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly." Such is literally a page from our daily news in the day in which we live.

**4 John, to the seven churches which 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, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,**

The author, ...the apostle John, ...now turns his attention to the “*addressees*” of this letter. To these rather obscure “*seven churches of Asia*.” Seven churches. The number 7...representing perfection and completion, will appear 54 times in this letter. Despite the attitude that Revelation is a book of “doom and gloom,” ...*and indeed it will prove to be so to many of us who are ignoring its warnings*...John actually begins with a blessing. One aimed at those seven churches, despite their “falling short” ...one available to all those who are faithfully “in the game”...honestly engaged in ministry and maturity even though they have not arrived upon any plateau of spiritual perfection. “Grace and peace” became the trademark possession of the early church, and was carried forth today to any “body of Christ” that is willing to receive it, as well as the cost of embracing it.

The grace that John speaks of means the favor and blessings of God. Clearly, God takes an active role in our lives; He directs each of us in the mission placed upon our lives. He provides good and beneficial aspects of life: physical, material, and certainly spiritual. This is not an optional relationship. It is a fact for each one of us, as we belong to him, whether we acknowledge that or not. Our part in this simply affects the dynamic of that relational interaction...the *way* He will deal with us. But either way, He *will* deal with us. It will be a relationship of unity and submission unto Him...and therefore a relationship of joy and purpose. Or one in which we battle Him for the sovereignty of our lives, and therefore the relationship is adversarial. Either way we cannot “bow out” of the race. We can only choose how we will run it. We certainly do not deserve God's grace, but He inexplicably loves us.

“Peace” speaks concerning our peace with God and with men. God is not far away from us, nor is He hovering over us, watching every little move that we make, waiting to cuff us in the head for our shortcomings. Peace also means that we are no longer divided and separated as people, but have found unity and fellowship with others who are also God's children and now a part of that body of Christ we are to be in Him.

Notice that these gifts ...*grace and peace*...are not found here on this earth ...through the things of this earth. They are in the hands of Christ alone to be given to those who will turn over their lives to Him. And I must emphasize that that surrender of our lives IS salvation! It is not some words to say, or our baptism, or communion, or church attendance. It is *surrender*. I say that because I fear there are many out there today that can't figure out why this Christianity thing isn't working for them. It is undoubtedly because you are still in control and you are attempting to use faith as a way to grease your life path and to get what you want in this life. That's not the way it works. He is not your servant...*you are His*.

John seemed to want to clarify once again that this is not HIS revelation, but that of Jesus Christ. The Jesus who is the eternal *faithful witness*. The witness that speaks down through the ages, the “I AM” of all time. A witness of God's love, a witness of God's *faithfulness*. A witness of God's *grace and peace*!

The word “witness” is actually a form of the Greek word that is rendered “martyr.” He “witnessed” the Father and all that He was doing, and He did so at the price of death. It is today even yet the price of admission. One must “die” to this world and their life in order to get on board. John seems to offer up a toast of tribute, hailing Christ as the one “*who loves us,*” and “*washed us from our sins by his blood.*”

**6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.**

*“He has made us kings and priests...”* Let that statement roll over you. It seems an incredulous fact that so many will struggle and strive and clutch their battered lives with white knuckles even as it stands without purpose and without joy. What and why are you holding onto it? Like a child with a doll...they just can't let it go, even despite its battered, worn, and inanimate state!

C.S. Lewis spoke of such, saying... “it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

We cling to what is dead and dying...what is empty and fleeting, while God wants to make us kings. Seems ridiculous, doesn't it? He wants to bless us beyond our imagination, and yet we just won't let go of the dead stinking carcass that is our “old man.”

He tells us we are also priests ...those who represent God to the people, and the people to God. Those who “stand in the breach.” Faithful witnesses of His glory and dominion. Lives that shout to the lost and dying world around us that He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” Both of these “titles” are His way of drawing us near to Him and allows us to join Him in ministry and mission at the highest level....far beyond what any human deserves.

In verse 7, John, overcome with a wave of awe, flashes to the “end of the story.” After the story is over and the Book of Revelation has played itself out in every detail, the Messiah that he has been speaking *of* and speaking *to* will come “in the clouds,” and this time, *everyone* will see Him. It will not be a secret...it will not be a “local” event. The world will bear witness that the King has come. For each and every one of us, there will come that day wherein we will stand before him and explain ourselves. Are you ready for that day?

The first time He came quietly to the obscure little village of Bethlehem and no one but those who had searched for Him found Him. Such has really been the case every day since that one. Jeremiah 29:13 tells us that “*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*” But this time it will be different. This time He will be seen by everyone, even those hiding from Him. Those who love Him, those who ignore Him, those who hate Him, and all those who killed Him. Everyone! All those who have spent a lifetime running away from Him will inexplicably find Him waiting at the end of their road. No doubt the tears of many will be heard from every corner of the earth. Lament for wasted life and meaningless years...(Matt 2:1-2, 10-11, Luke 2:8-18)

**8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” 9 I John, your brother and partner with you in the oppression, Kingdom, and perseverance in Christ Jesus, was on the isle that is called Patmos because of God’s Word and the testimony of Jesus Christ.**

He is the “Alpha and the Omega.” He is the *first* and He is the *last*. He started everything, and He will be there to end it. As they always said concerning your mother, our Lord “brought you into this world and He can take you out.” He started it all and the Book of Revelation is how He is going to finish it. He *is*...He *was*...and He *will be*. He is the same *yesterday, today, and forever*. He IS the *Almighty*...

John takes the humble position, placing himself on equal footing with those he writes to. As the “last apostle standing,” he could have sought authority and respect. But John knew that all the trials and persecution he had suffered were also shared by the body of Christ as a whole; thus, John comes to them as a brother, not as a superior or elite. But he also didn't whine or feel sorry for himself. Instead he counted himself an equal...a *brother* in the family of God, sharing in both difficulty and the blessing as part of the family of Christ.

John had been banished...imprisoned really, on the tiny remote island of Patmos. A rocky, forbidding chunk of land that is roughly ten miles long, by six miles wide. It was under these extreme circumstances, apart from family and friends and the civilized world, that John was delivered the most profound future vision of Scripture and of all time.

It seems that such intense communication and revelation often come in “wilderness” times. God never failed Moses, Isaiah, David, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, or Christ Himself in their wilderness experiences; He will not fail you, and actually tends to draw nearer than ever in such times. We are promised He will “never leave us, and never forsake us.” In these “wilderness times” we so often come to a very real and personal understanding of that fact.

**10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, like a trumpet 11 saying, “What you see, write in a book and send to the seven assemblies: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”**

John says that this “vision”...this “revelation” came to him while “in the Spirit.” He was “in the Spirit,” and he heard a “great voice” speak to him. He was “in the Spirit” despite some seriously heavy trials and difficult situations. Apparently, this “in the Spirit” zone is not contingent on comfort, situation, status, ease, or anything else. It seems it is only contingent on you...

John is then instructed to write down the things He is about to show him, and then to send this book to the “seven churches of Asia,” which He goes on to list. Certainly these “seven churches” are not to be the only recipients of what we are reading. Rather they are to be the first of many, wherein we find ourselves...each body of Christ that exists today...somewhere in the descriptions of these seven fellowships.

**12 I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. Having turned, I saw seven golden lamp stands. 13 And among the lamp stands was one like a son of man, clothed with a robe reaching down to his feet, and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 His head and his hair were white as white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace. His voice was like the voice of many waters. 16 He had seven stars in his right hand. Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining at its brightest.**

What John turns to see is surely representative of the temple candle-stand, which we know today as the Jewish Menorah. Each candle, according to verse 20 of chapter one, represents one of the seven churches. Christ is “in their midst,” where we can always find Him, even if He is “less-than-pleased.”

“*Son of man*”: Not a “man” in the strictest sense, but “*like* unto a man.” He *was* part of humanity, but He was still God. While He embraced His humanity, He never ditched His deity. He was God in flesh. All man, and yet all God. It seems that the “Son of Man” was Christ’s favorite term for Himself. Like John who followed Him, Jesus was always quick to take the humble path, and the servant’s position. Here we find Him as He is in truth: arrayed in priestly robes, and wrapped in the golden sash of the High Priest. His servanthood and humility will continue on throughout time, but now he steps up to take the position of ruler, king, and High Priest, both spiritually *and* earthly. (Heb 2:17-18, 4:15-16 NLT)

The Book of Daniel also speaks concerning His eyes, which are like flames of fire. One might gather that He at that moment is less than happy with what He was seeing throughout the earth. John 11:35 and Luke 19:41, spoke of those same eyes actually weeping over the state of mankind.

“...*feet like burnished brass*” are the same feet that were spiked through upon the cross as payment for the sins of mankind. Scripture tells us that this event left scars that remain even today and will remain for eternity...a reminder of “payment received.” “*Feet of brass*,” speaks of divine biblical judgment...the same feet that

Psalms 110 and Isaiah 63 tell us will “trample His enemies.” Feet that now... according to Christ, stand in the midst of the churches to judge them in righteous and divine judgment with a voice that sounds like “many waters.” The same voice that called the world into being...the same voice that will again raise the dead.

The term “right hand” denotes possession of power and authority. In that right hand, Christ held “seven stars.” These seven stars ...*we are told*, represent the angels of the seven churches. Hebrews 1:14 speaks concerning this saying these angels are “ministering spirits.” Out of his mouth comes a “*sharp two-edged sword*,” which Hebrews 4:12 tells us is the Word of God. The Word which led mankind and comforted for a thousand years, will now and forever serve to judge mankind. Think now about the Bible you hold today. It will be that book which will judge...and in many cases *condemn*, mankind.

**17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. He laid his right hand on me, saying, “Don’t be afraid. I am the first and the last, 18 and the Living one. I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever. Amen. I have the keys of Death and of Hades.**

John’s reaction to this scene before him is certainly both human and understandable, as he falls at the feet of Jesus. Imagine yourself in such a situation! We all will actually find ourselves there eventually. We all will stand in John’s shoes. At that moment “*every knee should bow, ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*”

As we begin this study of Revelation...may we hold this scene front and center. This is actually the finale scene of this book. This is your finale and mine. We all will be here. For those of us today that find ourselves at His feet, there is the reassuring hand of Christ and His voice of comfort: “*fear not, I AM...*” For the rest of us, we will hear “*Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...*”

As the world yet searches for the key to life, purpose, meaning and eternity, Christ says clearly that He *possesses* it. The key to both life-abundant and life-eternal. John’s gospel chapter 11, verse 25 says that Christ is *more* than just the *possessor* of life; **He is life**. He holds all the keys. All the answers. The way to heaven, and the way to hell.

**19 Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will happen hereafter. 20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven assemblies. The seven lamp stands are seven assemblies.**

So John is instructed to write these things down for the stated seven churches (which we will look into in the weeks to come here) as well as this church...the one that we are a part of. He is to write the things which he has seen in the past, the things which he now sees, as well as that which will be shown to him of future events. I hope to express the same concerning us in light of John's words...in light of Christ’s words. What was here...what IS here...and what is to come with us.

As we come to the end of this chapter one...this introduction really, for the book of Revelation, we can gather that it is indeed our Lord’s desire that we *understand* this book. That the “*mystery*” herein is made manifest, *made clear*, through the One who holds the power in His right hand. The one that stands in the midst of our church today. *AMEN... “so be it!”*