

02-07-07b Revelation

We're ready now to continue our study. We're back in Revelation chapter 1. Having reviewed the importance and significance of numbers and numeric quantities in the scripture, I wanted to point out one thing in that regard that I failed to mention, and that is, I had given it a passing mention of the relationship between 5 and 12, particularly in the Old Testament. We didn't say a whole lot about the number 5, other than the idea of completeness in the sense of, particularly in the priest having five fingers on each hand and so forth.

But the structure of the Old Testament is quite fascinating. I've been reviewing this with my girls in the evenings when we read. We take a little time, and we've been going through the Old Testament, and now we'll be starting on the New Testament, as far as familiarizing ourselves with each of the books and a few of its prominent features and a key word or two, and the category into which they fall.

It's very fascinating if you think about the structure of the Old Testament. You start out with the Pentateuch, which are the five books of the law, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. That's five books.

Then you have the five books of history. You have Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and then you have, actually I said five, there are twelve. I'm mixing my fives and twelves, because the whole Old Testament is organized on this principle.

Five books of the law, then twelve books of history. You'll see the reason for my confusion here in a minute. Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, for a total of twelve.

But in the Hebrew Bible, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are a single book. But within the books of history, you have three that are during the pre-monarchy or the theocracy, which is Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. Those take place during the time when God was to be the King of Israel.

Then in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, you have the books of the monarchy, three of those, which we split into six, and then you have the return from captivity in Ezra, Nehemiah, and of course Esther. It's kind of a special case there, but it's after the time of the monarchy and the captivity and the return. So that's organized into three sections for those twelve books.

So you have five of the law, you have twelve of history, or nine, depending on how you divide them up. But in our Bible, I think it's convenient to be twelve. Then you have the books of poetry, wisdom and poetry.

You have Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, and that's another set of five. Then following that you have major prophets. How many major prophets are there? There are five, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel, followed by the minor prophets,

and again there are twelve.

So you have five, twelve, five, five, and twelve that comprise all of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. And in that regard, it's quite interesting because, of course you have thirty-nine in the Old Testament, you have twenty-seven in the New Testament, and for a total of sixty-six books, which seems to me to be no accident that looking at the number six and the provision of God for man in this age, and the number six, six days of doing our labor and work, and if you think that that's sort of accidental or happenstance, take a look at the book of Isaiah. Isaiah, the great pinnacle of Old Testament prophetic revelation from God.

How many chapters are there in Isaiah? There are sixty-six. And the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah do the same thing that the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament do. They reveal the problem of sin, the problem of human failure.

And then beginning in Isaiah chapter forty and going through Isaiah sixty-six, you have, what's the first words of Isaiah chapter forty? Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem, because the time of her warfare is past, and so on. It's the revelation of salvation and deliverance and the power of God in forty through sixty-six, which is the message of the New Testament in its twenty-seven books.

So, again, there is an order and a structure and a symmetry to God's word that we could spend a lot of time exploring. But five is the number twelve minus seven. We talked about the factors.

Four plus three makes seven. Four times three equals twelve. Well, how do you get from seven to twelve? You add five.

And so five is a number that takes us from seven being the number where earth is crowned with heaven, heaven is added to earth. Multiplying always has the idea of power. We talk about powers of ten or powers of a number, meaning multiplication or exponential increase.

And so four times three, being twelve, you have this idea of a greater power and the power of God being expressed in mankind. Well, how do you get from seven to twelve? You have five. Five is the number of addition to what has already been revealed that brings you to completion.

That's why there are five books of the law. That's why there are five books of poetry and wisdom. That's why there are five major prophets.

These are provisions by God to get us to twelve, to get us to the place of God's power being revealed in His creation. So I wanted to point that out. As I say, you can easily delve off into the mystical and the speculative when talking about numbers, but there are some very well documented properties of those numbers and uses of numbers by God for symbolic purposes.

Nowhere is that more clear than in Revelation chapter one. Now that we have reviewed those numbers, I think you'll see why it is good for us to have spent a little time on that. Let's begin in

verse four of Revelation chapter one.

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. You will notice that there are a number of descriptions given for each of the members of the Trinity.

Who is God the Father? He is the one who is, who was, and who is to come. Threefold description, the number three. You have God the Holy Spirit and the number seven associated with Him.

He is a sevenfold spirit or manifested in seven manifestations before God's throne. And the Lord Jesus Christ has three descriptions. He is one, a faithful witness.

Two, firstborn from the dead. Three, the ruler over the kings of the earth. This is not an accident.

It is designed to remind us of the perfection, of the likeness. You'll notice that Jesus Christ is most like the Father. Three descriptions of the Father, three descriptions of the Son.

And the sevenfold spirit accomplishes the perfect revelation of the Son and through Him the Father. And then notice, we now reverse the process here and it talks about Christ. It says to Him who, and we have a threefold description, who loved us, who washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father.

To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierce Him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.

Even so, amen. And once again, there's another threefold description of Christ in verse 7. And when you add up the description of Him in verse 5b through 7, you have a total of six characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the revelation of Jesus Christ in and through human history.

He loved us, He washed us in His own blood, He made us kings and priests, He is coming with clouds, every eye will see Him, even the ones who pierced Him, and the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. So you have a threefold benefit to us, and you have a threefold time of judgment for those who reject Him. And then the Lord Jesus Christ speaks in verse 8, and once again the number 2, which is so often associated with the Lord Jesus.

He is the last Adam, the second Adam. He is the second person of the Trinity. He has twofold descriptions here.

I am the Alpha and the Omega. I am the beginning and the end, says the Lord. Who is, and who

was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

And so there, He is given the same description that God the Father was given earlier on. As far as being is, and was, and is to come. And so there you have a sevenfold description.

He is Alpha, Omega, the beginning, the end, who is, who was, and who is to come. He is the Almighty. So then in verse 9 you have, 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 which are in Asia, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea. 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. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead, but he laid his right hand on me, saying to me, Do not be afraid.

I am the first and the last. I am he who lives and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.

And I have the keys of Hades and of death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels, or messengers, of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Well, that's quite a section to cover, and there is a lot of detail that we could extract out of chapter one. Let's just note a couple of things in passing. First of all, once again in terms of authorship, verse 9, I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that was called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

And this is exile, this is a punishment that was inflicted by the Roman government, short of death, but by incarcerating John on the island, it was thought that his witness and activities would be limited. And of course, what looks like a limitation to man, can end up being an integral, essential part of the plan of God. And John is in a place where you would think he can't preach, he can't

function, his opportunities are virtually nil, and yet it is on the isle of Patmos that this greatest concluding book of prophecy is delivered to us from the throne of the Father.

So a quick point of application there, do not think when you look at your circumstances that somehow God is limited, or that God cannot accomplish his will and purpose and plan. Sometimes it is in the very difficulty and weakness and lack of opportunity that God manifests his power most strongly. And the human eye is very faulty when it comes to measurement, and we are quick to judge and we are quick to conclude that, well, nothing good is going to take place here, there's no real opportunity, and God delights in demonstrating that the wisdom of man is as foolishness with him.

So all of Rome's might and power to the contrary, God delivers a wonderful message to the church through the incarcerated John, who has no audience whatsoever when he writes this book. I also find it significant that the New Testament and the incursion of the Lord Jesus Christ into human history begins and ends with the ministry of a man named John, who is in a desert place, devoid of audience, devoid of opportunities. You start out with John the Baptist in the wilderness eating locusts and wild honey, preaching and ranting to the caves and the hills and the crickets and things out in the desert area, and the New Testament ends in much the same way.

You have another John on the Isle of Patmos, isolated and alone, each receiving a message from God and each being faithful to that calling and that mission that God has given them. So you can imagine that John might get sort of a big head. Here God has caught him up to the heavens and showed him things that are going to be after, and it would be easy to think, well, I'm just a pretty special guy.

I must have a really good standing before God for him to pick me out and let me be the purveyor of all of these wonderful mysteries and truths. But John is quick to dispel that impression. What does he say in verse 9? He says, I'm John.

He doesn't say, I'm John the Apostle. He doesn't say, I'm Saint John the Divine. He doesn't say, I'm... I don't know if you remember it or not, but I used to lay with my head in the bosom of the Lord.

He says, I'm John. I am your brother. I am your companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and in the patience of Jesus Christ.

What an unusual thing. If I was trying to make up scripture, John Smith, the founder of the Mormons, sat down and basically tried to make up his own scriptures. He'd been reading a lot of King James and kind of absorbed the rhythm and the these and thous and the what nots and all that.

So he thought, well, I'll sit down and just string out some words and make it sound like scripture.

And it's the worst hash. He didn't even know the rules for King James English, and he just makes a terrible mishmash of the whole thing.

I mean, even just from a literary point of view, it's wickedly funny when you read it. But here's John, and if I was going to sit down and write, I was going to say, well, here's what God said to John, or here's what John said when he was on the Isle of Patmos. I could think of a lot of things to describe John, but why would he say, I am your brother and companion in the patience of Jesus Christ? Why would he, of all the possible things he could have said? I can understand tribulation.

I can understand kingdom. But patience? Where does that come in? Well, the word patience here in verse 9 is hupomone, from hupomeneo is the verb. It means to bear up under, to persevere when pressure is on.

Anybody can persevere when there's no pressure. Anybody can persevere when it's something fun. We can kill ourselves doing something we enjoy.

We can engage in an activity and do it too long, too much, too excess, when it's motivating and when it's fun. But hupomone means to bear up, to bear with, to bear along, literally to bear up under something. So, he says, I'm your brother and your companion.

That word companion, by the way, is an interesting word. We've heard of koinonia, the word for fellowship. Soon is the Greek preposition that means with.

And this word companion is sugoinonas, sugoinonas, your fellow, I am your with-fellow, your with-companion, your fellowship with. Or co-fellowship would be a crude way of saying it. It says the brother, your brother, and the sugoinonas.

In the Philippians, T-H-L-I-P-S-E-I, Philippians is the Greek word for trouble or tribulation or trial. And it's even trouble to say it. T-H-L-I-P-S is not the most, doesn't roll trippingly off the tongue.

Philippians. And basileia, which is kingdom. And hupomone, N-E-A-S-U, in Jesus.

And, of course, there's a slight text variation between the various manuscripts. Some say Jesus Christ and some say Jesus. We know who he's talking about.

But, once again, brother and companion, tribulation and kingdom. And tribulation we understand. Jesus said that in this world we would have tribulation.

Paul talked about the fact that we have a momentary light affliction that is not worthy to be compared to the glory that is about to be revealed and the sons of God. So we understand that there is trial before triumph. We understand that there is the cross before the crown.

And what is it that takes us through the tribulation to arrive in the kingdom? It is hupomone. It is

patience. You have need of patience, the scripture tells us.

So that after you have suffered, you inherit. We find this word used throughout the New Testament. It's an important word.

It's one we need to understand. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 6, 4, talked about his role as an apostle. He said, in everything we are commending ourselves as the servants of God.

In much endurance, in much hupomone, in afflictions, in hardships and distresses, we don't fall apart, we don't unravel, we don't give up, we don't fall back. This is what commended Paul as an apostle. And servant of God.

What identifies the servant of God? Patience. It's the first characteristic. 1 Thessalonians 1, in verse 3, Paul says, we thank God for you, constantly bearing in mind your work of faith, your labor of love, and your steadfastness of hope, your patience of hope, your hupomone of hope.

The first thing to erode when we are attacked, when we are dissuaded, is our hope. Our patience, our endurance, is built on our hope. They're part and parcel of the same thing.

You can endure... Back before Dan was my dentist, when I was in an army dentist chair, and the guy is there working along, and it's uncomfortable, and he didn't get the nerves deadened, and he's drilling and chipping and hacking away, and they're pinching my lip between their hand, and my teeth, and one thing and another, and it's painful and uncomfortable, and there's a thousand other places I'd rather be. Put me in the desert, do anything, but don't sit there and just chip and hack and drill, and spread my jaw too far open, and mash my mouth, and all these other things. It's very much a patience situation.

Well, what is it that gets you through? Why don't I just leap up and say, I outrank you, get away from me. You hack, you're incompetent. Why do we sit there and submit to something that's painful and uncomfortable? Because we have the hope that when it's finished, things will be better.

I won't be able to chew on that side eventually, after I go back two more times and have them level off the high spots they left, or they don't level them off, and I bite down and crack the filling, and have to go back and have it replaced. All of this happened until I wound up under the administrations of someone that really knew what they were doing and how to do it. You can think of a thousand illustrations where we endure because we expect things to be better on the other side.

We know that this momentary discomfort is necessary to get to a greater state afterward. Well, that's what it's talking about. Constantly bearing in mind, Paul says, the thing I pray about, the thing I'm thankful for, is that you growing believers in Thessalonica, your faith results in works.

He says we remember your work of faith. And your love results in labor. You put yourself out.

You do things that are an expression of love. In the same way that your faith works itself out, your love works itself out. But hope doesn't work itself out.

Hope doesn't do work. Hope doesn't do labor. Hope is steadfast.

Hope is hupomone. They don't lose their hope. Because I promise you, if they lose their hope, their work is going to be work without faith, and their labor is going to be labor without love.

And you can look any direction in this country and in the Christian world today, and you will find work without faith. And you will find labor without genuine love. And the reason is, there is no steadfast hope.

People do not understand the plan and purpose of God. They do not understand the promises of God. They don't understand the provision of God.

They do not understand the gifts and calling of God and what they're for. They do not understand the glory of God. It's tragic.

Listen to the radio. Watch television. Talk to believers.

It's just tragically depressing sometimes how few of us can cling to our hope in a steadfast way. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 4. Paul writing to the same church. He says, Therefore we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your what? Your hupomone of faith.

Your perseverance of faith in the midst of all of your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. You are steadfast. You don't let your faith erode.

And the key to not letting your faith erode is not letting your hope erode. And to keep our hope alive, you know they have this phrase, keep hope alive. How do we keep our Christian hope alive? We have to stay in the word of God.

It has to be real to us. 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 11. And Paul's closing words to Timothy in that book.

He's talking about all of the failures that run rampant in the church and particularly in Christian leadership. And he says, But you, Timothy, flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, pursue godliness, pursue faith, pursue love, pursue hupomone, pursue perseverance, and pursue gentleness. These are not things that come to us naturally.

We have to run after. We have to chase righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Paul wrote another letter to Timothy later on.

And in 2 Timothy 3.10, he says, You have followed my teaching. You have followed my conduct.

Paul set an example as an apostle of purpose, of faith, of patience, of love, and of perseverance.

Hupomone. That's a part of the pattern of life that ought to characterize us as believers. In Titus chapter 2 and verse 2. How are older men supposed to be in the church? The ones who are elders and setting an example? They are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, and in perseverance.

Sound in hupomone. You can look around and scratch your head about how churches can tolerate leadership that is not temperate, not dignified, not sensible, and certainly not sound in faith, in love, or in perseverance. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 36.

This is the verse I quote so often. Let me back up a little bit. The author of Hebrews says in verse 34, You had compassion on me in my chains and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

Now that's hope, isn't it? That's a confident expectation just as we've been seeing in Luke where Jesus says those who have left behind father and mother and brothers and sisters and houses and lands will have it restored a hundredfold. You have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. So he says in Hebrews 10, verse 35, Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

Confidence has great reward. Verse 36. You have need of endurance.

You have need of hupomones. It's the first word in verse 36. Hupomones for, gar is the word for for, hupomones, gar, echete, crayon.

You have need of endurance so that after you have done the will of God you may receive the promise. Well, there are many, many passages in the scripture that we could point to. James chapter 1 and verse 3. Knowing that the testing of your faith produces hupomone.

If you want endurance, you've got to undergo testing. And let hupomone, let endurance, have its perfect result so that you may be perfect and complete. Isn't that an interesting thought? Let patience have its perfect work so that you may be perfect, so that you may be complete, so that you lack nothing.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally without reproach. But let him ask in faith with no doubting. Doubting is what erodes away our faith.

He who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. Let not that man suppose that he will receive anything of the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Well, this is why John, in establishing his credentials to deliver this message, and in identifying himself to his hearers, says he is the co-partaker, he is the fellow friend, or the friend with, the koinonia sug koinonos, with those who will read this letter. In 2 Peter chapter 1, you remember

that Peter says you need to add one thing to another. He says in 2 Peter 1 verse 6, In your knowledge add self-control, and in your self-control add perseverance, and in your perseverance add godliness.

Lots of people endure. They had flooding down in South Texas, and the news people are all saying the same thing. Look at how people are banding together.

Look at how they are helping one another in the spirit of community. Isn't this wonderful? Isn't it great? Well, some of these people are rank unbelievers, others are believers, but they are all getting through. They are all going to survive, unless they just stand on a pile of sandbags and dive in or something.

Everybody is going to get through. It is not just perseverance. It is perseverance that is in this sequence of knowledge and self-control and godliness.

It is a godly endurance. Everybody gets through. Read Mommy Dearest.

Joan Crawford's daughter survived her childhood. Lots of people survive horrible things, and it doesn't bring them to God. It isn't a part of the fruit of the Spirit.

It isn't something that seizes and lays hold of the power of God or of eternal inheritance. Anybody can endure. People have all kinds of coping mechanisms.

It needs to be endurance that is a part of the plan of God. We are going to see, when we get into this first letter in Revelation 2, to the church in Ephesus, that one of the things that is going to be noted about that church is that they have hupomone. If we look at just one or two other passages in this regard, it is so important a concept and so overlooked in our day.

People want to pray away trouble. They want to pray away disease. They want to bind Satan.

They want to cast out demons. They want trouble and tribulation to vanish. O Lord, take this away.

Make it disappear. I don't like this. I don't want this.

If you never have something unpleasant, then where is your hupomone? Without hupomone, there is no reflected glory of God. Colossians 1, verse 11, Paul talks about being strengthened with God's might, or God's power. If we back up a little bit in verse 9, for this reason we also, this is Colossians 1, verse 9, You know what I would like? I would love it if the Apostle Paul was here, and if I was on his prayer list, and the Apostle Paul went to God the Father in prayer, and he said, What a great prayer.

Can you think of a greater thing to pray for anybody than to be filled, not just access it, not just see it from time to time, but to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and all spiritual

understanding. That is a prayer I would love to be prayed. So that, what is the purpose of the prayer? So that you may walk worthy of the Lord.

That is as much as you can ask as a believer, to walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. You are already filled, and now you are increasing. What has to happen if you are already full of something, and then it increases? You have to expand.

You have to stretch. You have to grow. Your capacity has to increase.

Increasing in the knowledge of God. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, according to the standard of his power. Strengthened.

That same power we have talked about in Ephesians, the last half of the chapter 1, where it talks about the power that raised Christ from the dead, reached down into the grave, resurrected him, raised him not only from the dead and back onto the surface of the planet, but up through the heavens, far beyond all principalities and power, to seat him at the right hand of the glory on high. God's right hand. That power.

Paul says, I pray that you will be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power. What for? For all patience and long-suffering with joy. Paul's prayer is that as they attain that knowledge and access that power, that their hupomone be with joy.

It's not a grinding, Calvinist, minor key, gritting your teeth and trudging to glory kind of a thing. To have hupomone with joy. Now that's a tricky thing.

That is hard for us to fathom, much less to attain. But if you're looking at the standard of God's power, you can have all patience and long-suffering with joy, and giving thanks. Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

He's delivered us from the power of darkness, conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. It goes on to a great doxology of the Lord Jesus Christ. But that is the patience that we need.

James says in James 5.11, We count those blessed who have endured. You've heard of the endurance of Job, and you've seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. Of course, you can't get any better example than the example of Job himself.

So, back now to Revelation chapter 1. That's why you find this sort of unusual notice given of Hupomone, I am your brother and your companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. I was on the island that is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. And it is one thing to suffer, and it is something else to suffer for the sake of righteousness.

There are times when we take a stand or we maintain a policy in the face of criticism or in the face of the upturned nose and the downcast eyes of others who look at us askance and say, Well, I think you're weird. I think you're nuts. I think you're some kind of a fanatic.

I think you're some kind of a religious nut of some sort. It's worse when it comes from someone close to us and someone whose opinion we want to be high within. But here, John has been exiled because of the word of God, because of the testimony of Jesus Christ.

This tells us that he is not some obscure monk somewhere. This is the Apostle John who was well-known and who Rome saw as a threat and they felt that they had to isolate him, incarcerate him, put him in cold storage. He says, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.

Now, a lot of speculation has been made about what it means to be on the Lord's day. We assume that this is Sunday, but there are those who have thought that the Lord's day was Easter, was the resurrection day. The problem with this is that in the early church, Easter was celebrated in different ways and even on different days.

In the church that existed in Asia Minor in the early centuries of the church, they followed the Jewish calendar and celebrated Easter on 14th Nisan, on Passover. That would not fall on a Sunday. It would fall on whatever day 14th Nisan falls on.

It varies from year to year. There are people that have thought that this is the day of the Lord, that he is talking about what he is going to see. The vision is about the day of the Lord, but the language is not right for that.

It says the Lord's day. It doesn't say the day of the Lord, which is consistent throughout the rest of the book. We have confidence that this is the first day of the week.

This is the eighth day. This is the day of the new beginning. One of the reasons we worship on Sunday is that it is the Lord's day.

It is a commemoration of the new beginning for a new dispensation, a new age. It says he was in the Spirit. There is a sense in which we should always be in the Spirit, but the Bible more often talks about the Spirit being in us.

We have the indwelling, we have the filling, we have the sealing ministry of the Spirit, but it is one thing to have the Spirit in us and it is something else to be in the Spirit. The idea here is that he was in an attitude of worship. What did Jesus tell the woman at the well back in the early chapters of John? He said, there is a time coming.

She said, should we worship up here at Mount Gerizim or should we worship down in Jerusalem? He said, there is a time coming when you won't worship either place, but those who worship God will worship him. How? In spirit and in truth. John was worshipping on Sunday.

That is the import, that is the implication of this phrase. He was in a special time of worship beyond the usual walking in the Spirit. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice as of a trumpet.

In verse 12 it tells us, then he turned to see the voice. Now, being the strange thinker that I am, it makes me wonder, why didn't Jesus appear in front of John? It is kind of like Star Trek, when they beam down they can choose the place. If the Lord Jesus is going to appear to someone in bodily form, he can come in wherever he wants.

So why did he choose to arrive behind John instead of in front? If I was going to go down and visit somebody, you might startle them or something going behind them. But he hears before he sees. He hears this statement, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.

I am the Alpha, the Omega, the first and the last. What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches. This is a fairly long speech that gets completed before John turns around.

John, throughout the book of Revelation, represents the church, represents believers. When he is caught up at the beginning of chapter 4, and his vantage point is to come up here, it is a picture of the rapture. John is our representative, if you will, for these things.

And what is his experience? He hears before he sees. That is our experience, isn't it? No man has seen God at any time. We haven't seen the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everything we know about Christ comes from what we hear. We hear first, and then we are going to see. What did Jesus say on the occasion after the resurrection when he appeared and Thomas put his finger in the nail prints and in his side where the spear came in? He said, you see and you believe.

Blessed are those who, not having seen, believe. And that is us. And it goes back to that idea of perseverance.

We operate in faith, fueled by hope manifesting itself in love. We hear before we see. But we are going to get the chance to do just what John did.

We are going to get to turn around and behold the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ someday in the not too distant future. Everything in this book is symbolic. Everything communicates.

Everything represents. As you can see, I am having a hard time even getting out of chapter 1 to get to chapter 2. But it is so important to understand that every word, every circumstance, everything that is mentioned means something. Every number, every detail has meaning for us as it is with the entire word of God.

We have seen from Genesis to Revelation, God is consistent in the way he reveals. What a privilege it is for us to be able to hear what the word of God has to say. And a great hope ought to

be fueled within us that not only do we hear, but one day we are going to be able to turn and behold.

Paul said, Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. That is our hope. We have need of hope.

We have need of endurance. Do not let that hope fade. Do not let it recede into the background.

It should drive every thought, every action. It should be behind everything we do each and every day. We are going to have to pause at this point.

We will resume next time in verse 12 and hopefully be able to get all the way up to the first letter to the church at Ephesus. We have some fascinating things to see in that regard. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank you for your grace and provision for us in so many ways. We know that if we simply learn to lean on your power and to access the resources you've placed at our disposal, we have unlimited power.