In the Lord’s Day BOOK

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**Foreword**

This book deals (1) *with the time of the resurrection of the dead and translation of the living “in Christ”* (commonly called “the rapture”), (2) *with judgment awaiting Christians at Christ’s judgment seat following their removal from the earth*, and (3) *with events related to this judgment, which preceded and anticipate the coming Messianic Era.*

These are the things dealt with in the opening four chapters in the book of Revelation. And viewing the book as a whole, these opening four chapters provide a sequence of events that *must occur at the end of the present dispensation but before the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period on earth.*

The book of Revelation is the only book in Scripture that provides a comprehensive coverage of this nature, surrounding these events. The same truths concerning these events are taught elsewhere in Scripture (particularly in Old Testament typology) but not all together, in a sequence, which includes the Tribulation in the sequence, such as one finds in the book of Revelation.

Now only *must* the rapture and events surrounding the judgment seat occur preceding the Tribulation, but these events must, according to information in these chapters, be *all-inclusive*. That is, *all Christians* (*all of the dead and the living “in Christ”* throughout the entire 2,000-year dispensation) *must* be removed together, at the same time and place, to appear before Christ in judgment. According to these chapters, there can be no such thing as a selective removal of Christians from the earth at the time of the rapture; nor can there be such a thing as more than one time and place for events surrounding the judgment seat.

A separation of Christians on the basis of faithfulness will occur, but not at the time of the rapture. This separation will occur at the judgment seat alone.

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Chapter One

**Caught into His Presence**

*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.*

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,*

*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 that are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”* ([Revelation 1:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.9-11&t=NKJV))

The book of Revelation is clearly *a prophecy* having to do with events occurring during “*the Lord’s Day*” ([Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV)). These events begin with Christ’s return for the saved of the present dispensation, preceding the Tribulation ([Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV); [4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV)), and end with events at the conclusion of the Millennium, anticipating “*the day of God*” ([Revelation 20:7-22:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.7-22.5&t=NKJV); *cf.* [2 Peter 3:10-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.10-12&t=NKJV)).

The book divides itself into *three main sections* in the opening chapter: “*Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this* [*lit.*, ‘after these things’]” ([Revelation 1:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.19&t=NKJV)).

The “*things which you have seen*” refer to the things in the latter part of chapter one (a description of Christ as *Judge*, with Christians in His presence [following their removal from the earth], in the future Day of the Lord), the “*things which are*” refer to the things in chapters two and three (God's dealings with His people [Christians] during the present dispensation, preceding the Day of the Lord), and the “*things which will take place after this* [‘after these things’]” refer to the things beginning with chapter four (things that will occur during the Day of the Lord, after the present dispensation [set forth in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)] has run its course).

Note that events in chapter one actually follow events in chapters two and three, though they are listed first in the book. The Lord's Day, during which time these events occur, will not begin until Christians have been removed at the time of the rapture (following events in chapters 2, 3). And this is where both chapters one and four begin. Events beginning with verse ten in chapter one and events throughout chapter four actually occur either at or about the same time, which is at the time of and immediately following the removal of Christians from the earth into the heavens at the conclusion of the present dispensation.

(As will be shown, John's removal into the future Day of the Lord in [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV) is the same as his removal into heaven in [Revelation 4:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.2&t=NKJV). Events that follow in each chapter have to do either directly or indirectly with Christians. The events depicted beyond John’s removal in chapter one apparently precede events depicted beyond his removal in chapter four, for events in chapter one anticipate the events in chapter four.)

Events throughout the first four chapters, beginning with verse ten of chapter one, concern God’s dealings with Christians, both during and immediately following the present dispensation. Then chapter five is somewhat of a transitional chapter. God's dealings with Christians will have been completed at this point in the book (dealings that terminate in heaven with events at the judgment seat [chapter 1] and the relinquishment of crowns by the twenty-four elders [chapter 4]), and God will then turn His attention toward Israel and the nations on earth.

Chapter five ([Revelation 5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5&t=NKJV)) is given over to a search for and revelation of the One found worthy to break the seals of the seven-sealed scroll; and the breaking of these seals — with the breaking of the first seal marking the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation — then begins to occur in [Revelation 6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6&t=NKJV).

Thus, along with the three-way division of the book given in verse nineteen of chapter one, the preceding divisions must also be recognized. Except for several statements in the opening nine introductory verses, the first four chapters constitute the Christian section of the book. Then beyond that, events shift away from God’s dealings with Christians to His dealings with the earth-dwellers (Israel and the Gentile nations); and most of the remainder of the book (through chapter eighteen) is given over to these events.

Christians appear *on earth* during the present dispensation in chapters two and three. They appear in heaven at the end of the present dispensation in chapter one and again in chapter nineteen at the end of the Tribulation, concluding the present age. Then events in chapter four indirectly concern Christians, *in heaven*, though there is no reference to them in the chapter.

Events in chapter five present a scene *in heaven*, anticipating the Tribulation *on earth*; and chapters six through eighteen are given over to a description of this seven-year period *on earth*. These chapters ([Revelation 6-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6-18&t=NKJV)) have to do strictly with Israel and the nations, and they form the most exhaustive, detailed treatment to be found anywhere in Scripture of events that will transpire *on earth* during the last seven years of the present age.

Do you want to know what’s about to happen to Christians? Do you want to know what’s about to happen to Israel and the Gentile nations? Do you want to know how Man’s Day will end and the Lord’s Day will begin and end? We’re not left in the dark. It has all been made known in the “*Revelation of Jesus Christ*” that God gave to John the Apostle, in order “*to show His servants — things that must shortly take place*” ([Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV)).

In the Spirit

The expression, “*in the Spirit*,” used in [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV); [4:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.2&t=NKJV), refers to a person being removed from the natural state of affairs and into the supernatural for a particular purpose. John was on the Isle of Patmos “*for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ* [which must be understood in the light of [Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV), ‘*things that must shortly take place*’]" ([Revelation 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.9&t=NKJV)). He was removed from his own time, near the end of the first century, and placed in the future Day of the Lord, nineteen centuries later ([Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV)). And he was not only moved from one time-period to another but he was also moved from one place to another. He was moved from the earth into heaven ([Revelation 4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV)).

John recorded the things revealed to him, not on the Isle of Patmos, but in heaven, nineteen and twenty-nine centuries in the future. These things were given to the Son by the Father and revealed to John through an angel ([Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV); [22:6-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.6-9&t=NKJV)). And during this time he was commanded to “*write*” on twelve different occasions ([Revelation 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.11&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.19&t=NKJV); [2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.1&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.8&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.12&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.18&t=NKJV); [3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1&t=NKJV), [7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.7&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.14&t=NKJV); [14:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.13&t=NKJV); [19:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.9&t=NKJV); [21:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.5&t=NKJV)).

The fact that John wrote as these things were revealed to him is evident from the one time when he was about to write but was commanded not to so do ([Revelation 10:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+10.4&t=NKJV)). Thus, what we have in this book is an eye-witness account concerning events that will begin to transpire at the end of the present dispensation and age (excluding events in chapters 2, 3), which are prophetic insofar as [Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV) is concerned but current from John's vantage point in the future Day of the Lord. In this respect, we have a book that was written during “time” which is yet to occur.

Moving individuals into another time-period (either past or future) or into another location within that time-period in order to receive a revelation from God is not something new in Scripture. God, on one occasion, moved the prophet Ezekiel back in time, transporting him from Babylon to Jerusalem, in order to show him certain things about Israel's past ([Ezekiel 8:5ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+8.5ff&t=NKJV)); and, on another occasion, God moved Ezekiel forward in time and once again changed his geographical location in order to show him certain things about Israel's future ([Ezekiel 37:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.1ff&t=NKJV)).

God is not bound by time or space. He can move individuals forward or backward in time at will, as well as change their geographical location (*cf*. [Acts 8:39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.39&t=NKJV)). He lives in the eternal present, and He is omnipresent. He is the eternal “*I Am*” ([Exodus 3:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.14&t=NKJV)), and He is present everywhere at once through the work of the Spirit (*cf.* [Genesis 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2&t=NKJV); [2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.3&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.9-10&t=NKJV)).

In [Ezekiel 8:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+8.3&t=NKJV), God removed Ezekiel from Babylon and transported him to Jerusalem into a time before the captivity. God allowed Ezekiel to see the abominations that had been committed at that time by the children of Israel, which ultimately brought about the captivity in which Ezekiel had found himself ([Ezekiel 8:5ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+8.5ff&t=NKJV)). Thus, God, by allowing Ezekiel to see with his own eyes that which had occurred in Jerusalem at a time in the past, allowed him to see and understand why the children of Israel were in Babylonian captivity.

In [Ezekiel 37:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.1&t=NKJV), God removed Ezekiel from Babylon once again and placed him in the middle of a “*valley that was full of bones*.” On this occasion God revealed to Ezekiel, by that which happened to these bones, that which would happen to Israel at a future date. In this instance, the prophecy looks far beyond the Babylonian captivity to a time when the Israelites would be scattered throughout the nations of the earth, to a time when it would appear that *all hope was lost* and *the people were cut off* ([Ezekiel 37:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.11&t=NKJV), [21ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.21ff&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Matthew 24:21-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.21-22&t=NKJV), [31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.31&t=NKJV); [Luke 21:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+21.24&t=NKJV)).

Ezekiel was removed from Babylon and placed at a point in time over 2,500 years in the future and allowed to see that which is future even during the day in which we live. He was allowed to see the restoration of “*the whole house of Israel*” ([Ezekiel 37:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.11&t=NKJV)) at a time when the Israelites would be placed in their own land under David their king, never to be uprooted again ([Ezekiel 37:12-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.12-28&t=NKJV)). Thus, he was allowed to see the restoration of Israel (both the resurrection of the dead and the re-gathering of the living [[Daniel 12:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+12.2&t=NKJV); [Matthew 24:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.31&t=NKJV)]) as it will occur when Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation.

And John’s experience on the Isle of Patmos — being supernaturally transported through time and space — is no different than Ezekiel’s experience. John, as Ezekiel, was transported after the same fashion (*cf.* [Ezekiel 37:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.1&t=NKJV); [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV)) for the same purpose (*cf.* [Ezekiel 11:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+11.25&t=NKJV); [Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV); [22:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.6&t=NKJV)). Both men were transported “*in the Spirit*” through time and space in order that they might be allowed to view different things first-hand, as they actually occurred, things that God wanted them to see, understand, and record.

The Lord’s Day

Controversy has existed over the years in the interpretation of different parts of the book of Revelation; and the fact that controversy of this nature has existed can, in no small part, be attributed to a misunderstanding of what is meant by the expression, “*on the Lord’s Day* [*lit.*, ‘in the Lord’s Day’],” in [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV). Some expositors view this expression as a reference to *the first day of the week*, while others look upon the expression as a reference to the future *Day of the Lord.*

The manner in which one understands this expression will govern, to some extent, his interpretation of that which follows in the book. Differences of interpretation in this realm usually involve only the opening several chapters, but sometimes they involve almost the complete book.

One school of thought, for example, viewing “*the Lord’s Day*” as a reference to *the first day of the week*, looks upon the book of Revelation as a prophecy having to do mainly with events occurring during the Christian dispensation (an interpretation requiring extensive spiritualization of the book). Almost everything leading into the Lord’s return at the end of chapter nineteen is looked upon as pointing to events progressively occurring over two millennia of time. All these events would have been future at the time John wrote the book, in line with [Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV), but they would be mainly past today.

A more common view among those expositors who view “*the Lord’s Day*” as a reference to the *first day of the week* is to look upon most of the book after the correct fashion — having to do with events during the future Day of the Lord — but to look upon the opening several chapters (especially chapter one) after an incorrect fashion. These expositors often see events depicted in the latter part of chapter one as referring to events surrounding Christ and His Church here on earth today, with Christ in the midst of the Church occupying His present high priestly office.

To view chapter one in this manner is to miss the whole point of the way the book is introduced, something that will reflect, after some fashion, on one’s understanding of various things in the remaining chapters, especially things in chapters two through four. On the other hand though, to view John’s reference to “*the Lord’s Day*” properly, as a reference to the future Day of the Lord, will start the person out in a correct manner in the book; and beginning the book after this fashion, he will be far more apt to see things within a correct framework in subsequent chapters than if he had begun after a fashion different from that which the author intended.

Most of the criticism concerning “*the Lord’s Day*” being a reference to the future *Day of the Lord* arises from the way that the Greek text is structured. It is structured differently in [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV) than it is elsewhere in Scripture when reference is made to the Day of the Lord. Elsewhere, both in the Greek and Hebrew texts, two nouns are used (“*Day*” and “*Lord*”). In [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV), by contrast, there is one noun (“*Day*”) preceded by an adjective (translated, “*Lord’s*”).

The adjective (translated as a possessive in the English text [a perfectly acceptable translation in this case; see also [1 Corinthians 11:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+11.20&t=NKJV)]) is a form of the Greek word for Lord (*Kuriakos*) and is used in the sense of “Lordian” or “Lordly.” The word is articular in the Greek text, referring to a particular Lordian or Lordly day. It is a particular Lord’s Day, or a particular Day of the Lord.

There is absolutely no difference in saying “*the Lord’s Day*” or saying “*the Day of the Lord*.” In fact, the Hebrew text where the expression is found most of the different times it appears in Scripture (twenty times in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and three times [other than [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV)] in the Greek text of the New Testament) can only express “*the Lord’s Day*” one way. There is no adjective for “Lord” in the Hebrew text, as in the Greek text, and the only way “*the Lord’s Day*” can be expressed in this language is by using two nouns and saying “*the Day of the Lord*.”

The context of [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV) and central message of the book clearly reveal that the writer, through the use of the expression, “*the Lord’s Day*,” could have had only *one thing* in mind — the *future* “*Day of the Lord*.” John was not only removed from the Isle of Patmos and taken to heaven but he was also moved forward in time to the end of the present dispensation. He was transported to a place and time where he saw Christ occupying His future position as *Judge* in the midst of His Church ([Revelation 1:11-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.11-20&t=NKJV)). And from that point forward, the book of Revelation has to do with things either *anticipating judgment* ([Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV); [5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5&t=NKJV)), with *judgment itself* ([Revelation 1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1&t=NKJV); [6-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6-20&t=NKJV), or with things *resulting from judgment* ([Revelation 4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4&t=NKJV); [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19&t=NKJV); [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21&t=NKJV); [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22&t=NKJV)) during “*the Lord’s Day*,” “*the Day of the Lord.*”

The first reference to the Day of the Lord in Scripture forms *a first-mention principle*, establishing a meaning and usage for this day that holds constant throughout Scripture. The Day of the Lord is first mentioned in [Isaiah 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+2.12&t=NKJV) as a day when the “*lofty looks of man shall be humbled*, *the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down*, *and* *the LORD alone shall be exalted*” ([Isaiah 2:11-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+2.11-17&t=NKJV)). To bring the latter to pass (the Lord’s exaltation), the Day of the Lord is always associated in Scripture with God’s judgment, both upon man and the material creation. Judgment during this day falls first upon *the Church* (*cf.* [Revelation 1:10-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-20&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 5:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.2-4&t=NKJV)), then upon *Israel and the Gentile nations* (*cf.* [Revelation 6:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.1ff&t=NKJV); [Joel 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+1.15&t=NKJV); [2:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.1-2&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.11&t=NKJV), [31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+2.31&t=NKJV); [3:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+3.14&t=NKJV)), and then upon *the material creation* (*cf.* [Revelation 21:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.1&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.10&t=NKJV)). This is the way the book of Revelation is structured.

This is the reason why a correct understanding of the expression, “*the Lord’s Day*,” in [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV) is a major key to a proper understanding of this book. And one reason so many people have trouble with the book of Revelation is because they have ignored the interpretative keys that God has provided, especially this one.

Aside from the preceding, there is no evidence whatsoever that *the first day of the week* was ever called “*the Lord’s Day*” prior to the time this book was written. “The first day of the week” is always called just that in Scripture — *the first day of the week* ([Matthew 28:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.1&t=NKJV); [Mark 16:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.2&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+16.9&t=NKJV); [John 20:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+20.1&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+20.19&t=NKJV); [Acts 20:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.7&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 16:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+16.2&t=NKJV)); and insofar as any historical evidence is concerned, this was the usage common in John's day.

Matters surrounding the expression, “*the Lord’s Day*,” and how it is used by Christians today though are quite different. This expression is presently used by numerous Christians as a reference to *the first day of the week*. In fact, one hears it almost everywhere, in and out of the pulpit. And this common usage may very well have had its origin centuries ago with a misinterpretation of [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV).

Actually, if one is going to call a day of our week, “*the Lord’s Day*,” it would have to, according to scripture, be a reference to *Saturday*, not Sunday. *Saturday* is the seventh day of the week, corresponding within the septenary arrangement of Scripture to the seventh millennium, which will be “*the Lord’s Day*,” or "t*he Day of the Lord*" (*ref*. the author's book, What Time Is It?\* chapter 3 [\*Haven't found this book.]).

Thus, the use of the expression, “*the Lord’s Day*,” as a reference to the first day of the week is detrimental to sound biblical study in more ways than one. The scriptural use of this expression (or, “*the Day of the Lord*”) is limited to *one thing*: a period of judgment lasting slightly longer than 1,000 years that will ultimately result in that which is described in Revelation, chapters twenty-one and twenty-two. The Day of the Lord will terminate at the conclusion of the millennium (after 1,000-years of judgment, executed by Christ and His co-heirs) with God making “*all things new*” ([Revelation 21:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.5&t=NKJV)).

Come Up Here

John’s removal from the earth and appearance in heaven during “*the Lord’s Day*” points to that future day when Christians will be removed from the earth and find themselves in heaven during “*the Lord’s Day*.” This is clear from comparing [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV) with [Revelation 4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV), along with the contexts of these verses.

In [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV), John was transported, “*in the Spirit,*” into the future Day of the Lord. He then heard behind him “*a loud voice, as of a trumpet,*” instructing him, “*What you see, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches that are in Asia* . . . .” ([Revelation 1:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-11&t=NKJV)). John then turned to see the One speaking ([Revelation 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.12&t=NKJV)) and *saw the seven churches*, with Christ, occupying His future role as *Judge*, in their midst ([Revelation 1:12-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.12-20&t=NKJV)).

In [Revelation 4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV), John heard a voice, “*like a trumpet*,” which said, “*Come up here, and I will show you things that must take place after this* [*lit.*, ‘after these things’].” He was then transported, “i*n the Spirit*,” into heaven. Once in heaven, John saw *a throne, One seated on the throne*, and *twenty-four crowned elders seated on surrounding thrones* ([Revelation 4:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.2-4&t=NKJV)). John then described the central throne and the worship of the One seated on the throne by four living creatures and by the twenty-four elders, as they cast their crowns before the throne ([Revelation 4:5-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.5-11&t=NKJV)).

[Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV) provides the *time* (the Day of the Lord) into which John was transported, and [Revelation 4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV) provides the *place* (heaven) into which he was transported.

Time is then looked upon in another sense in [Revelation 4:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1&t=NKJV). This verse both begins and ends with the same two Greek words that mark the third division of the book back in verse twenty of chapter one — the words *meta tauta* (“after these things”). The verse should literally read, “After these things I looked . . . and I will show you things that must be after these things.” “*After these things*” follows “*the things which are* [the things set forth in the messages to the seven churches in chapters 2, 3, pointing to the present time, the time when God deals with the Church on earth].” Thus, John’s removal into heaven, “*in the Spirit on* [‘in’] *the Lord's Day*,” points, chronologically, to an event occurring during future time at the conclusion of the present dispensation, preceding the Tribulation ([Revelation 6:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.1ff&t=NKJV)).

This is where Scripture places the removal of the Church from the earth. It will occur at the end of the present dispensation, preceding the Tribulation on earth. And for those who have eyes to see, [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV) and [Revelation 4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV) describe the same event as described in [1 Corinthians 15:51-57](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.51-57&t=NKJV) and [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.13-18&t=NKJV).

*1. Seven Churches*

Following the removal of Christians from the earth, commonly called “the rapture,” Christians will see exactly the same thing John saw following his removal in chapters one and four. They will see other Christians (which, in [Revelation 1:11-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.11-20&t=NKJV), is clearly a reference to *all Christians* [all seven churches appear together, with Christ in their midst]), they will see Christ on His judgment seat, they will see God on His throne, they will see an active, ongoing worship of God, and they will see twenty-four elders cast their crowns before God’s throne.

The seven churches, to which John was commanded to send a record of that which he saw while in heaven, in the Lord’s Day, were seven existing churches in Asia during his day. These were seven particular churches that the Lord chose to use, because of certain peculiar characteristics embodied by each — things brought to pass under God’s sovereign control of matters — in order that He, having these things, might be able to teach numerous spiritual truths in the opening chapters of this book.

These seven churches, among other things, set forth a history of the Church during the present dispensation, beginning with the church in Ephesus that left its “*first love*” and ending with the “*lukewarm*” church in Laodicea ([Revelation 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.4&t=NKJV); [3:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.15-16&t=NKJV)). Apostasy, because of the working of the leaven that the woman placed in the three measures of meal in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV), began to make inroads in the Church early in the dispensation (set forth in the message to the church in Ephesus); and the working of the leaven was prophesied to be so complete (“*until the whole was leavened*”) that, by the end of the dispensation, within the Church, there would exist a state of total corruption (set forth in the message to the church in Laodicea).

This is the reason Jesus asked the question, “*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith* [‘the faith’] *on the earth?*” ([Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV)). The answer, from the wording of the Greek text, is *negative*. When the Son of Man comes, rather than finding the Church holding to “the faith” (a reference peculiarly related to the Word of the Kingdom [[Matthew 13:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.19&t=NKJV)]; see in this site [Confusion about Salvation](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-two.php#Confusion%20about%20Salvation).), He will instead find the Church, because of the working of the leaven over almost two millennia of time, described as being “*wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*” ([Revelation 3:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.17&t=NKJV)).

Such a condition, however, will make no difference insofar as Christians going forth to meet the Lord is concerned. All Christians, both the dead over a two-thousand-year period (resurrected) and the living at that time (translated), will be removed from the earth when the rapture occurs. They will be removed at the same time and be transported to the same place.

The seven churches dealt with in the first three chapters of Revelation (dealt with on earth during the present dispensation in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV) and dealt with before the judgment seat of Christ during the Day of the Lord in [Revelation 1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1&t=NKJV) point, *numerically, to the complete Church*. “Seven” is a number showing *the completeness of that which is in view*; and in this case, the reference is to *the complete Church, all Christians*.

The book of Revelation, in one sense, is built around the use of the number “seven.” This number is not only used to point to the Church in the Christian section but it is also used, among other things, to point to judgments (seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials) upon the earth-dwellers during the final seven years of Daniel’s prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. The three sets of sevens, outlining judgments on earth during the Tribulation, point to *divine perfection* (“three” sets) *within God’s complete judgment* (“seven” in each set) *during the completion of Daniel’s prophecy* (the last “seven” years).

The number “seven” must show *completeness*. It is the number associated with God and the completion of His work, in contrast to man’s number, “six,” showing incompletion. And when John sees all seven churches in the presence of Christ in heaven, as He exercises His role as *Judge* during the Lord’s Day, only one thing can be in view. The scene is that of *all Christians* in heaven during the Lord’s Day, standing in Christ’s presence to be judged.

*All Christians* are going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ *together*, *at the same time and place*. Their faithfulness or unfaithfulness, carnality or spirituality, will have nothing to do with the matter of their being removed from the earth to stand in this place at this time.

This is what is pictured in Revelation, chapter one. *All* who are “*in Christ*” ([1 Thessalonians 4:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.16&t=NKJV), [17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.17&t=NKJV)) — *i.e.*, all Christians — will appear in the presence of Christ together, at the same time, in order that they might give an account concerning how well they had previously performed their assigned duties as servants in the Lord’s house ([Matthew 24:45-51](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.45-51&t=NKJV); [25:14-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.14-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:11-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.11-27&t=NKJV)). Those represented by the Laodicean church will be there alongside those represented by the Philadelphian church. The separation of Christians on the basis of faithfulness or unfaithfulness occurs before the judgment seat, not via selective resurrection and translation as some teach.

This is what is taught in the first chapter of the book of Revelation, perfectly in line with corresponding Scripture such as the parables of the talents and pounds ([Matthew 25:14-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.14-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:11-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.11-27&t=NKJV)) and the reference to the future judgment of Christians in [1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV).

*2. In that Day*

The expression “*the Day of the Lord*,” “*the Lord’s Day*,” because of how the expression is used in the Old Testament, is usually thought of by expositors as associated only with activities surrounding *Israel and the Gentile nations on earth*. However, the New Testament, following the inception of the Church, uses the expression in association with activities surrounding *the Church in heaven as well* (along with the expression, “*the day of Jesus Christ*” [[Philippians 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.6&t=NKJV)]).

In [1 Thessalonians 5:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.4&t=NKJV), there is a clear inference that “the Day of the Lord” ([1 Thessalonians 5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5&t=NKJV):2) will overtake some Christians “*as a thief*.” Many of those advocating selective resurrection and translation of Christians at the rapture recognize this fact; and viewing “*the Day of the Lord*” in verse two as associated only with activities surrounding the earth-dwellers, they point to [1 Thessalonians 5:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.4&t=NKJV) as one of their proof texts that some Christians will be left behind at the time of the rapture to go through either part or all of the Tribulation. However, Revelation, chapter one clearly reveals that God’s dealings with man during that part of “*the Day of the Lord*” prior to the millennium (as during the millennium itself) have to do with the Church in heaven, as well as Israel and the Gentile nations on earth.

“*The Day of the Lord*” will overtake unfaithful Christians “*as a thief*” at the time they are removed from the earth and taken to heaven — at the time of the rapture (*cf.* [1 Thessalonians 5:6-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.6-10&t=NKJV); [Revelation 1:10-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-20&t=NKJV)). For them, Christ’s appearance will be completely unexpected, as the unexpected arrival of a thief ([Matthew 24:37-44](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.37-44&t=NKJV) [note particularly [Matthew 24:43-44](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.43-44&t=NKJV); see also the author’s book, [Bible One - Prophecy on Mount Olivet, One Taken, Another Left, by Arlen Chitwood](http://bibleone.net/POMO_10.htm)]).

Such Christians will, “*in the twinkling of an eye*,” be removed from the earth and find themselves in heaven, in the Lord’s Day, before the judgment seat of Christ. And, in accord with the first chapter of the book of Revelation, it is there that they, along with all other Christians, will render an account, resulting in “*a just recompense of reward*” ([Hebrews 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.2&t=NKJV); [11:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.26&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter Two

**Judged in His Presence**

*Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,*

*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.*

*His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;*

*His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;*

*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.* ([Revelation 1:12-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.12-16&t=NKJV))

The book of Revelation is a prophecy ([Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Revelation 22:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.7&t=NKJV)). Except for several introductory verses, chapters two and three, and a few concluding verses, the book concerns events that will transpire beyond the present dispensation, during “*the Lord’s Day*” ([Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV)), the future Day of the Lord. And even chapters two and three, which have to do with the present dispensation, must also be looked upon as prophetic in nature. Among other things, these chapters depict a history of the Church — beginning with Ephesus (which left its “*first love*”) and terminating with Laodicea (described as “*wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*”); and John, though writing at a point beyond the present dispensation (in the future Day of the Lord into which he had been transported), wrote for those living in his own time, at the beginning of the dispensation ([Revelation 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.11&t=NKJV)).

In order to receive this prophecy, called, “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*” ([Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV)), John was removed from the earth, taken to heaven, and placed at the very beginning of the future Day of the Lord. From that point he was progressively moved forward in time and shown a sequence of events that would transpire throughout this future day, both in heaven and on the earth ([Revelation 1:10-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-20&t=NKJV); [4:1-22:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-22.6&t=NKJV)); and at the very beginning of this time he was allowed to look back upon certain events that would transpire during the present dispensation, preceding the Day of the Lord ([Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)).

The events occurring during “*the Lord’s Day*” that John saw began with the removal of the Church at the conclusion of the present dispensation and ended over 1,000 years later with preparatory events anticipating the eternal ages, the Day of God, which will follow the Day of the Lord (*cf.* [Revelation 1:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.9-10&t=NKJV); [4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV); [21:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.1ff&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 3:10-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.10-13&t=NKJV)). The complete scope of time covered by the Day of the Lord is thus clearly revealed in the book of Revelation.

The Day of the Lord covers not only events during the Tribulation and Millennium but also certain events immediately preceding the Tribulation and certain events immediately following the Millennium. It includes the judgment of Christians in heaven, preceding the Tribulation (*cf.* [Revelation 1:10-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-20&t=NKJV); [6:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.1ff&t=NKJV)); and it includes events beyond the Millennium, preparatory to the eternal ages, the Day of God ([Revelation 20:7ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.7ff&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Revelation 1:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-11&t=NKJV); [22:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.6&t=NKJV)).

This is why Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, clearly associates God’s activities during the Day of the Lord with both the earth-dwellers and with Christians; and insofar as Christians are concerned, this association is clearly revealed to be immediately following the rapture, preceding the Tribulation ([1 Thessalonians 5:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.2-4&t=NKJV); *cf.* [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.13-18&t=NKJV)); and this is also why the destruction of the present heavens and earth and the creation of a new heavens and earth at the end of the Millennium are placed within the Day of the Lord (*cf.* [2 Peter 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.10&t=NKJV); [Revelation 21:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.1&t=NKJV)).

(Actually, Scripture presents an overlap between the ending of the Day of the Lord and the beginning of the Day of God. Note that the destruction of the present heavens and earth occurs both during the Day of the Lord and during the Day of God [[2 Peter 3:10-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.10-12&t=NKJV)]. This destruction occurs at the very end of the Day of the Lord and at the very beginning of the Day of God. Thus, at least some, if not all, of the events beyond the Millennium in the book of Revelation will occur during the Day of God as well as during the Day of the Lord.)

The Son of Man

The title, “*the Son of Man*,” in Scripture is intimately connected with the Lord’s coming dominion over the earth. This title first appears in [Psalm 8:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8.4&t=NKJV), a Messianic passage quoted in [Hebrews 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.6&t=NKJV), within a Messianic setting. [Psalm 8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8&t=NKJV) begins and ends with the same statement: “*O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth!*” ([Psalm 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8.1&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8.9&t=NKJV)). The reference is to the coming day of His “*glory*” when He will possess “*dominion*” over the earth (*cf.* [Psalm 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8.1&t=NKJV), [6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8.6&t=NKJV)). Thus, by the use of this title in [Psalm 8:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8.4&t=NKJV), a first-mention principle is established that remains constant throughout Scripture.

Wherever this title occurs in Scripture, the underlying thought through its use always has to do with the Lord’s coming dominion over the earth. The first appearance of this title in the New Testament is in [Matthew 8:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+8.20&t=NKJV): “*And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’*” At first glance there would appear to be no Messianic connection. But note the last mention of this title in the New Testament: “*Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle*” ([Revelation 14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV)).

Both the first and last times this title appears in the New Testament, there is a reference made to Christ's “*head*.” At His first coming, He did not have a place on the earth (which He would one day receive for an inheritance) to even lay His head. This was the day of His shame and humiliation, the day when a crown of thorns was placed on His head, followed by His crucifixion between criminals. However, the day is coming when He will wear a golden crown upon His head (signifying *divine kingly* power [“*gold*” in Scripture signifies *deity*]). That will occur during the coming day of His power and exaltation.

(The Greek word used for “*crown*” in [Revelation 14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV) is *stephanos*, not *diadema*, indicating that Christ, at this time, will not yet have entered into His office as King. A ruling monarch wears a “diadem,” not the type of crown that the Greek word *stephanos* signifies. By contrast, in [Revelation 19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV), Christ is seen wearing “*many crowns* [the Greek word *diadema* rather than *stephanos* is used here].” Thus, that which occurs in [Revelation 14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV) anticipates that which will occur in [Revelation 19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV).)

The true nature of His identity — Israel's Messiah, the One destined to possess dominion over the earth — is exactly what Jesus had in mind when He asked Peter, “*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*” ([Matthew 16:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.13&t=NKJV)). And Peter, after responding to that question, in response to the Lord’s next question, “*But who do you say that I am?*” ([Matthew 16:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.15&t=NKJV)), responded within the same framework in which Christ had asked both questions. Peter said, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” ([Matthew 16:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.16&t=NKJV)).

In essence Peter said, “You are the Messiah, the Firstborn of God, the One in possession of the rights of primogeniture.” And this is why Jesus said in response, “*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven*” ([Matthew 16:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.17&t=NKJV)).

This title is used about eighty times in the four gospel accounts, and outside the gospels the title only appears in the New Testament four different places, in three books ([Acts 7:56](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.56&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.6&t=NKJV); [Revelation 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13&t=NKJV); [14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV)).

The passage in [Acts 7:56](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.56&t=NKJV) presents “*the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.*” The offer of the Messianic Kingdom was still open to Israel at this time, Stephen had just finished delivering a lengthy dissertation about Jesus the Christ to the Jewish council ([Acts 7:2-53](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.2-53&t=NKJV)), and the door was open for the Jewish leaders to respond in a positive manner. Had they done so, Jesus would have returned and restored the kingdom to Israel. This is the reason He is seen “*standing*” at God's right hand and identified as “*the Son of Man*.”

The passage in [Hebrews 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.6&t=NKJV) is simply a quotation from [Psalm 8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8&t=NKJV), a Messianic Psalm where the title is first used in Scripture. The use of this title in Hebrews speaks volumes about the Messianic nature of this book. Paul never used the title in His writings, though he had far more to say about the coming kingdom than many realize. But Hebrews is different yet. Hebrews is a book given over almost entirely to things surrounding the Heir and His co-heirs, as these things relate to the Messianic Era.

Then in the book of Revelation the title is used of Christ twice at the conclusion of the present dispensation ([Revelation 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13&t=NKJV); [14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV)), anticipating His coming reign over the earth. Both times the title appears in this book, judgmental scenes are in view. The title appears first in connection with the Son judging the Church preceding the Tribulation, with a view to the manifestation of His co-heirs at the termination of this judgment; and the title appears the second time in connection with Christ judging the earth-dwellers at the end of the Tribulation, with a view to His taking the reins of government.

His Description in that Day

As soon as John was transported into heaven, into the future Day of the Lord, he heard behind him “*a loud voice, as of a trumpet*,” telling him to write the things being revealed and to send the record to seven particular churches in Asia. The words following this command — “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last*” — appear in some Greek manuscripts but are usually considered spurious by textual critics. The person speaking though had previously identified Himself after this same fashion ([Revelation 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.8&t=NKJV)) and does so after a similar fashion later in the chapter ([Revelation 1:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.17-18&t=NKJV)).

John turned to see the One speaking; and having turned, he saw seven golden lampstands and the person possessing the “*voice, as of a trumpet*” standing in the midst of the candlesticks ([Revelation 1:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.12-13&t=NKJV)). The person John saw was the glorified Christ as He will appear after the present dispensation is over, at the very beginning of the Day of the Lord (note [Revelation 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.18&t=NKJV)); and the seven lampstands were said to be “the seven churches” ([Revelation 1:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV)).

Consequently, John didn't see Christ as our *present High Priest*, but as our *future Judge*. The time in view and John’s *description* of Christ clearly reveal this fact.

The *time* is in the future Day of the Lord. Christ today is exercising the office of High Priest in order to effect a present cleansing of the “*many sons*,” the “*kings and priests*,” He is about to bring “to glory.” His present ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is strictly on behalf of those who are being called out to occupy positions as co-heirs with Him during the coming age. If He does not “*wash* [a reference, typically, to cleansing provided by water in the laver in the courtyard of the tabernacle]” them now (through His high priestly ministry, on the basis of His shed blood on the mercy seat), they can have “*no part*” *with Him* during the coming age (*cf.* [John 13:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.8-10&t=NKJV); [1 John 1:7-2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.7-2.2&t=NKJV)).

John sees Christ in heaven at a time beyond the present dispensation, beyond the time of His present high priestly ministry. The complete Church, shown by the seven churches in His presence, will have been removed from the earth; and Christ’s present high priestly ministry will have come to an end. Christ, at this time, will come forth from the sanctuary to judge those for whom He had previously interceded with the Father.

The *description* that John then gives of Christ is that of a *Judge.* A description of Christ as *Priest* in the future day of the Lord, with the Church in His presence, would be completely out of place, for this would not be in keeping with events set forth in the book at all.

The Day of the Lord is associated in Scripture with God’s *judgment*, and the dispensation during which Christ exercises the office of High Priest will have ended when this day begins. Thus, without even reading John’s description, one could, contextually, only expect John to see Christ as *Judge*. And that is exactly the description that he gives.

*1. Clothed* . . . . ([Revelation 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13&t=NKJV))

John described Christ first of all as “*clothed with a garment down to the feet*.” Such a garment would be worn by either a priest or a judge. But John next states that He was “*girded about the chest with a golden band*”; and only a judge wore the girdle in this position.

A priest wore the band around the waist, signifying service. He would often lift the hem of his garment and tuck it under the band as he went about some of his various priestly duties. By contrast, a judge wore the band over one shoulder and across his chest as an insignia of the magisterial office that he held.

Thus, John sees Christ at a time *after* He has removed the band from His waist and placed it over one shoulder, allowing it to rest at a position across His chest. This signifies that His high priestly work has ended (the present dispensation is over) and His judicial work has begun (those for whom He occupied the office of High Priest are now in His presence, in heaven, in the Day of the Lord; and they are about to come under judgment).

*2. His Head and Hair .* . . . ([Revelation 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.14&t=NKJV))

It is significant that at this point in the book John sees Christ, in the future Day of the Lord, *without a crown upon His head*. This part of the revelation of Jesus Christ occurs prior to the time He is seen wearing a crown (*cf.* [Revelation 14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV); [19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV)). It occurs at the time He judges Christians, at the end of the present dispensation but preceding the Tribulation.

Christ will turn His attention to the earth-dwellers only after He has first dealt with the Church ([Revelation 5:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.1ff&t=NKJV)); and seemingly, at this time, He will begin wearing a crown — first a *stephanos*, to later be followed by a *diadem*. This thought is derived from comparing four different verses — [Revelation 6:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.2&t=NKJV); [12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3&t=NKJV); [14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV); [19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV).

In [Revelation 6:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.2&t=NKJV) the Antichrist is seen wearing a *stephanos* at the beginning of the Tribulation, three and one-half years before Satan gives to him “*his power, his throne, and great authority*” ([Revelation 13:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.2&t=NKJV)) — three and one half years before he actually enters into his regal office and wears a diadem ([Revelation 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3&t=NKJV); [13:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.1-2&t=NKJV)), anticipated by the *stephanos.*

Christ will wear a stephanos prior to the time He actually assumes regal power and is seen wearing many diadems (cf. [Revelation 14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV); [19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV)); and since Antichrist dons a crown (though not a regal crown) at the very beginning of the Tribulation, it seems evident that Christ will have donned a crown (though not a regal crown) at this time also. Satan is the great counterfeiter, and he will see to it that regal activities surrounding Antichrist are patterned after regal activities surrounding Christ.

(See in this site, [Crowned Rulers — Christ, Christians](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-four.php#Crowned%20Rulers%20%E2%80%94%20Christ,%20Christians), for additional information concerning how the words *stephanos* and *diadema* are used in this respect in the Greek New Testament.)

The yet-to-be-crowned head of Christ and the hairs of His head were described by John as being “*white like wool, as white as snow*.” Wisdom, dignity, and superiority (all surrounding longevity) are in view, but the best commentary on the passage is [Daniel 7:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.22&t=NKJV), where the results of Christ’s judicial activity set forth in Revelation, chapter one are depicted.

The words, “*saints of the Most High*,” in [Daniel 7:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.22&t=NKJV) (also [Daniel 7:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.18&t=NKJV), [25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.25&t=NKJV), [27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.27&t=NKJV)) should literally be translated, “saints of the high places [heavenly places].” Since Israel, through rejection, forfeited the right to occupy these heavenly places in the coming kingdom and the Church was called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel rejected (*cf.* [Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.9-10&t=NKJV)), Christians (among others, *e.g.*, martyred Tribulation saints [[Revelation 20:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4&t=NKJV)]) would have to be the ones receiving judicial power and authority (rulership) in [Daniel 7:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.22&t=NKJV) (even though the Church was not in existence at the time this was written).

And since all such power and authority has been committed into the hands of the Son (*cf.* [Matthew 28:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.18&t=NKJV); [John 5:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+5.22&t=NKJV)), “*the Ancient of Days*” in [Daniel 7:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.22&t=NKJV) would have to be identified as Christ, even though “*the Ancient of Days*” is a title used of the Father back in verse nine of the same chapter (*cf.* [Daniel 7:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.13&t=NKJV); also note the Son’s title, “*the Son of Man*,” in this verse).

The thought is similar to [Psalm 45:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+45.6&t=NKJV) and [Hebrews 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.8&t=NKJV). The author of Hebrews, quoting [Psalm 45:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+45.6&t=NKJV), takes words directed to the Father in the Old Testament and uses them relative to the Son in the New Testament. The words, “*Thy throne, O God* . . . .,” are used of both; and in [Daniel 7:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.9&t=NKJV), [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.22&t=NKJV), the title, “*the Ancient of Days*,” is also used of both.

(In Daniel, chapter seven, verses seventeen through twenty-seven form an “interpretation” of several visions that Daniel had previously been shown, recorded in verses two through fourteen [[Daniel 7:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.16&t=NKJV)]. However, the manner in which “*the Ancient of Days*” is presented in the interpretation is significantly different than the way He is presented in the visions.

In the visions, “*the Ancient of Days*” gives *the Son* “*dominion and glory and a kingdom*.” [[Daniel 7:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.13-14&t=NKJV)]; but in the interpretation, “*the Ancient of Days*” gives *the saints of the high places* judicial power and authority in the kingdom [[Daniel 7:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.22&t=NKJV), [27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.27&t=NKJV)]. The former allows the latter to occur, and in this respect, revelation becomes progressive as one moves from the visions to the interpretation.

In the visions, the Father, called “*the Ancient of Days*,” acts on behalf of His Son; but in the interpretation, it is the Son who acts. The Son, now in possession of the kingdom [received from His Father], is also called “*the Ancient of Days*” and acts on behalf of His co-heirs.

This is the manner in which the delegation of power and authority in the coming kingdom is presented elsewhere in Scripture. The Son receives the kingdom from His Father [an act of the Father as He delivers the kingdom over to His Son]; but once the Son has received the kingdom, then He, rather than the Father, is the One seen acting with respect to the power and authority placed in His hands [*cf*. [Luke 19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.12&t=NKJV), [15-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.15-19&t=NKJV); [Matthew 20:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.23&t=NKJV); [25:19-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.19-23&t=NKJV)]. This is why the work of “*the Ancient of Days*” in Daniel, chapter seven must be looked upon as progressive acts of both the Father and the Son.)

In [Daniel 7:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.9&t=NKJV), the Father is described as having hair “like pure wool,” and this same description must be looked upon as also applying to the Son in verse twenty-two, which perfectly fits the description given of the Son in [Revelation 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.14&t=NKJV). The Father cannot be described one way and the Son another. The Father and the Son are “one” ([John 10:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+10.30&t=NKJV)), which can be easily illustrated by comparing the description of the Father in [Daniel 7:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.9&t=NKJV) with the description of the Son in [Revelation 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.14&t=NKJV), in the light of [Daniel 7:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.22&t=NKJV).

Thus, not only does the manner in which Christ is clothed in [Revelation 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13&t=NKJV) depict a judicial scene, but the first thing said about the description of His person in the following verse (in the light of Daniel, chapter seven) also depicts judgment.

*3. His Eyes .* . . . ([Revelation 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.14&t=NKJV))

John next calls attention to His eyes, described “*like a flame of fire*.” “Fire” is used numerous places in Scripture in connection with God’s *judicial activity.*

In [Daniel 7:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.9-11&t=NKJV), in the same judicial scene previously considered, God’s throne is described as being “*a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire*”; and a “*fiery stream* [a stream or river of fire] *issued and came forth from before Him*.”

Fire is used after this same fashion in connection with what Scripture reveals about the judgment seat of Christ: “*Every man's work shall be made manifest . . . it shall be revealed by* [‘in’] *fire*; *and the fire shall try every man's work . .* . .” ([1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV)). This is where the baptism “*with* [‘in’] *fire*” occurs — on Christ’s threshing floor when the wheat is separated from the chaff and the chaff is burned ([Matthew 3:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.11-12&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Hebrews 6:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.8-9&t=NKJV)).

Christ used the Valley of Hinnom (*Gehenna*), the place of refuse south of Jerusalem, where the fires always burned, as a synonym for the place numerous individuals found unworthy to enter the kingdom would occupy following judgment.

Then there are the fiery judgments of the Tribulation, the destruction of the earth by fire at the end of the Millennium, and the Lake of fire as the final abode of the unsaved.

There can be no question concerning how “fire” is used in Scripture; and when Christ is presented as having eyes “*as a flame of fire*,” only *a judicial* scene can be in view.

In the subsequent messages to the seven churches, Christ is presented as the One who sees all and consequently knows all. Nothing that occurs escapes His attention. And this same individual is the One who will one day judge all those in each of the seven churches (pointing to a judgment of all Christians); and nothing that occurs during the present day will escape His attention in that coming day when every man’s work will be “*revealed by* [‘in’] *fire.*”

Christ's eyes, “*as a flame of fire*,” in that day will be searching, penetrating, and revealing, just as they were when He looked upon Peter after his foretold denial of Christ. Immediately after Peter had denied his Lord the third time, the cock crowed a second time; and the Lord (apparently being led at that moment past Peter into “Praetorium (‘*the hall of judgment*’)” turned and looked upon Peter, awakening him to the stark reality of that which he had done ([Luke 22:61](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+22.61&t=NKJV)).

The Lord's look at this time was far more than a brief glance. The word used in the Greek text (*emblepo*) points to Christ fixing His eyes upon Peter in an intently searching sense. These were the eyes that John saw in [Revelation 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.14&t=NKJV); and Peter looked into these eyes, as will every Christian.

Peter came under scrutiny for his actions, causing him to remember that which had previously occurred. Resultantly, he “went out and wept bitterly” ([Luke 22:62](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+22.62&t=NKJV)). And Christians who have followed a similar course of action will react after a similar fashion when they, in that coming day, look into those same eyes, described as “*a flame of fire*.”

*4. His Feet . .* . . ([Revelation 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.15&t=NKJV))

John not only sees Christ's feet as being “*like fine brass*,” but he further describes them “*as if refined in a furnace*.” Thus, there is actually a dual reference to judgment, for both “brass” and “fire” are used in Scripture depicting *judgment*, with “brass” specifically depicting *judgment* upon sin as borne for us.

In [Numbers 21:5ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+21.5ff&t=NKJV), God judged His people because of sin. He sent poisonous serpents throughout the camp, and numerous Israelites, bitten by the serpents, began to die.

Moses interceded with God on behalf of the people, and God provided him with the antidote. He was to take a brazen serpent, affix it to a pole, and lift it up in the camp of Israel. And any individual who had been bitten by a serpent needed only to look upon the brazen serpent in order to live.

In the antitype (to which Christ called attention in [John 3:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.14&t=NKJV)) man today is under the sentence of death. Man is dying, and God has provided the antidote. In the camp of Israel, serpents caused the problem, and a serpent provided the cure. In the world today, man (the First Adam) caused the problem, and Man (the Last Adam) has provided the cure. God has judged sin in the person of His Son, “*that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*” ([John 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.15&t=NKJV)).

The same use of brass in Scripture is seen in the two articles of furniture in the courtyard of the tabernacle. The brazen altar was constructed of wood overlaid with brass, and the brazen laver was constructed completely of brass. Both appear in connection with God’s judgment upon sin.

The brazen altar stood next to the only door to the tabernacle and barred the way for any who would not come via the required blood sacrifice (typifying Christ’s finished work on Calvary); and the brazen laver stood between the brazen altar and the Holy Place and barred the way for any priest who would not first avail himself of cleansing from present defilement, provided by the water in the upper and lower basins (typifying Christ’s present work as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary).

*5. His Voice .* . . . ([Revelation 1:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.15&t=NKJV))

His voice, heard and described by John, was “*as the sound of many waters*.” During Christ's earthly ministry, officers sent to apprehend Him returned empty-handed and confessed to the chief priests and Pharisees, “*No man ever spoke like this Man!*” ([John 7:46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+7.46&t=NKJV)). At a later time, shortly before His crucifixion, Judas led a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees in another attempt to apprehend Him, and, at the sound of two words that He used to identify Himself, they were caused to go backward and fall on the ground ([John 18:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+18.5-6&t=NKJV)).

Christ identified Himself to His would-be captors through the use of the expression, “*I am*.” By using this expression, Christ identified Himself with the God of the Old Testament ([Exodus 3:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.14&t=NKJV)). He revealed that those sent by the chief priests and Pharisees had been sent to take God Himself captive. It was God who was later led into the “*Praetorium* (‘*the hall of judgment*’),” and it was *the blood of God* that was subsequently shed to redeem fallen man ([John 18:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+18.28&t=NKJV); [Acts 20:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.28&t=NKJV)).

A *judicial* scene in connection with Christ speaking can be seen in [Matthew 22:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.11-12&t=NKJV), in the parable of the marriage feast. This parable has to do with the festivities surrounding the wedding of God’s Son, and the King coming in to see the guests in verses eleven and twelve can only be identified as the Son Himself making His appearance, as *King.*

The King, viewing the guests, sees a man who does not have on a wedding garment, and he asks the man a very revealing, searching question: “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?”

The way the question is worded in the Greek text indicates that the man knew he was supposed to have a wedding garment to attend the festivities, but he deliberately, defiantly refused to provide himself with one and sought to attend the festivities dressed after another fashion. This fact was called to his attention in Christ’s question, and he was left without any way to respond. There was nothing he could say. The man, as described in the text, was “speechless.”

*6. In His Right Hand* . . . . ([Revelation 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV))

John saw Christ with “*seven stars*” in His right hand, which are identified as the “*angels of the seven churches*” ([Revelation 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV)).

These are “*angels*,” not men, and would have to be identified as being angels from among the “*ministering spirits*” of [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV) — ministering on behalf of Christians during the present dispensation but somehow connected with the future judgment of those for whom they presently minister. God has always used angels to carry out affairs in His kingdom, and angels will apparently be very active in events surrounding the judgment seat of Christ (*ref.* in this site [Because of the Angels](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-four.php#Because%20of%20the%20Angels)).

*7. Out of His Mouth* . . . . ([Revelation 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV))

Out of Christ’s mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. A “sword” in Scripture is symbolic of *the Word of God* ([Ephesians 6:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.17&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 4:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.12&t=NKJV)). God always acts in complete accordance with His revealed Word; and judgment, wherein a just recompense will be rendered to every Christian, will be carried out in perfect keeping with that which God previously revealed in His Word.

In Christ’s message to the church in Pergamos (the church that had settled down in and, as its name implies, had become “married” to the world), reference is twice made to the “*sharp two-edged sword*” from [Revelation 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV) ([Revelation 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.12&t=NKJV), [16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.16&t=NKJV)). The church in Pergamos was warned that unless those in the church repented, the day would come when Christ would appear to them and “*fight against them*” with the *sword proceeding out of His mouth.*

That day would be when Christians appear before the judgment seat of Christ as seen in chapter one. And the common teaching that only blessings and rewards will emanate from Christ’s judgment seat can immediately be dispelled by noting how Christ uses this same sword in His dealings with the unsaved at the end of the Tribulation ([Revelation 19:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.21&t=NKJV)).

Christ, on His judgment seat, will come against those Christians settling down in and associating themselves with the world; and Christ, at the time of His return, seated on a white horse, will come against those in the world itself.

Christ will speak, and it will be done; and that which He speaks will be in perfect keeping with that which He previously revealed in His Word.

*8. His Countenance...* ([Revelation 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV))

John then sums up the appearance of Christ by writing that “*His countenance* [His overall being] *was as the sun shining in its strength.*” The allusion is to the sun at noon on a cloudless day, too intense for man to gaze upon.

This is Christ in His glory, as John, along with Peter and James, had beheld him about sixty years earlier on the Mount. At that earlier time “*His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light*" ([Matthew 17:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+17.2&t=NKJV)). Now, six decades later, John sees the same glorified Christ and compares His complete being to the shining of the sun; and it is not just simply the sun shining but the *sun shining in its strength*.

Concluding Remarks

When Christians see Christ it will be *at His judgment seat*, and the description given in [Revelation 1:13-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13-16&t=NKJV) is exactly what they will see in that day. That which John saw caused him to fall at Christ’s feet “*as dead*” ([Revelation 1:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.17&t=NKJV)); and his experience will also be that of numerous Christians when they look upon Christ as Judge and realize that “*the terror of the Lord*” is about to be manifested ([2 Corinthians 5:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.11&t=NKJV); *cf.* [2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV)), and a “*fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries*” is about to occur ([Hebrews 10:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.27&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Hebrews 10:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.30&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter Three

**The Seven Churches**

*To the angel of the church of Ephesus . . . Smyrna . . . Pergamos . . . Thyatira . . . Sardis . . . Philadelphia . . . Laodicea . . I know your works . . . To him that overcomes .* . . . ([Revelation 2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.1ff&t=NKJV))

Revelation, chapters two and three consist of short, to-the-point epistles written to seven churches in Asia during the first century, during the time in which the Apostle John lived. These seven churches were specifically chosen by the Lord to not only receive the message given to John in the future Day of the Lord but to also set forth certain evident, spiritual truths in the opening part of this message.

Near the end of the first century, at the time John was removed into heaven to receive “*the Revelation of Jesus Christ*,” it is obvious that there were many churches scattered throughout Asia [groups of believers in different communities, comprising various churches], far more than the seven referred to in the opening chapters of the book of Revelation.

There were some five hundred to one thousand townships in Asia near the end of the first century; and through the dispersion of Christians and the evangelistic fervor of the early Church, with much of this evangelistic fervor concentrated in Asia (*cf*. [Acts 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.9&t=NKJV); [8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.1&t=NKJV), [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+8.4&t=NKJV); [11:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+11.19&t=NKJV); [19:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+19.10&t=NKJV), [26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+19.26&t=NKJV); [James 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.1&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.1&t=NKJV)), one could only conclude that there had to be numerous Christians, comprising many churches, in different communities throughout Asia by this time.

Thus, the seven churches appearing in the opening chapters of the book of Revelation could only have been chosen by the Lord from among numerous existing churches, and the Lord’s purpose behind not only selecting seven but selecting *these particular seven* becomes very evident as one studies the material in these opening chapters.

Seven Churches

“Seven” is one of four numbers used in Scripture to show *completeness* (“three,” “ten,” and “twelve” are the others). Each one shows completeness after a particular fashion. “Three” shows *divine completeness*. “Seven” is somewhat similar to “three” in the sense that it is a number associated with deity. It is God’s number, and in this respect it is used in Scripture numerous times to show *the completeness of that which is in view*. “Ten” shows *numerical completeness*, and “twelve” shows *governmental completeness.*

When the Lord used the number “seven” in the first three chapters of this book, referring to seven churches in Asia, He, by this means, was also referring to the complete Church (the completeness of that which was in view, *i.e*., “the Church”). These seven churches are spoken of and dealt with in the book of Revelation in *an all-inclusive sense* (*cf.* [Revelation 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.4&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.11&t=NKJV), [16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV); [2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.1ff&t=NKJV)). Insofar as revelation in this book is concerned, there were *no other churches* in Asia. These “seven” are looked upon as comprising a summation of the whole, *the complete Church*.

In this respect, any one of the numerous other churches in existence in Asia during John’s day could not be named or even alluded to in the opening chapters of the book of Revelation, for *the complete Church* is shown within the scope of the “seven” that are listed. This is the reason that there is a repeated reference to “seven churches,” no more, no less — calling them “the seven churches that *are in Asia*,” looking upon them, in actuality, as *the only churches in Asia* — in the opening three chapters of this book.

These seven churches show not only the complete Church in Asia during John’s day but also the complete Church in the world throughout the dispensation. This is evident by that which is shown at the very beginning of the book, in chapter one — the seven churches appearing in Christ’s presence in the future Day of the Lord. These seven are used to represent the complete Church — all Christians throughout the entire course of the dispensation — appearing in Christ’s presence to be judged in that future day when we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (*cf.* [2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV)).

By having John send “*the Revelation of Jesus Christ*” to “*the seven churches that are in Asia*,” viewing these churches in *an all-inclusive sense*, the Lord clearly revealed that this message was for the complete Church, represented by the seven. It was also for the other congregations in Asia or any other part of the world during that time, as well as all congregations in the world during any intervening time since. The message in this book is thus for all Christians at any time during the dispensation.

*1. An Overview of Chapters Two and Three*

Two entire chapters of the book of Revelation are given over to material pertaining strictly to the seven churches. Seven short epistles — one directed to each of the seven churches — form all of the material comprising these two chapters. And each of the seven epistles follows exactly the same outline: (1) Introductory words, drawn from that which has already been revealed about Christ in chapter one, (2) the statement, “*I know your works*,” (3) certain things peculiar to each church, and (4) an overcomers’ promise to each church.

God has taken a rather lengthy segment of the book of Revelation to record a number of things to and about the seven churches in Asia, and these seven epistles can only be filled with meaning and spiritual significance. There are seven churches, there is an order to the way these churches are listed, and certain things are said to and about each church within this order.

Possibly the best way to illustrate what God did in His choice of these churches and the arrangement of material set forth in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV) is to illustrate what He did prior to this time in establishing the types within Scripture. One was done exactly in the same fashion as the other.

God, in His sovereignty, allowed certain things to occur (beginning with the sin of Satan and the subsequent ruin of the earth prior to the creation of man) in order that He might have these occurrences (and also the subsequent experiences of Adam and his descendants), forming the types within Scripture, to draw upon as object lessons to later teach His people the deep things of God. Everything occurred within the scope of God’s sovereign control of matters. God does not draw spiritual lessons of this nature from haphazard experiences.

And it is the same with the seven churches in the book of Revelation. God, in His sovereign control of matters, allowed certain things to occur within seven particular churches in Asia during the first century for particular purposes — that at the end of the first century He could have these seven churches and the things peculiar to each to draw upon in order to teach His people, for the next nineteen centuries, numerous spiritual truths surrounding the Church.

*2. A History of the Church*

With the seven churches pointing to the complete Church as shown numerically, one would naturally be led to look for a fore-view of the history of Christendom during the dispensation, and even more so since the first and seventh of these epistles fit perfectly within the framework of that which Scripture elsewhere reveals about the beginning and end of Church history during Man’s Day.

It is entirely by divine design that Ephesus (which had left its “*first love*”) is mentioned first and Laodicea (which had never known a “*first love*” but, rather, is presented as “*wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*”) is mentioned last. The dispensation began after a fashion described by Christ’s words depicting conditions in the church in Ephesus, and it will end after a fashion described by Christ's words depicting conditions in the church in Laodicea.

During the Apostolic period, “*the hope of the gospel*” (which has to do with “*the mystery*” revealed to Paul [“*Christ in you, the hope of glory*”]), was proclaimed to “*every creature* [‘the whole creation,’ Weymouth] *under heaven*” ([Colossians 1:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.23&t=NKJV), [26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.26-27&t=NKJV)). But Scripture presents conditions in Christendom at the end of the dispensation in a completely opposite framework.

The departure of Christians from their “*first love*” eventually resulted in complete apostasy in Christendom — Christians refusing to have anything to do with “*the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*,” *i.e*., Christians departing from particular biblical truths that were widely proclaimed by the Church during the Apostolic period but would not be proclaimed by the Church at the end of the dispensation (*cf.* [Jude 1:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3-4&t=NKJV)).

It was the Lord Himself who asked the question while on earth the first time,

*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find [the] faith on the earth?* ([Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV))

The way the question is worded in the Greek text necessitates a *negative* answer. When the Son of Man comes He will not find “*the faith*” on the earth (an expression in Scripture peculiarly related to the Word of the Kingdom, the salvation of the soul, or, as in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV), overcoming and subsequently occupying a position with Christ in the kingdom [*cf.* [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV); [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV)]). Rather than finding “*the faith*” on the earth when He returns, the Son of Man will find conditions in Christendom exactly as described in His words to the Church in Laodicea in [Revelation 3:15ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.15ff&t=NKJV).

(Note the section dealing with the Messianic nature of the Lord’s title, “*the Son of Man*,” in Part 2 of this series. It is “*the Son of Man*,” the One about to possess dominion over the earth, who will not find “*the faith* [the message concerning Christians having a part as co-heirs with Him in His dominion]” being proclaimed by the churches at the time of His return.)

The thought of a history of Christendom being presented in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV) must be understood within the framework of the subject matter in these two chapters. The seven epistles deal with the works of Christians in relation to overcoming or being overcome, with a view to the coming judgment of Christians and the Messianic Era that follows. In short, the epistles deal with the Word of the Kingdom; and that part of Church history that is covered within the scope of these seven epistles must, contextually, center on the direction that Christendom takes over a 2,000-year period in relation to this message.

*3. Present Conditions in Christendom*

The Word of the Kingdom is the central message that is supposed to be proclaimed by pastor-teachers in the churches of the land during *the entire dispensation*. This is the message that was proclaimed throughout the entire known world during the Apostolic period and the message Christ will not find even being proclaimed in the world when He returns. And it is this central thought that must be kept in mind when viewing a panorama of Church history in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV). Church history is not covered in a broad sense in these two chapters. Rather, it is covered in a very restricted sense.

Why has Church history gone in this direction? Why did the Church leave its “*first love*” and eventually end up in its present apostate state? The answer is very simple. The leaven that the woman placed in the three measures of meal in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV) has progressively done its damaging work during two millennia of time. And not only is this the case, but once the working of the leaven had brought Christendom into the state described by the seventh church, the Laodicean church, the leaven could then rapidly finish the work that it had begun almost two millennia earlier.

Leaven works best in a place where the temperature is not too hot or too cold, and the “*lukewarm*” conditions existing in the Laodicean state of Christendom provide a very conducive atmosphere for the leaven to complete its work in a rapid manner. Because of this, the leaven today is actually doing its most rapid, damaging work of the entire dispensation.

This is the reason why a person can go into the churches of the land today and begin talking about any number of subjects, except one, and encounter very little problem or opposition. But let him begin talking about the one subject that was uppermost in the mind of the Lord before the inception of the Church, or uppermost in the minds of the Apostles and others in the early Church (before or about the time that the leaven began its work in Christendom) and see what happens. Let him begin talking about the Word of the Kingdom, and trouble will immediately surface. Apostate Christendom, brought into a place separate from “*the faith*,” will be antagonistic toward and will have nothing to do with this message.

Thus, don’t be surprised when you find Christians, even in so-called fundamental circles, who will not only reject but be antagonistic toward the things having to do with the coming kingdom of Christ. The leaven has been working toward this end for almost two millennia, and that which is very evident in Christendom today is the end result. The condition in which Christendom presently finds itself is *exactly* the condition in which Christendom had been prophesied to exist at the end of the dispensation.

Messages to the Churches

As previously stated, each of the seven messages to the seven churches follows exactly the same outline: (1) Introductory words, drawn from that which had already been revealed about Christ in chapter one, (2) the statement, “*I know your works*,” (3) certain things peculiar to each church, and (4) an overcomers’ promise to each church.

The messages to the seven churches are directed, not to the churches themselves, but to the angels of the churches: “*To the angel of the church of* [‘in’] *Ephesus . . . Smyrna . . . Pergamos . . . Thyatira . . . Sardis. . . Philadelphia . . . Laodicea write* . . . .”

These angels are heavenly messengers and could only be identified as angels from among the “*ministering spirits*” in [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV), ministering on behalf of Christians relative to “*so great salvation*,” “*the saving of the soul*” ([Hebrews 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.3&t=NKJV); [10:39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.39&t=NKJV)) — or contextually in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV), relative to overcoming and realizing a position as co-heir with Christ in the coming kingdom (*cf.* [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)).

In Hebrews, chapter one, angels are seen as spirits ministering on behalf of individual Christians; but in Revelation, chapters two and three, angels are seen as spirits ministering on behalf of groups of Christians, comprising churches. Angels are thus presented in Scripture as ministering on behalf of Christians on both individual and corporate levels.

Though the different messages in Revelation, chapters two and three are directed to the angels ministering on behalf of the churches, the messages are for and concern the churches themselves, not the angels *per se*.

The material concerns the angels only in the sense that they have been placed over the churches and occupy positions in which they can minister on behalf of the churches in relation to that which is in these messages.

(For additional information concerning these angels, see the author’s books, [Bible One - Judgment Seat of Christ by Arlen Chitwood](file:///C:\Users\Marsha\Pat%20Groves\Documents\Pat\Bible%20One%20-%20Judgment%20Seat%20of%20Christ%20by%20Arlen%20Chitwood), chapter 3, and, in this site, [So Great Salvation BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-four.php#So%20Great%20Salvation%20BOOK), chapter 2.)

*1. Introductory Words*

Revelation, chapter one provides the background material for chapters two and three, and these two chapters would stand alone, in a non-intelligible sense, apart from chapter one. Chapter one provides numerous descriptive statements concerning Christ, but revelation in the chapter centers on John being removed into the future Day of the Lord and seeing the Church (the complete Church, all Christians [represented by the seven churches]) appearing in Christ’s presence to be judged.

Then chapters two and three also contain a number of descriptive statements concerning Christ. Each of the seven epistles to the seven churches begins with one or more descriptive statements, and each is drawn from material in chapter one.

The descriptive statements in these three chapters could all be looked upon under four different headings: (1) the deity of Christ, (2) His finished work of redemption, (3) Christ as Judge, and (4) Christ as King.

The One who is co-equal with the Father, the “*I AM*” of Scripture (*cf.* [Exodus 3:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.13&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.14&t=NKJV); [John 18:4-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+18.4-8&t=NKJV)), purchased the Church “*with His own blood* [the blood of God ([Acts 20:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.28&t=NKJV))]” with a purpose in view. And that purpose is intimately connected with His coming reign over the earth. However, prior to His reign, Christians must be judged. And it is with all these things in mind that the descriptive statements concerning Christ are given in the first three chapters of this book.

Chapter two, opening with the message to the church in Ephesus, begins by showing Christ in the midst of the seven churches and by calling attention to the angels of the seven churches ([Revelation 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.1&t=NKJV)). Since these angels are mentioned within the scope of the judgmental description of Christ in the first chapter ([Revelation 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV)), the only logical conclusion would be that they will somehow have a part in Christ’s judgment of Christians. God has always used angels to carry out affairs in His kingdom, and angels will apparently be very active in events surrounding the judgment seat of Christ.

The scene beginning the second chapter of this book is thus one of *judgment*. Christ is presented as walking “*in the midst of the seven lampstands* [the seven churches]” with the angels of the seven churches in His presence, which is a judicial scene drawn from chapter one ([Revelation 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13&t=NKJV), [16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV)).

The next descriptive statement concerning Christ in chapter two, beginning the message to the church in Sardis, centers around the *eternity* (deity) *of Christ and His finished work of redemption*. He is "*the first and the last*," and He is also the One who “*was dead, and is alive*” ([Revelation 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.8&t=NKJV)). The One who will judge the Church is described as the One who not only has existed from all eternity but has also redeemed the Church.

In messages to the next three churches, the churches in Pergamos, Thyatira, and Sardis, reference is made to things having to do with Christ as *Judge*. He is described as the One “*who has the sharp two-edged sword*,” “*who has eyes like a flame of fire*,” and “*feet like fine brass*”; and reference is again made to the angels of the seven churches, along with the “*seven Spirits of God*” ([Revelation 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.12&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.18&t=NKJV); [3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Revelation 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.4&t=NKJV), [14-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.14-16&t=NKJV)).

Then in the messages to the last two churches, the churches in Philadelphia and Laodicea, reference is made to *Christ’s Kingship* and to things surrounding *His deity* once again ([Revelation 3:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.7&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.14&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Revelation 1:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.5-6&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.8&t=NKJV)).

God’s *message* in this seven-fold description of Christ is very simple: God is calling attention to the One existing from all eternity who will one day reign over the earth ([Revelation 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.8&t=NKJV); [3:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.7&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.14&t=NKJV)); but the One who will reign has *first* provided redemption ([Revelation 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.8&t=NKJV)), and He will also *first* execute judgment ([Revelation 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.1&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.12&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.18&t=NKJV); [3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1&t=NKJV)).

*2. I Know Your Works*

God's judicial activity has always been and will always be on the basis of “works.” There is no such thing as God executing judgment apart from works.

God, for example, judged sin in the person of His Son on the basis of the Son’s finished work; and *God is satisfied*. This is the reason unredeemed man can come into possession of eternal salvation only one way — by receiving that which has already been done on his behalf.

The things surrounding Christ’s finished work can never enter into any future judgment of man, whether saved or unsaved. That is, no man can ever stand before Christ to be judged on the basis of his eternal salvation. Judgment surrounding this matter has already occurred in past time, and it can never occur again.

This is the reason we find in [John 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18&t=NKJV) that the one believing on Christ “*is not condemned* [‘judged’],” but the one “*that believeth not is condemned* [‘judged’] *already.*” No judgment relative to eternal salvation can await the believer (it has already occurred [*cf*. [Romans 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.1&t=NKJV)]); nor can judgment relative to eternal salvation await the unbeliever (it has already occurred also, for it is the same judgment, occurring at the same time, as for the believer).

God judged sin in the person of His Son once, never to be repeated; and unsaved man, in relation to God’s judgment upon sin in the person of His Son, has already been judged. A perfect tense is used in the Greek text in [John 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18&t=NKJV), indicating that judicial activity surrounding unsaved man occurred in past time and presently exists in a finished state. Unsaved man has already been judged, and that’s the end of the matter.

Some Christians have sought to view the first part of [John 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18&t=NKJV) and [Romans 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.1&t=NKJV) in relation to Christ’s judicial activity at His judgment seat, leaving them with a one-sided, erroneous view of this future judgment. God’s judicial activity in the past is one thing, and Christ’s judicial activity in the future is something completely different. Both have their basis in works; but they are completely separate judgments, surrounding completely different matters, occurring at completely different times, for completely different reasons, based on completely different works.

If a person, on the basis of Christ’s past finished work, is going to say that a Christian can never enter into any type future judgment (leaving the judgment seat of Christ operable only in the realm of rewards), he is going to be forced to say exactly the same thing about unsaved man relative to future judgment at the Great White Throne. Unsaved man can no more be judged at the Great White Throne on the basis that is being used ([John 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18&t=NKJV); [Romans 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.1&t=NKJV)) than saved man can escape judgment on this basis at the judgment seat of Christ.

Judgment that is waiting for both saved and unsaved man will be on the basis of works — *their own works* ([Matthew 16:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.27&t=NKJV); [Revelation 20:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.12&t=NKJV)). There’s no other basis upon which they could be judged. Their prior acceptance or rejection of the finished work of Christ will only determine which judgment they will enter into. Their eternal destiny will have already been determined, and it can have *nothing* to do with that which will occur at either of these future judgments.

This is the reason that the works of Christians are mentioned first in each of the seven messages to the seven churches, immediately following the introductory words concerning Christ. “Judgment” is in view (from chapter one; note also how the first of the seven epistles is introduced in chapter two — Christ, as *Judge*, walking in the midst of the seven churches [[Revelation 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.1&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Revelation 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV)]), and it can’t be a judgment on the basis of eternal verities. The eternal destiny of those being judged will have already been settled, on the basis of God’s past judgment surrounding the past finished work of Another.

Consequently, something entirely different is being dealt with in these seven epistles when the works of Christians are mentioned.

A judgment of Christians, with a view to overcoming and occupying a position on the throne with Christ, is the only thing that could possibly be in view (and, contextually, it is clear that this is exactly what is in view); and the only basis for this judgment will be *the works of those being judged.* Thus, each of the seven epistles, after introductory statements concerning Christ, begins exactly the same way: “*I know your works* . . . .”

*3. Peculiarities of Each Church*

The “*Nicolaitans*” appear to occupy a prominent place in the facet of Church history depicted by the seven churches in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV). These individuals are named in the first and third of the epistles to the seven churches (epistles to Ephesus and Pergamos), and there is a sharp deterioration in the attitude of Christians toward “*the faith*” in these epistles, which would seem to be connected with what is said about the Nicolaitans.

Outside of Revelation, chapter two, there is no known sect in Church history (biblical or secular) by the name Nicolaitans. Some early writers tried unsuccessfully to connect this group of individuals with *Nicolas of Antioch*; and others, following in their steps, try this even today. However, such a connection cannot be established, which leaves one with a sole method of identification — *the meaning of the word itself*.

The reference can only be to a group of individuals in the early Church whose practices and doctrine are self-explained by the term that Christ used to identify them. Apart from this method of identification, nothing can be known about the Nicolaitans.

The word “*Nicolaitans*” is a transliterated, compound word from the Greek text, derived from *nikao* (“to conquer”) and *laos* (“people”). Thus, the word simply means, “to conquer the people.” Using the meaning of the name itself after this fashion, the Nicolaitans would have to be identified as individuals in the Church who had subjugated the remaining Christians to their self-imposed authority — individuals comprising a ruling class (the clergy over the laity), something condemned by Scripture in no uncertain terms.

*Authority* within the Church must *always* be based *solely* upon “service.” Those occupying positions of leadership (elders, deacons) must always minister (serve) within this sphere of activity, which is to bear no relationship whatsoever to authority exercised by those in the world (*cf*. [Matthew 20:25-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.25-28&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 16:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+16.15-16&t=NKJV)). Nicolaitanism is simply a corruption of delegated authority within the Church, exercising this authority after a forbidden pattern — after the pattern set forth by the world.

Christians in the church in Ephesus were said to hate “*the deeds of the Nicolaitans*” ([Revelation 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.6&t=NKJV)), but this was not said about Christians in the church in Pergamos. Rather, in the church in Pergamos, Christ alone is mentioned as hating their “*doctrine*”; and the Nicolaitans appear to have found acceptance in the Church by this time.

Christians in the church in Smyrna — the church that Christ singled out after He mentioned the Nicolaitans in the church in Ephesus but before He mentioned them in the church in Pergamos — were exhorted to be faithful; but such was not to occur. By the time one reaches the epistles to the third and fourth churches (Pergamos and Thyatira), doctrinal corruption appeared to be rampant. The doctrine of Balaam was being taught, and a woman identified by the name “*Jezebel*” was being allowed to teach Christians things surrounding sexual immorality and idolatry (see the author’s book, [Bible One - Judgment Seat of Christ by Arlen Chitwood](file:///C:\Users\Marsha\Pat%20Groves\Documents\Pat\Bible%20One%20-%20Judgment%20Seat%20of%20Christ%20by%20Arlen%20Chitwood), chapters 7, 8).

Contextually, the “*deeds of the Nicolaitans*,” brought about through the working of the leaven, appear to have been the means by which the working of the leaven then produced the additional named corruption in the churches.

The fifth and sixth churches that Christ addressed — the churches in Sardis and Philadelphia — reveal that even though corruption of the nature set forth in the churches in Pergamos and Thyatira will exist during the dispensation, there will still be faithful Christians in various churches ([Revelation 3:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.4&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV)). But the Church as a whole, in relation to the attitude of Christians toward the Word of the Kingdom, is going to exist at the end of the dispensation exactly as depicted by the seventh and last church that Christ addressed, the church in Laodicea ([Revelation 3:14ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.14ff&t=NKJV)).

*4. To Him Who Overcomes*

The promise ending each message concerning what Christ will do for the one overcoming becomes self-evident when these seven messages are viewed in their proper perspective.

“Overcoming” is *to conquer, to gain a victory*. The promise is to Christians alone, to those comprising the seven churches, *i.e*., to all Christians. Christians, rather than falling victim to the various forms of corruption arising in the Church are exhorted to remain “*faithful*” (*cf.* [Revelation 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.10&t=NKJV); [3:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.4&t=NKJV)), and seven different overcomers’ promises are held out for those who so govern their lives.

The overcomers’ promises are all *millennial* in their scope of fulfillment, and *they will be realized in the coming age when Christ and His co-heirs ascend the throne together.*