

Sent & Signified (1:1-2)

The Title of the Book

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ” is the abbreviated title of the Book. The complete title is really the first two verses:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.”

This prolonged title or prologue plainly states the name and the purpose of the prophecy. The source of this book isn't John the Apostle; it's Almighty God. And God gave it to Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ who then communicates this unveiling by the mouth of one of an angelic messenger to John, one of the original twelve apostles who was an eyewitness to everything recorded in the Gospels.

John the Amanuensis

John is not the source of this prophecy; he is simply an *amanuensis*. The Apostle Paul often used an amanuensis, one who transcribed his epistles for him. This is seen in Romans 16:22: ***“I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.”*** Paul dictated Romans to Tertius, and he wrote it down. The author of so many epistles in the New Testament probably had some vision difficulties after his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Eye trouble may very well have been the thorn in the flesh he beseeched the Lord to take from him. He tells the Galatians: ***“Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand” (Galatian 6:11)***. This remark is probably a reference to the large-size script he had used because it was difficult for him to see clearly. In some cases, Paul actually had to have an amanuensis write for him because he simply wasn't able to do it. In Romans, he dictated the words to Tertius.

Here in Revelation, Jesus Christ dictated to the Apostle John what to write through His angelic messenger. John isn't the author of Revelation; he is simply the amanuensis. He simply fulfilled the role of a scribe there on the island of Patmos.

The Endorsement of Jesus Christ

In 1:1-2, this prolonged title, we are told the entire prophecy was given by God the Father to Jesus Christ for the purpose of revealing it to His Church. In other words, Jesus Christ affixes His signature and His endorsement. At the end of Chapter 22, Jesus affixes that signature directly.

During His earthly ministry, Christ declared:

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32).

He is speaking of His future coming. Around AD 30, Jesus said no one knew the day or the hour of His coming, not even He Himself. Only God the Father knew. But, more than 60 years later, John is told that God revealed the details to the resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ. God revealed it to the Son, and the Son does know because it has been revealed to Him since the time of His earthly ministry. And here, the Son turns around to reveal these details to John.

Now, I know such a statement might make for difficult understandings in terms of the relationships that exist within the Trinity. Nevertheless, this truth is revealed in these verses. We can rest upon the authority of God's Word. God the Father, at some time subsequent to Jesus' statement in Mark 13:32, revealed these things to Him. In Acts 1:6, right before Christ's ascension, His disciples asked: ***“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”***

His disciples knew He was the Jewish Messiah and expected Him to fulfill all the Old Testament promises concerning the nation of Israel and the restoration of the throne of David. Jesus did not deny that any of this would happen. He simply replied,

“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7)

Jesus acknowledges those promises were there to be fulfilled. He didn't rebuke His disciples and say something like “Well, those promises aren't for Israel. This Church I am going to build replaces Israel, and all that literal stuff is really spiritual allegory.” The Lord didn't say anything like that. He simply affirmed that they need not concern themselves with God's timing in these matters.

God holds all of these things in His power from time immemorial. Some folks have a real problem with this. Having preached much in the open air, I have become accustomed to questions like: “How can God hold me responsible for sinning when He created us in the beginning; and He knew we would sin. He knew this, and He created me this way?” Now, I could get into a debate with folks who ask such questions, but the answer really is very simple. The Apostle Paul communicates it in Romans 9:21-23:

“O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.”

Who are we to say to the One who made us, “Why have you made us this way?” Who are we? God is the Potter, we are the clay. If He wants to fit some vessels to honor and some vessels to dishonor and destruction, that is His business and His purpose. Who are we to question that, as if, like Job and his friends, we know better? What if God, willing to make His mercy known to some, pours down wrath and judgment on others appointed to destruction? What if that is His divine plan? I don't have a problem with that, neither should you. God is GOD, and He never contradicts Himself. Everything that transpires is under God's hand, not man's. The answer really is to humble ourselves before the Lord, to humble ourselves before Him as our Maker. Then, He will draw nigh and

give understanding of such things. There is just such an arrogance with folks when it comes to what God should or should not do, and this hubris should have no place in the churches.

God holds all things in His hands, their timing, their seasons, the specifics—including all details written down in the Book of Revelation. Nothing can overthrow what He has purposed to do. These things will happen, and the Son of God knows all about it.

Now, does this back me into a “*!Que Será, Seráj*” corner? Not a chance. As a Christian, I understand that the LORD is in control of these things. Being able to rest in this magnifies His grace in my life. I may wonder: “Why didn’t He give me a spirit of hatred or rebellion? Why didn’t He allow me to go the ways of the world? Why did He save me instead of someone else?” And in these questions, His free grace is magnified, and like those elders in Revelation 4:10, I simply want to fall down on my face before Him and proclaim:

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

But alas, people love their sin. That is why they want to blame God for it. Notwithstanding, He holds all things in His power: the time of Christ's coming, the season, the specifics. What He has revealed to us, what He does reveal in this Book of Revelation is for our edification and comfort, so that we can have an understanding of the times. Every detail was not hidden from the Son. Everything in this Book was revealed to the Son to be shared with us.

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass

God gave the Lord Jesus Christ this prophecy, and Jesus, in turn, *shews* (i.e. to show and explain) it to servants by John, an amanuensis. He is to shew to His servants ***“things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1)***. Now, the Koine Greek phrase used here (εν ταχει) does not necessarily mean “soon” in reference to the time this prophecy was first given. It confers suddenness and swiftness. In other words, when these things begin, they will happen very

quickly. When the prophetic clock for Daniel's 70th week (cf. Daniel 9:27) starts ticking, events will transpire rapidly and suddenly. The events foretold in Revelation will not be drawn out over ages, centuries, or even decades of time. They will come suddenly; and they will consummate swiftly. Consider the words of the Apostle Peter:

***“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:9-10).*”**

You might ask, “Why are these things not happening today? Why is God not acting to finish His work for the Church, and why does He not pour out His judgment upon the nations?”

The answer is clear: The LORD is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. He has a plan and a sound purpose established before even time began. That plan included a period of time in which He would patiently wait, calling men to repentance. For when the Director finally does steps onto the stage, the play is over. Notwithstanding, verse ten cited above is very important. The day of the Lord WILL come, and it will come suddenly, like a thief in the night. And when it does come, all will transpire quickly. A decade really is a very quick period of time when compared to centuries and ages. Ten years is just a blip across two thousand years of church history, or the three thousand years since David sat upon the throne in Jerusalem, or the thousand years of ancient Rome's world dominance, or the almost four thousand years since God called Abraham. The period of Tribulation covered in Revelation, Daniel's 70th Week, or the ***“time of Jacob's trouble”*** as described in Jeremiah 30:7, isn't even ten years. It's only SEVEN.

When it all falls apart and Antichrist rises, his kingdom will be short. It won't be like the Roman Republic or the Roman Empire of old. It won't be like the Greeks of old or the great ancient world kingdoms that stood the test of time. It won't

be like America which has so far endured for more than two centuries. The kingdom of the beast will rise to ultimate power, and then it will fall in less than a decade. Once the wheels of God's wrath in the last days began to grind, they will turn quickly, quite unlike the wheels of true justice that turn so slow in America today.

I believe the beginning of ***“things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1)*** approaches. I believe these things are imminent; they could begin to happen at any time and happen quickly. The Tribulation begins with the signing of a treaty between Antichrist and the people of Israel. We cannot know exactly how this will look, but Daniel 9:27 is clear. For the 70th week, he [nearest antecedent to this pronoun is *prince that shall come* in 9:26] will ***“confirm the covenant.”*** And, in the middle of that 70th week, three and a half years later, he will break that covenant and set himself up in the temple in Jerusalem as God. Most of what is prophesied between Revelation 6-19 takes place in this latter half of that period, some of its in the first half. And yet, we are not looking for these things as Christians. We are looking for the imminent return of Jesus Christ to take us out. The Lord took Enoch out before the great judgment of the Flood. The Lord took Lot and his family out of Sodom before the great judgment of fire rained down from heaven. And so, He will also do for His faithful remnant before these days of judgment:

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:10).

As followers of Jesus Christ, we should be looking for this Church Age to close, for the fulness of the Gentiles to come in (Romans 11:25), for the restraining Holy Spirit and the indwelt Body of Christ to be removed from the earth (II Thessalonians 2:6-7):

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (II Thessalonians 2:8).

We should be looking for that blessed hope (Titus 2:13), that catching out of the Church ahead of the coming wrath and judgment. That rapture is imminent and could happen at any time. It could happen today, for there is no prophecy that must yet be fulfilled before the catching away of the Bride of Christ. And once that happens, at some point, these wheels of God's wrath, the wrapping up and fulfillment of all prophecy in this Book and the Book of Daniel, and the ushering of Christ's Kingdom will transpire shortly, or quickly.

Again, I truly believe we are living in the last days of the Church Age. But even if not, these things remain imminent, as they have been imminent throughout all of church history. The only way Christ's coming can be likened to a thief in the night for His Church is if the churches don't know when He is coming. The Book of Revelation spells out in great detail when and how He is coming in terms of the overthrow of Antichrist. The Book of Daniel spells out in great detail when and how He is coming in terms of Israel and the consummation of God's plan for that nation. All you have to do is calculate a week of years from the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and the son of perdition. At the end of that week, seven years later, Christ comes back to earth. That isn't imminent, and yet the Church is told to always be ready. Jesus' coming for those who are told to be ready at all times can only be truly imminent if He comes secretly to rapture His Bride, just like the bridegroom characteristically does in a Jewish wedding. The bridegroom comes unexpected; he carries his bride off in the night; and they go spend a period of time together before they come back and publicly announce the wedding. We shall talk more about that later. For now, just remember: when things happen, they ***“must shortly come to pass” (1:1).***

Sent & Signified

This first verse also reveals Jesus ***“sent and signified it [the Book of Revelation] by his angel unto his servant John.”*** The word translated “signified” (σημαίνω) is the verbal form of the Greek noun for *sign, wonder, or miracle* (see John 2:18, Revelation 12:1, Acts 15:12). Its use here indicates there are indeed signs and symbols in Revelation that convey and reinforce spiritual truth and reality. John saw things unfold, and then he describes what he saw in familiar terms, utilizing symbolic language. None of this, however, involves dark and obscure metaphor that cannot be understood. John uses meaningful symbols just as did the Lord

in His earthly ministry; and these symbols are explained just as the Lord explained what He signified. Revelation's symbols are either explained right there in the text of Revelation, or they are explained elsewhere in the prophetic Scriptures.

John is transported into the future to see future events. He writes down what he saw, describing these events in language that could be comprehended by his immediate audience, ***“the seven churches which are in Asia” (1:11)***. Consider the technology and military advances of today and imagine the Apostle John beholding, for example, the breaking of the sixth seal in Revelation 6:12-17. He describes what he sees as the sun going dark and the moon turning to blood. There are great earthquakes, and heaven shakes. The sky departs as a scroll and comes back together again. What did he see, and what is he signifying or describing?

Have you ever watched film footage of a nuclear bomb test? What happens when that bomb is detonated? Does not the sun go dark well beyond ground zero? Does not the haze of nuclear winter that follows give a bloody red tint to the sky? Indeed, a giant mushroom cloud is as if the sky opens like a scroll and slams right back together. The heaven indeed shakes. Perhaps John is seeing a nuclear holocaust and describes it accurately with meaningful and symbolic language that translates quite literally into the things we know and see today. Such is the power of God's Word to transcend centuries.

Later in Revelation, when John records that the mark of the beast will be *in* the forehead or *in* the right hand (13:16-17), he signified truth that we see today right before our eyes. Microchip technology is commonly used with pets these days, and there is already talk of implanting such chips in human beings for safety and security purposes and to track movement. It really isn't very difficult to see such things evolve into a mark or implanted microchip that people are required to receive in order to transact business. John was shown this advanced technology and signified it quite meaningfully.

Interestingly, when talk of these implanted microchips being inserted into people started making its way into headline discussions, Dr. Jerry Falwell, chancellor of Liberty University, my *alma mater*, went on record affirming that we need not

worry about such things. He spoke of how an implanted microchip cannot be the mark of the beast because the Bible says the mark is *on* the forehead or *on* the right hand. In Revelation 13:16, my King James Bible certainly doesn't say ON. Now, Dr. Falwell's New King James might have said that, but there is a big difference between *IN* and *ON*. One should be very careful about lightly dismissing what has been preserved and blessed for more than four hundred years as God's Word for English-speaking saints in the face of its literal present fulfillment. One should be especially careful when dismissing prophecy's literal fulfillment on the basis of some new and copyrighted translation that financially profits the translators, some of who are directly connected to Liberty University. As for me, I'll go with what my English forefathers have read and studied with God's blessing for four centuries and not fail to acknowledge its fulfillment right before my eyes.

Indeed, John saw things unfold; he described what he saw; and he used meaningful signs and symbols to do it. Symbols in the Bible are defined by the context in which they are used and by the whole context of Scripture. You cannot just pull them out and force a meaning upon them. The Apostle Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, calls such a thing *private interpretation*, and ***“no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (II Peter 1:20)***. This is the problem with the *allegorical, preterist, and historic* methods of interpreting Revelation. They result in private interpretations that contradict themselves, often within the same camp. While some claim Antichrist as the Roman Catholic Papacy persecuting the Reformers, others claims Antichrist to be one of the Roman Emperors. There is therefore no standard method of interpreting the symbols. Outside of a biblical symbol's immediate context and the whole context of Scripture, it is very dangerous and foolish to try to interpret it.

By His Angel

Let me sum up Revelation 1:1. The things that are written in Revelation must shortly come to pass. In other words, when they begin, they will transpire quickly. These things were signified. In other words, they are relayed using meaningful signs and symbols. And, they were sent to John by Jesus' angel.

Jesus Christ delivered this prophecy to John through a mediator, “**by his angel.**” The Greek word translated “angel” is *angellos* (αγγελος). It doesn’t connote wings, a halo, or robes. It simply means *messenger*, in this case, a *heavenly messenger*.

In Koine Greek, *angellos* can be used to reference a human messenger. When this word is used in the New Testament, it is defined as a ministering spirit (Hebrews 1:13-14). However, when Peter was thrown into prison in Acts 12 and the Lord let him out, he returned to the home of John Mark where a group of saints were gathered to pray. When he called at the door, a young lady who went to answer recognized his voice and ran back to tell the others. At first, they thought she was crazy (imagine that, praying for something and then thinking it crazy when God does exactly what you had been asking for). As she pressed them, however, they concluded, “**It is his angel**” (**Acts 12:15**), his *angellos*. In other words, these early Christians thought Peter had been killed and that his angel, or his spirit, had come to tell them something in a ministering fashion. An angel in the New Testament is a heavenly messenger. It could be Michael, Gabriel, or it could just be a ministering spirit sent from God to reveal something.

A heavenly messenger is indeed sent by Jesus to John on the Isle of Patmos, to deliver unto him “**The Revelation of Jesus Christ**” (1:1). This messenger is not identified by name, but clues are revealed in the book’s last chapter, in its epilogue. Jesus says He had sent “**mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches**” (22:16). This very angel has an interesting interaction with John a few verses earlier:

“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God” (22:8-9).

The one Jesus identifies as “my angel” identifies himself to John the Apostle as “thy fellowservant and of thy brethren the prophets.” One of the Old Testament

saints, not Michael or Gabriel, is the angel or heavenly messenger who delivers Revelation. The spirit of one of the Old Testament prophets was sent to reveal these things to John.

Now, when Jesus was glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah stood with Him; and they were recognized by Peter, James, and John (Mark 9:5). So, God did, on occasion, use the spirits of Old Testament prophets in something He was effecting. When King Saul visited the witch of Endor to inquire about what would happen in the upcoming battle with the Philistines, Samuel's spirit appeared to Saul. Even the witch was surprised and shocked (I Samuel 28:12). Here on Patmos, the spirit of one of the Old Testament prophets, perhaps Daniel, acts as Christ's messenger, a ministering spirit sent to deliver a message, an unveiling of Messiah.

Eyewitness Testimony

The eyewitness to everything that follows in this Book is ***“his servant John Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw” (1:1-2).***

John is not simply transcribing or dictating a story. He is not recording a myth. He writes down what he sees with his own eyes, just as He and the other apostles had written down what they saw with their own eyes when Jesus arose from the dead. The Book of Revelation is eyewitness testimony.

More than five hundred eyewitnesses saw and interacted with Jesus Christ after His resurrection. They ate with Him; they fellowshiped with Him. In Matthew 17, Peter, James, and John hiked with Jesus ***“up into a high mountain apart” (17:1).*** There on that summit, they beheld the Messiah in His glory with their own eyes, the same glory with which He will return to earth. Just before this, the Lord had spoken something to all his disciples that must have sounded strange:

“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matthew 16:28).

In other words, at least two of those disciples standing there that day would not die until they saw Jesus coming in His Kingdom. On the surface, scoffers might look at such a thing and remark: “Well, Jesus died and all the disciples died,” or “Jesus rose from the dead and went back to heaven. He hasn’t returned, and all the apostles are long gone. So, Jesus lied or meant something else.” And yet, the very next thing that transpires in Matthew’s Gospel is the Mount of Transfiguration. What did Peter, James and John see on that mountain? They saw the **“the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matthew 16:28)**. They were transported through the ages and saw the Son of God in His glory as He will be when He returns. And Moses and Elijah are there, ministering to Him. In Revelation 11, we shall see the ministries of two street preachers, **“my two witnesses” (11:3)** who will preach the Messiah and the judgment of God in Jerusalem during the time of Jacob’s trouble. I believe these street preachers are Moses and Elijah, and I’ll explain why with detail when we get to that chapter.

Peter, James, and John truly did live to see Christ coming in His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. They were eyewitnesses to that glory. Even more so, John actually lives out the very things Jesus said in Matthew 16:28 more than sixty years later on the Isle of Patmos. He was alive in the penal colony and was suddenly transported through future history to see the Second Advent of Christ in Revelation.

At one point, John was immediately translated into the throne room of heaven. I believe this is picture or type of the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church:

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.”

John actually went to this throne room, just as had Paul when he was caught up to the third heaven (II Corinthians 12:1-5). Like Paul, he was transported and

saw things in fulfillment of what Jesus declared. He was an eyewitness. All of Revelation is reliable eyewitness testimony.

A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY

The Apostle Peter also talks about seeing Jesus Christ in His glory:

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (II Peter 1:16).

He goes on to reflect upon his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, which leads me to believe that that incident was the indeed fulfillment of Matthew 16:28, as is also the Book of Revelation. Peter speaks of how he SAW the Lord transfigured, how they HEARD the voice from heaven. He experienced these things. He relays eyewitness testimony.

And yet, in verse 19, he says: ***“We have also a more sure word of prophecy.”*** In other words, there is something even more sure than eyewitness testimony. What Peter saw isn't what made it sure. Oh yes, that was powerful testimony, powerful evidence; but there is a more sure word of prophecy, the inspired and preserved Word of God.

And then Peter goes on to say in the next verse: ***“No prophecy of the Scriptures of any private interpretation” (1:20).*** That being true, the allegorical method for interpreting Revelation goes out the window.

When the Scriptures were given, men spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God. Therefore, the Scriptures are even more sure than the eyewitness testimony. As we read and study the Book of Revelation, we must remember that John was an eyewitness, just as he had been during the earthly ministry of Christ and as recorded in his Gospel. Yes, that is powerful evidence of the prophecy's veracity. But more sure than this is that John records Revelation by the Holy Spirit. And the fact that God inspired it and has preserved it down through the Church Age for us here toward it's end is the Holy

Spirit's stamp and testimony even today. Indeed, this is a more sure word of prophecy.

You can't always trust what your eyes see. There is a video on YouTube that was filmed out near where I live, just over the county line. It is footage from 2010 that appears to be *Knobby* (the local name associated with Cleveland County sasquatch lore) running across the road. Watching that video the first time, I concluded: "Well, that really could be the infamous Knobby." Watching it again, however, I thought: "There is no way that is a sasquatch." I just could not trust my eyes, what I was seeing in that short clip. John was an eyewitness, but that's not why we believe this Book of Revelation. We believe it because the Holy Spirit has given testimony to its truthfulness, and that is a more sure word of prophecy.

The Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ

Verse 2 says John bore witness to both God's Word and the testimony of the Messiah. He did that in his Gospel, his three short epistles, and here in Revelation. He bears record of the Written Word and of the Living Word.

I want to ask you a simple question. Is that your testimony as a Christian? Does your life, like John's, exist to bear record of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ? To bear record of the Word of God is to live the Word of God. It is not just to speak it, it is to live it. To bear record of the testimony of Jesus Christ is to proclaim the Gospel. Is that your testimony?

An important part of the Gospel, as we shall see here in this Book, is the return of Christ. John deemed it important enough to write about in detail and to call it "***testimony of Jesus Christ.***" Does your life bear record of the return of Christ? Are you living as if He is indeed coming back to set up a kingdom? Those who live so do not hold tightly to earthly things or the vanities of this life. Those who live so do not try to build an earthly kingdom because they know and understand that earthly kingdoms will inevitably fall. The one who bears record of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ lives as a pilgrim in these dark days. Such an one lives in the world but is not of it.

Are we faithfully proclaiming the future coming of Jesus Christ with our mouths and by our lives? That was John's testimony. It must be ours. The Lord's return is an important part of the Gospel. Yes, the simplest form of that message can be found in I Corinthians 15:3-4:

“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

And yet, the Gospel inevitably, and in its fuller sense, involves the return of Christ and the consummation of all things. Paul the Apostle says in 2 Timothy 4:8 that God has reserved a crown of righteousness for those who love the appearing of Christ. Do we love this appearing? Are we daily looking for it? Are we preaching it?

When Paul preached to the Greek philosophers atop Mars Hill in Athens, those who had little to no knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, he drew their attention to the *Unknown God* and declared that He who had winked at their ignorance and idolatry was now calling men everywhere to repent:

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

Paul's Gospel preaching to the Greek Stoics and Epicureans included the judgment of Christ at His second coming. We must declare the same when we preach the Gospel. That is to faithfully bear record of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ***“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).***

I encourage you even today: live like you are in the last days, and preach the last days as you preach the Gospel. Bear record of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Bear record of His return! Let us pause for a moment to pray:

Father, thank you for this opportunity to study your Word. I know it has already been long, but let us think of those poor and persecuted believers around the world for whom time is of no essence. They will sit around the Word of God and around the preacher of God for three or four hours in one afternoon. I simply pray that you will continue to speak to us through this very important Book of the New Testament and that with patience we shall receive this witness. Compel us to study all of your Bible and to faithfully bear record of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, just as John did in his day. Lord Jesus, we look for your coming. May we not be as those foolish virgins who didn't have enough oil. May we instead remain vigilant and ready for our Bridegroom to come for us as a thief in the night. We thank you, Lord, for what your Spirit is teaching us. May we be found faithful stewards in Jesus' name. Amen.