

Rev. 1:17 - 20 *When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 20"As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

Last week we had a little comparison between ullah, the moslem god, and YHWH, the christian God. It was so much fun I thought it might be useful to have a little reminder each week!

Here goes;

ullah; *In Kabul, protesters set fire to cars and shops and threw stones at police. "We will defend our prophet until we have blood across our bodies. We will not let anyone insult him," said one protester in the Afghan capital. "Americans will pay for their dishonor."*

"Americans will pay for their dishonor." The whole world will pay for their dishonor. But not from ullah. ullah has no arm to punish anyone.

God Almighty; *5:7Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. 8And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. 6:1Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." 2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.*

Both Gods were insulted, dis-honored by men. It just seems ullah doesn't have much going on. A few arabs throwing dirt in the air, throwing stones. Whoopee. 'that all ya got ullah?

You can see I could keep this going quite a while. Maybe a little update each week? OK, that was just for fun. Now we get to work.

I want to preface our study tonight with some thoughts about God Almighty.

1 John 4:8 says this; Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

GOD IS LOVE Love is an attribute of our God. It is the very essence of very God, to love. Unconditionally! There's nothing lovely about us!

Anyone peek at the end of the book? Anyone read a bit in the middle? Love?? How do we square this up in this book we're studying? It pretty much looks like God hates His enemies!

Love ~ Hate

Let's talk about this. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that who-so-ever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Yet, you study the book of Revelation and you discover that God hates His enemies. God is furious with a world that has dis-honored Him by suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. Wrath for this world is about to be unleashed. Vengeance for every sin is about to be loosed on this world!

So how do you square these two truth's that seem like a contradiction?

For lack of a better example, I remember George Bush's offer of peace over and over and over to Saddam Hussein. He begged, he cajoled, he pleaded, all the while explaining what the result would be if terms of peace were ignored. And then one night, the time for diplomatic

solutions was over, and the F117's were in the air making their devastating first strike.

God loves His enemies. But the day is coming when the offer of peace will be closed and wrath will rain down on those who have dishonored our God. God hates His enemies.

Rev. 1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 20 "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. This is the right reaction.

We're broken vessels. We were made to walk and talk with God, to receive and mirror His glory out to the world, but we're broken. Sin has so dis-figured us that if we should see God in our fallen state, we should die.

Exodus 33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

In John MacArthur's book on Charismatic Chaos, there are a bevy of people who claim to have visited heaven, seen God. Dr. Percy Collett, for example, a Charismatic medical missionary devised an extensive series of detailed messages on heaven. They were all drawn from his extraordinary personal experience. Collett claimed that in 1982 he was transported to heaven for five and a half days. He says he saw Jesus who was supervising the building of mansions there (if true, Jesus was obviously lying when he said "in my father's house are many mansions, present tense) and he claims he was able to speak face-to-face with the Holy Spirit. If I may add a parenthetical statement, it's very difficult to

speaking face to face with any spirit.

Further a newsletter rhapsodically detailing Dr. Collett's journey to heaven began, incredibly, with these words, quoting him:

While Christianity abounds with accounts of glimpses of the "other" dimension from those who have had "out of body" experiences, Dr. Collett's is unlike these. Obviously he was "caught up in the third heaven" even as Paul was. The difference being, Paul was not allowed to utter the things he saw and heard, while Dr. Collett, almost 2000 years later, was commanded to do so.

Another up-and-coming young leader in the Charismatic Movement is Roberts Liardon, he says he took an extensive tour of heaven as an eight-year-old, supposedly with Jesus as his personal guide. He recalls, "Many people have asked me what Jesus looks like. He's five-feet-eleven to six-feet tall. He's got sandy-brown hair. It's not too long, it's not too short. He's a perfect man. Whatever you picture as a perfect man, that's what Jesus is. He's perfect in everything, the way He looks, talks, everything, that's the way I remember Him.

"We walked a little farther. This is the most important part of my story. I saw three storage houses, 500 to 600 yards from the Throne Room of God. They're very long and very wide. We walked into the first, as Jesus shut the front door behind us I looked around the interior in shock. On one side of the building were arms, fingers and other exterior parts of the body. Legs hung from the wall, but the scene looked natural, not weird. On the other side of the building were shelves filled with neat little packages of eyes...green ones, brown ones, blue ones, etc.

"This building contained all the parts of the human body that people on earth need. But they haven't realized these blessings are waiting for them in heaven and they're for saints and sinners alike. Jesus said to me, 'These are the unclaimed blessings. This building should not be full, it should be emptied every single day. You could come in here with faith and get the needed parts for you and the people you'll come in contact with that day,'" end quote.

Liardon describes many other incredible sights he witnessed in heaven, the river of life, a stadium full of people who he says were the cloud of witnesses spoken of in Hebrews 12:1, and a medicine cabinet with pill bottles labeled "Peace and overdose of the Holy Ghost." Here is Liardon's description of what took place at the River of Life, quote: "Jesus and I visited a branch of the River of Life. This river was knee deep and crystal clear. We took off our shoes and got in. And do you know the first thing Jesus did to me? He dunked me. I got back up and splashed Him and we had a water fight. We splashed each other and laughed. That meant something to me for the King of glory, the Son of God to take time out for a little eight-year-old Roberts and dunk him in the River of Life.

Liardon's trip to heaven supposedly happened in 1972. He says he didn't tell anyone about it for eight years though. Says Jesus appeared twice more to him. The second time, he says, it was too sacred, he can't talk about it. The third time, however, was a bit more mundane. Quote: "The third time I saw Jesus was when I was about eleven years old. Jesus walked in through the front door of my home while I was watching 'Laverne and Shirley' on television. He came over and sat down beside me on the couch, kind of glanced at the TV and everything in this natural world clicked off. I couldn't hear the telephone or a television set, all I heard was Jesus and all I saw was His glory. He looked at me and said, 'Roberts, I want you to study the lives of My generals in My great army throughout time. Know them like the back of your hand. Know why they were a success. Know why they failed and you'll want nothing in that area.' He got up, walked back out through the door, the TV clicked back on and I resumed watching 'Laverne and Shirley.'"

Isaiah 6:1 *In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.*

3*And one called out to another and said,
"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory."*

4And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

5Then I said,

“Woe is me, for I am ruined!

Because I am a man of unclean lips,

And I live among a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

Daniel had a similar vision to John, and a very similar reaction:

Dan. 10:4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, 5I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. 6His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult. 7Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. 8So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. 9But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

10Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11He said to me, “O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.”

[See that reference there to Daniel. Man of high esteem. That is one of my favorite verses in the entire Bible. *Oh, Daniel, man of precious value...*

I want to be Daniel. I want God to say, there's Jim. He's precious to me. I know, I know, positional truth ~ practical truth. Positionally we're all precious to God. I want it to be true, practically, like Daniel.]

Something is different here. The biblical encounters with God always seem to end up with the person face down, on the ground, helpless, lifeless, breathless, temporarily paralyzed, limp as if dead.

The modern church encounters God, and resumes watching Laverne and Shirley when He leaves. I'll let you make your own conclusions.

And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

First, note the tenderness. A touch.

Where were the seven stars?

What hand does He touch John with?

Do not be afraid;

If you're a sinner, even a saved one, still in this body, and you see a vision of God, those are the words you want to hear.

The folks who do not acknowledge that He is God, when the heavens roll up like a scroll, and they see God . . . be VERY afraid. But He graciously tells John, who He loves, whose sins are forgiven, "do not be afraid.

And then He begins to articulate, by repeating who He is. We've seen all of these already in the Prologue to the book.

I am the first and the last,

literally, from everlasting to everlasting. Eternal God is the only one who can make this claim.

18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore,

ullah is a dead god. He can't do anything. Our God is alive. And He died, for us. And He lives forever with us. Idols are dead. God is alive. Life does not exist without Him holding everything together. Every molecule would explode if God didn't hold them together. The miracle of life.

and I have the keys of death and of Hades

whoa! I keep going back to the same verse, over and over again. Matt. 28:18 *"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth."*

Jesus owns everything. He is sovereign over everything! Jesus owns death. Jesus owns Hades. If He is for us, who can be against us. All authority! His!

And only His. The world is out of patience with a religion that says there's only one way to be reconciled to God.

Want to have a fight. Go on line and quote Acts 4:12 *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved.* or John 14:6 *Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me.*

You can create a swarm of angry bees instantly. Jesus, and only Jesus, has the keys to death, and to hades. He is the only one who can say, *I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore*

19*"Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.*

Therefore Stop right there. ***Therefore***....this is the tip-over word.

There's bizarre stuff in this book. Why would we believe it's anything but the psychedelic fancies of an unhinged mind. Stars falling to earth. Heavens rolled up like a scroll. 1/2 the worlds population perishing in famine and pestilence. Nations collapsing and armies being drawn to

Jerusalem.

Why should I believe any of it? Go back to vs. 17b *I am the first and the last, 18and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19“Therefore write....*

This is the God of the ages. No beginning, No end, all knowing, all powerful, all present who had died and lived again and who owns the keys to death and hades. Therefore, write!

In verse 19 He gives us the outline of the book;

19“Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

Here's the outline for the entire book of Revelation;

1) the things which you have seen

This is the vision of the Glorified Son of God. That was what John saw, and obediently recorded for us.

2) the things which are

This is the church. The church is what now IS. 7 letters to 7 churches that we will see, will span all the way to today.

3) the things which will take place after these things

Future things. End time things. Events that surround Jesus re-taking this world back from Satan. God's authority to reign on this earth! Satan deposed. Wickedness vanquished!

We believe this book because of the credentials of the Glorious One giving the dictation.

The world is filled with books. You can take them or leave them, mostly, inconsequentially. There's only one book written by the God of Glory. That one, we need to read and read and read again . . . for our very lives, eternally, are at stake. The credentials are *the things which*

you have seen.

The church is us. We are the church. We had better listen to what the God of creation is going to say to the church. This is our era. Our time. *the things which ARE*

Future things. *the things which will take place after these things*

I want to show you something exciting that I'd not paid attention to before.

You can build a doctrine for a pre-tribulation rapture . . . right here!

the things which will take place future things. things to come. when do they start? *after these things* what things. The church things. Tribulation things happen after the church. I think I see a clear distinction there. Church era. Tribulation era. With a distinct line dividing them

We'll talk about this some more as we go. Where does that line get drawn, where the church ends and the tribulation begins? Rapture of the church, out of the world.

20*“As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

Here's what we'll find as we go through this book. The book is meant to be heard, understood, carried out.

3*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

This book is meant to be understood. You can't be accountable if you don't understand.

And so we'll find very often that the Lord will stop and explain some of the imagery for us.

Then sometimes He doesn't. We'll get to some fairly wild looking beasts that don't have clear cut explanations.

I believe, in the purpose and pleasure of God, that the reason may be, that when the time comes, the thing described will be patently obvious.

But that has also led to some interpreters going hog wild. Assigning crazy explanations. During WWII you had a whole bunch of folks teaching that hitler was the beast, etc.

I plan to take the conservative approach, most of the time, and simply say, "I don't know who or what that is". Most of the time.

But here we have a clear explanation of the images John experienced.

the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches

Angels. angellos. It typically refers to heavenly beings. But the word means messenger. Sent one.

It can mean a human messenger or a heavenly one. In this case, we only have the record of John having a revelation delivered with heavenly angels. But how did these seven messages, seven letters, get to their intended churches.

I'm going to speculate here. I think the 7 angels here are the pastors of the seven churches. I think John sent for these seven pastors and they were the messengers that took the letters back to their respective congregations.

We don't have to bend any hermeneutical rules at all to see pastors, overseers, as messengers who bring God's word to God's flock, do we. I wish more would take it seriously, but that is the conduit God set in place for his church. Angels. Messengers. See those wings on Dennis!

and the seven lampstands are the seven churches We've already talked

about this some.

The churches are God's light shining in the world's darkness. The contrast of light and darkness is a perfect picture of Satan's cosmos, which is inky black with darkness. The church illuminates the darkness.

Next week we'll start looking at the churches, one by one. But tonight I want to introduce you to the seven churches, taken as a whole.

Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

What we'll learn is that these are first to be taken at face value. Each one was a real congregation, in a real place with that name, in Asia minor. Face value. If you went to Ephesus on a Sunday morning you could find an organized church, the first church of Ephesus, meeting there.

But we'll also see that the church at Ephesus is a type. We have Ephesus type congregations meeting in 2012. And we have Ephesus type believers in 2012. We may have some here.

Then fourthly, we've discovered that these churches represent 7 church periods of the history of the church in a sort of timeline. We could speak of the Ephesus period of the church, and we would generally be talking about the apostolic era that ended with the death of John in 96AD.

So

1. a real church in a real place in real time. Face value.
2. a church type. We have Ephesus type churches.
3. an individual believer type. We have Ephesus type believers.
4. and lastly an era in the church time line. The Ephesus era.

These are the things that "ARE". We're still in that portion of the outline, 1900 years later.

