

**REMOVING THE COVER:**  
**THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST**  
**(A Study Companion for Chapters 1 – 3)**



**Jim Raddin**

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### **The Front Cover:**

The cover art is representative of the church at Sardis, and probably many more. My wife Janie painted the abandoned country church building, awaiting the reawakening of those who would receive the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

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With great thanksgiving  
To my Lord Jesus Christ,  
And to those who have served Him in my life,  
Most notably my dear wife Janie.

Thanks also to Janie Jones,  
Who thoughtfully reviewed my draft  
And provided corrections, suggestions and encouragement.

May He Reveal Himself to the hearts of those who seek Him,  
And may you and I be consistently among those who do.

Jim Raddin

June 2023

San Antonio, Texas

## Foreword

The Book of The Revelation in the Bible is seen by many to be complicated and confusing. For some, it can seem downright scary. Sometimes, people may teach it at arm's length. Others may claim to have it all figured out, giving their explanations for all the "predictions". I no longer believe that any of this was intended to be so.

This book originated in a series of 42 Sunday morning Bible studies on the Book of The Revelation presented by the author in the year 2013 to an adult class at a church in Boerne, Texas. The briefly summarized studies here do not represent an imposed point of view. Instead, they are simply based on what we read throughout the Bible as, together, we sought God's Face in His Word. He met us there!

The word "revelation" derives from a Greek word for "apocalypse". Some think apocalypse means something catastrophic, but it doesn't. The word simply means "taking the cover off". That's why it is translated as "revelation". It is like the guy who reveals the new car model in the commercial by whipping the sheet away. We only see a vague shape until the cover comes off.

One difference in the Revelation of Jesus Christ is that He is not the One who is covered. We are! We are not able to remove that which covers our eyes and prevents us from seeing our God. My cover hasn't been completely removed all at once. No preacher or teacher or book could even begin removing my blindfold. Only my Jesus can remove that! He did it twice, dramatically, in Acts 9 when He Revealed Himself to Paul .

Long ago, Jesus Christ drew near to a man named John and revealed Himself. Jesus didn't just reveal future events or things **about** Himself. He actually revealed **Himself**! That is the Book of Revelation. Simply reading it won't remove our covers. Only He is able and willing to do it! May He draw near, reveal Himself and abide within us in these days.

## **Removing the Cover: The Revelation of Jesus Christ** **(A Study Companion for Chapters 1 – 3)**

### **Introduction**

This book is structured as a Bible Study of the Book of Revelation, but it won't be a study that I will be doing for you. Bible Study does not work that way. I pray that it will not be a study that you will be doing for yourself, because Bible Study doesn't work that way either. The Bible is God's Word. I find that He opens His Word to each person individually and directly, just in the way He chooses, just in the way we need and just when we are willing to hear Him above the noise of the world. It is my fervent prayer that some of those, into whose hands this book is delivered, will hear and see Him more clearly.

If you choose to read this book, it will be needful to read it with your own Bible open alongside, as mine has been as this was written. My book is not necessary for you, but His is. I pray only that the words He has touched me with may in some way facilitate your hearing of His Holy Word from Him. I am thankful for those whom He has used, and is using, along the way in my life to facilitate my own hearing of Him. That's what we do in our fellowship together in Christ.

The brief passages I will verbally quote to you here will be from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted. As you look into the longer and more complete sections I will refer you to by chapter and verse references, please use the translation or translations He will lead you into. There are sometimes considerable variations among them, as you may know. I fully expect that He will lead you to other passages beyond those provided here. Go there!

I did not choose to write this book or to write it in this way. Sometimes I have felt like I was taking dictation, but I cannot say that some of me has not crept in. May His Good Purpose be well served, not by what I have written, but by His Sure Revelation of Jesus Christ to you and to me,

## Study 1: Essential Revelation

(Read Revelation 1:1-3)

Games are often played with the Book of the Revelation. People may call it “Revelations”, as if it is disclosing things or events in the future. People may speak of “codes” that they have broken, which they are of course happy to explain to me, but often only if I will buy their book.

Please don’t try to figure this Book out by your own efforts or someone else’s. It is God’s Revelation of Jesus Christ, not that we might know things about Him, but that we may **know Him** in the depth of our being.

The original Greek word for “Revelation” is “apocalypse”. “Apo” means “taking off” and “calypsis” means “a covering”. I think the covering is probably on us, over our own eyes, rather anything covering Jesus.

In the first verse, some translations speak of showing “the things which must soon take place”, but the Greek does not have “the things” in the original text. It is the Revelation of Christ, not of things. He is the One who must soon reach into our perception of time and take His Place.

A beautiful example of God’s Revelation of Christ to people can be found in Luke 2:21-38. Jesus had been brought to the Temple of God as a newborn baby. He did nothing to reveal Himself, but God “*revealed*” to a man named Simeon that he would see the Lord’s Christ before he died. It says that Simeon was “*in the Spirit*” when he came into the Temple and saw this eight day-old Child being presented before the Lord. He immediately said that he was fully free to die then because, “...*my eyes have seen Your salvation...*” That seems particularly appropriate since the name “Jesus” means “Jehovah’s Salvation”.

Simeon did not figure this out. There was no basis for him to know, other than Revelation. It is noteworthy that, as we shall soon see, a man named John, who received the Revelation that we’re now reading about, also was “*in the Spirit*”, and, for him, it was surely “*on the Lord’s day*”.

At the very end of Romans (16:25) Paul speaks of “*Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery** which has been kept secret for long ages past...*”. The Greek word for “mystery” is “musterion”, which derives from “muo”, meaning “shut the mouth”. The mystery couldn’t be known by hearing someone talk about it or by figuring it out. It could only become knowable by God’s Revelation of Christ Himself.

The mystery is further addressed in Colossians 1:26-29. “...***God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.***” The mystery **IS** Christ, and God willed to make Him known by Revelation. He clearly does not just reveal Him at arm’s length. **He is revealed as He comes in and abides!**

John was a disciple. He had seen Jesus close up. He knew a lot about Him. He had heard His teaching, seen Him do miracles, saw Him transfigured on the mountain, leaned upon Him at the Last Supper, saw Him on the cross, and felt His resurrected breath upon him after. But we read of something very different in the Book we have opened. This is God’s **Revelation** of Jesus Christ to John, revealed as his Lord of All!

May you and I also receive that Revelation in all its Fullness from God Himself, that we may know the One whom to know is Life Eternal. We don’t need to know the things that are going to happen. We don’t need to know what He wants us to do. We need only to **Know Him**. He is the One Coming, and He is already here. He is the One who can and will work in us that which is well-pleasing in His Sight (Hebrews 13:20-21). It’s not about us. It is about Him! Our glory is that **He** is About Us!

According to most translations, John tells us in his third verse that those who read, hear and heed that which is written here will be blessed. But the Greek word actually tells us more. They will be **Supremely Blessed**. It is possible to read, without hearing Him, and without heeding either. Lord, I have an urgent desire to be among those receiving the continuing Revelation, not just to my mind, but of Jesus Christ abiding in my heart.



## Study 2: Summarizing the Revelation

(Read Revelation 1:4-8)

These 5 verses summarize the Revelation of Jesus Christ. John starts with the addressees, in a manner similar to Paul's letters. However, he doesn't just name one church, one group, or one person. He lists seven churches, located in a loop in what is now western Turkey, and he will be addressing individual messages to each church. But, as we shall see, he expands the address list in an interesting way. Near the end of each of these messages, John will add, "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" If you have an ear, and I think God can provide you one if you are willing, this Revelation is addressed to you!

The Revelation begins very much like one of Paul's letters: "*Grace to you and peace...*" Grace is "charis" or the "gift" of God. (Charisma means giftedness.) Peace is "eirene" or "joined" in wholeness with God. Here, we are being offered grace and peace, but John is not the source any more than Paul was. John says the grace and peace come from the Eternal Triune God: the Father, a distributed Spirit and Jesus Christ. It is certainly appropriate that grace and peace should come from Christ. John 1:17 tells us that grace came into being through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:14 tells us that Jesus Christ **is** our peace.

By the way, don't get too concerned about rationalizing the seven Spirits before God's throne in verse 4. Our rational minds cannot understand the Holy Spirit, or anything else, as much as we may like to think we do. "Seven" actually appears 54 times in the Book of Revelation. We will do well to content ourselves with the grace and peace of His Revelation.

Verses 5&6 reveal who Jesus is and what He is doing. He is making us to be royal and holy ("*a kingdom, priests to His God and Father...*"). How appropriate for those whom the Father has already seated with Christ in heaven (Ephesians 2:4-7)! This is **not** a new idea. It is not found only in Revelation 1:5-6. Take the time to compare I Peter 2:1-10, with special attention to verses 5 and 9 about our royal priesthood.

Verse 7 serves as a synopsis of the whole Revelation: “**Behold, He is coming in the clouds, and every eye will see Him...**” This is not a new idea either. A few hundred years before John was born, another man testified to the Revelation of Jesus Christ given to him. Here is what he had to say in the Old Testament Book of Daniel 7:13: “*I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming...*” Go ahead and read the rest of that verse and the next. Daniel saw the Son of Man presented before God the Father, receiving dominion, glory, and a kingdom forever. Revelation 1:5&6 also spoke of Christ’s kingdom, glory, and dominion. Why should consistency surprise us? We will have reason to speak a lot of Daniel.

One thing that may surprise us in v.7 is that **every** eye will see Him, even the eyes of those who pierced Him, and the response across the world will be mourning rather than rejoicing. At the end of v.7, John expresses apparent satisfaction that mourning will be appropriate. We will find this to be well supported through the Bible. God is the God of mercy, but He is also the God of judgment. The rejoicing will be reserved for those who have received Him already by His Revelation. We look not to a revelation **that** He will come, but to the Revelation **of** the One who **has** come close to us. “*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation...*” (Zechariah 2:9)

When John wrote of glory, he used the term “doxa”, meaning praise, honor and glory. That’s how the “Doxology” got its name. When John wrote of dominion, he used “kratos”, meaning strength and might. It comes from a root meaning to perfect or to complete. Verse 8, the last verse for today’s study, uses words to reveal something of our God. He is the first and last, both beginning and end, by reference to the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. He always **was**, before time began. He fully **is**, everywhere you look. He **is to come**, forevermore unendingly. And He is the **Almighty**. For that word, John used “**pankratos**”. Just as PanAmerican means **all** the Americas, pankratos means **all** the strength and might, perfect and complete. **He is All of it!**

### Study 3: Encountering the Revealer

(Read Revelation 1:9-12)

Let's consider now how God's Revelation to John could become ours. V.9 says that John is much like us in several particulars. He is our brother, literally meaning he is "from the same womb" as are we. John had heard the same thing from the cross directly from the Lord. John was told that he and Jesus now shared the same mother (John 19:25-27). John is beginning to tell us of far more than just what his qualifications are to write this. He will tell us of our qualifications to read it.

We are fellow partakers with John of three seemingly unrelated things: tribulation (or abrading pressure), a kingdom (the royal power of a Sovereign King), and patience (bearing under, endurance). John was experiencing all three, in hard exile on the island of Patmos, but patient under his King of Kings. Jesus also experienced all three on the cross (Hebrews 12:2). Why should we be exempt? Hebrews 2 tells us we have yet to see all things put under His Feet, **but we see Jesus**, even now.

Observe the reason in v.9 that John is on Patmos: "...*because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*" God's Word and Christ's Testimony had brought John there, but John was also there to receive much more of God's Word and Christ's Testimony. More than that, John was there that **the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus might be given to me!**

In v.10, John says he was "...*in the Spirit on the Lord's day...*" When something is **in us**, it just goes wherever we go. But when **we are in** something, we go where it goes. In Him, both can be true. Jesus tells us to abide in Him and He will abide in us. Also notice that John hears before he sees, just as I often do. John hears a loud voice **behind** him that he can't ignore and John turns. We have to be turned from ourselves and our doings in order to see Him. He is the One who has to turn us because we are incapable of turning ourselves. Let's pray for Him to turn us, that we may be turned indeed (see Jeremiah 31, especially v.18).

Consider Abraham in Genesis 22. Abraham had been called of God to sacrifice **his promised son** on a homemade altar on top of Mt. Moriah. This was the exact place where the grand altar of sacrifice would be located when the Temple of God's Presence was built centuries later. As Abraham raised the knife over Isaac, the Voice of God's Messenger called and **turned him back** from what he was about to do. He looked and saw a Revelation of **God's Promised Son**. He saw a Lamb of God beside the altar, like the One who was to be the Sacrifice of Substitution for Isaac, and for me. Moriah, of course, means "God Will Provide".

Consider God's Call to Ezekiel to speak to the Israelites in Ezekiel 3. When you get to v.12, the Revelation comes. The Spirit lifts Ezekiel up and he hears a great rumbling sound **behind** him: "*Blessed be the glory of the Lord in His place.*" Ezekiel turned to the Revelation.

Consider Isaiah 30:15-26. "...*your eyes will behold your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word **behind** you, 'This is the way, walk in it...'*" Need I remind you of Christ's Words in John 14:6, "***I am the way...***"?

Consider Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb according to John 20:1-18. After a brief interchange with two angels, Mary **turned around** and received her personal Revelation of Jesus Christ.

These people were seeking to know their God. So did David, the man after God's Own Heart. But David sinned greatly, and the punishment of death for his sin was eventually falling on the people. Just then, as God was already ending the punishment, David showed up at the precise spot where Abraham had received his Revelation. As David spoke to God, he was changed. David asked God to let the punishment fall on him instead of the people. David was given the Heart of Christ and volunteered to become a lamb as a sacrifice. (Read II Samuel 24 and II Chronicles 3:1.)

We can be so intent on looking ahead and proceeding down our own course that we may ignore the Voice of the One calling from behind. Lord, turn us. Give us ears to hear, hearts to know and eyes to see You.

## Study 4: The Reality of Christ

(Read Revelation 1:12-20)

John had turned to “*see the Voice*” but he saw Jesus Christ Revealed. Apparently he began low as he started looking up, because he first saw seven lampstands. Greek “*luchnia*” describes a holder or stand for the “*leukos*” or “the bright, white”. (I know leukocytes as white blood cells). “*Leukos*” is only used 25 times in the New Testament. Jesus uses the word in Matthew 5:36 and John 4:35. It is used 3 times to describe Jesus at the Transfiguration and four times describing the clothes of men or angels at the empty tomb or, in Acts 1:10, at the Ascension. All the other 16 times will be in the Book of the Revelation. It is an important word.

As John raised his eyes he saw his own Revelation of the Person of Jesus the Christ. Read vv. 13-16 again! Would you have any idea how to draw the One being described? Jesus was revealed here to John and John was asked to write about it for me, but the Indescribable Revelation in fullness has to come directly and personally to us from God Himself.

There are striking similarities in John’s Revelation and what we read in Daniel 7:9-14, but the most detailed similarities here are to Daniel’s description of God the Father. This just emphasizes the truth in Christ’s statement that “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father...*” (John 14:9). We find our first two uses of the Greek “*leukos*” in Revelation 1:14. The Daniel reference does not use “*leukos*” since it was written in Hebrew, but I have the distinct sense that Daniel 7:9 would have used “*leukos*” had it been written in Greek.

You can see similarities in other descriptions of God’s Revelation to men. See Ezekiel in his Chapter 1 or Saul (soon to be Paul) in the first part of Acts 9. The typical response is the same as John’s. They fell to the ground. These are not visions in your head or videotapes or youtube. This is God Himself, right here, Revealing Himself Personally to real people, and not just some important guys. He still does it to little folks like you and me, so that we might **know Him**. God so loves the world!

On our own, we fall to the ground in the Presence of God's Revelation. Even Daniel soon found himself flat out with his face to the ground in Daniel 8:18. But he was touched, as John was, and was raised up to hear.

John heard a Word from Jesus who says He is the First and the Last (literally the Foremost and the Furtherest). He is the Living One who was dead on the cross but who is now alive forevermore. But what does it mean in v.18 that He has the *keys of death and of Hades*? What would He want with those? The Greek word for "key" here is "kleis" which means something used to shut. It comes from "kleio" which means to close, lock, or shut up. Thanks be to God! Never to be opened again.

In several translations, we see a number of references in v.19 to "things" being revealed, but there is no word in the Greek text that says "things". It simply refers to that which **has been** seen, that which **is now**, and that which **is to be**. That is a **Person**! That is the Revelation of Jesus Christ!

In v.20, Christ explains some of the "mystery" to John and John dutifully writes it down for us. The seven stars John saw in Christ's right hand are the Spiritual messengers to the seven churches. The seven lampstands for the bright, white light of God (the leukos) are the seven churches. Christ is there **among** them. The lampstands don't represent those churches. They **are** those churches. That is something of what it means to be walking in the Light (I John 1:7) and seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

Why those seven? What about the churches at Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem and elsewhere? What about San Antonio? Should I move to Laodicea? This is John's description of the Revelation of Christ to John. If the Revelation is to you or me, might the locales be personalized to us? Christ told John to write about his own Revelation of Christ. Christ wanted me to read of John's Revelation as He drew me to my own.

May we not depend on how strong a belief we can come up with. Instead, may we seek and rely upon the Reality of His Revelation.

## Study 5: The Word Revealed to the Church at Ephesus *et alia* (Read Revelation 2:1-7)

As we come to the seven letters, notice first that the words are not addressed to the churches and left to the people to figure them out. This Word will come clearly by God's Spirit to all those who are given ears to hear, because it is addressed to the angel, or Spiritual Messenger, of each church. Each letter also makes clear that its Source is the Revealed Son of God, whom John is still being given to hear and see as he writes.

He says in v.2 that He knows our deeds. The Greek is "*eido*", meaning to see to the point of knowing, like when we say, "I see". Christ sees and knows it all, even the parts we may ignore or try to hide.

He recognizes some observable actions on our part that are certainly more appropriate than others we might have chosen. Some of us may really be trying our best, but God always looks to the inside. He sees the "vital signs", the signs of Life. He desires to work **in** us!

As a physician, I would sometimes be called to "pronounce" a patient who had died. Before I pronounced them dead, I would have to evaluate for "vital signs", such as heartbeat, pulse, breathing, and responsiveness. I would often hear activity, such as gas moving, but that was not a sign of life, any more than some of our "best" activity proves Spiritual Life. V.4 tells us our Vital Sign is our relationship to Christ, our **First Love**.

Do you remember or have you experienced your first love in this world? I remember the moment I met Janie, the woman He gave me to love. I remember our dating days, much of it while 2000 miles apart. No phone call lasted long enough. No time together was sufficient. I just wanted to be with her and, after 56 years of marriage, I still do. But that love, at best, can only derive from my First Love. We actually have a different letter from a man named Paul to this same church. Ephesians 5:25-27 also tells me that my love for Janie should derive from my First Love. Christ's Love for me shows me what my love for my wife should be.

Christ does not say here that the Ephesians have **lost** or **misplaced** their First Love. He says they have “**turned away**” from Him. Yet another letter also calls us back to Him as our **First Love**. I John 4:19 tells us, *We love, because He **first loved** us*. He is indeed my First Love, because He Loved me First! It is not that we are to come up with love for Him. He **is** Love. Read I John as part of your study, especially I John 4:7-21.

I think it likely that the Ephesian church got to read all seven of these letters to the churches, as well as Paul’s letter to them, and even I John, which went to more than just one church. I would be surprised if all these letters did not come to them. We have testimony from history that John, in his old age, had ministered in this area and was exiled to Patmos from Ephesus, where he had been a leader of that church. Christ is speaking here to seven churches, arranged in an itinerary order. Both John and Paul walked these roads and they knew these churches.

The statement in v.5 about removing the lampstand may concern those settled on “once saved; always saved”. Having your lampstand removed cannot be good, but we are not the ones who define or certify salvation. I am fully certain of my eternal salvation only because of His Revelation directly to me. However, if there is no *Leukos*, no bright, white Light of His Revelation, then there is no need for a lampstand.

The Nicolaitans of v.6 were believers in unrealistic grace. They thought it did not matter at all what you did. You could live in the vilest sin and God would just forgive everything, so you could just keep on doing it. That’s not the God who Reveals Himself to me or to those seeking Him. Paul also addressed this same error of Nicolas in Romans 6:1-2.

The Tree of Life is reserved for those who overcome (v.7), but overcoming is not something that we can do out of ourselves. That is the Work of the Revealed Christ, done on the cross (I John 5:1-5, John 16:33 and Revelation 3:21). Adam and Eve chose the attractive, forbidden tree. They ignored the Tree of Life right there in the middle, growing in the shadow of a cross. Find **Life** in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.



**Study 6: The Word Revealed to the Church at Smyrna *et alia***  
**(Read Revelation 2:8-11)**

We now turn our attention about 40 miles up the road to the coastal city of Smyrna (now Izmir). In John's day, these cities were known far less for their churches than for their temples of idol worship. Ephesus (now the smaller village of Selcuk) had its temple to the Roman goddess Diana (the Greek Artemis, brother of Apollo and goddess of the hunt). Smyrna earlier had a temple to the Greek goddess Athena (the Roman Minerva, goddess of war). The first churches of the time were probably only small congregations with no church buildings at all.

The word for "church" literally means the "called out ones". This letter is for the called out ones of "Smyrna" which literally means "myrrh", a material for anointing the dead. It was one of the gifts brought by the Wise Men at Christ's Birth. (Izmir also means "myrrh" in Turkish.)

As Christ did in the previous letter, He starts again with "eido" (v.9). This time He "sees to the point of knowing" the abrasive pressure and the destitution upon His called out ones, but He also reminds us of the riches He provides to us by His Presence. He knows too of the evil speaking imposed on us by those who falsely claim to be the chosen ones of God but who are really the exact opposite.

He tells us in v.10 not to fear the difficulties to come. That is what fear is about. We do not fear what has already happened. We fear the worst that we think must surely be awaiting us. So He tells us what that is to be.

Some will be imprisoned by the devil and suffer tribulation for ten days. Others could suffer under difficult trials like being stuck in a sick bed or with a disability for much longer. We are to be tried, proved and tested. We are given to know that our tribulation will be time limited, but our deliverance will be eternal. We may think that we are the ones being tested and proven, but it is Christ in us, the Hope of Glory, who will be proven All-Sufficient even beyond our physical death.

People grapple with the meaning of the ten day reference in v.10. I have not needed to figure that out in order to receive His Word to me here. I am to cling to Him until my physical death and then know Him face to Face. He will give the Crown of Life to the ones He calls close. I have found it useful here to review James 1:12, I Peter 5:4 and II Timothy 4:8. It is noteworthy that all these texts use the Greek word “stephanos” for crown. If you capitalize the word, you get the name of one recorded in the book of Acts as a “faithful-until-death-called-out-one”. You may read about him in Acts 6 and 7. You may also read about the “second death”, mentioned in our v.11, in Revelation 20:6, 20:14 and 21:8.

We may know of a specific person who was among the first to read the letter to the church at Smyrna. There are many contemporaneous historical references to a man named Polycarp serving as the bishop leading that church. Several historians report that he was a disciple of the John who penned the letters to the churches and that John was the one who installed Polycarp to lead the church at Smyrna. This brief letter from the revealed Christ spoke much to Polycarp.

Polycarp died a martyr in Smyrna around 155 AD at the age of about 85. His life apparently did overlap John’s. He was burned at the stake after refusing to renounce Christ and burn incense to the Roman emperor. He was reportedly also stabbed to death when the flames did not cooperate.

You might find it worthwhile to read two very brief passages: the Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp. Both can be easily found by an internet search. You will find how the Word of Christ in the Smyrna letter was used to prepare this man. ...*Be faithful until death and I will give you the Crown of life.* (Revelation 2:10)

You probably have never known anyone named Polycarp. By the way, “Poly” means multiple, like a polygon has multiple sides. “Carp” comes from the word for fruit. *My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.* (John 15:8) May we also be “called out” to be faithful servants by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

## Study 7: **The Word Revealed to the Church at Pergamum *et alia*** (Read Revelation 2:12-17)

We now look almost 50 miles farther, to the northernmost church of the seven. Pergamum was a grand place with a network of temples for idol worship. It had perhaps the grandest altar in the history of the world. That altar was eventually excavated, taken apart, and moved to Berlin, Germany where it was reconstructed from 1910-1930. It remained there through World War II and still is part of a large complex of museums on an island in Berlin. You can easily look at pictures of it on the internet.

This letter is also directly from the Revealed Christ to the messenger to this church and thence to me. In v.13, the Pergamum altar is referred to as Satan's throne. Christ says that He knows where these called-out-ones live, but He also knows that they hold fast to His Name even in the midst of a world that has gone its own way. We live in that world too.

The church had not denied their faith relationship with Christ despite intense persecution, which had led to martyrdom there as well. In this case, a faithful witness named Antipas had been killed before the letter arrived, but not before he too shared in the Revelation of Christ.

But the church had a problem. They tolerated snare-setters in their fellowship who were firmly grounded in the world and not in Christ. These people shared the things of the world within the church (v.14), placing "stumbling blocks" in the paths of those who were being called out of it. The Greek here is "skandalon", from which we get the word "scandal". It is literally the stick to hold the bait in a snare or trap!

Balaam, a non-Israelite, is used as an example here, with good reason. He is a confusing guy. Superficially, Balaam can look good when Balak calls him up to curse Israel (Numbers 22-24), because he keeps blessing Israel instead. But then, in Numbers 25, Israel is being led into sin, and we find that Balaam was involved in setting the snare. We read of his death in Numbers 31:8. (Also see II Peter 2 (esp. v.15) and Jude 1:11.)

Similarly, the Nicolaitans are mentioned again, just as they were in the first letter (Revelation 2:6). This was the same snare, also from one who some might have seen as good. Nicolas basically was saying, “Sin all you want, because the abundant grace of God will forgive it all!”

The church is reminded to be separate and called out from the world, because the sword is coming. We saw the sword coming from Christ’s mouth in vv.12 and 16. They refer back to 1:16 and forward to 19:11-21. Jesus is both Savior and Judge. He speaks forth both Life and Death.

I treasure His Word in v.17. He makes two promises to the ones who overcome. As we saw at the end of Study 5, overcoming is something **He does in us**. His first promise here is the hidden manna. Manna comes from the Hebrew for “What is this stuff?”. It is what the Children of Israel said when God first provided a form of bread for them in the wilderness. Here, Christ tells us it is **hidden bread from heaven**. Recall Christ’s visit with the woman at the well in John 4. The disciples had gone into town to obtain food. When they returned, they announced that lunch had arrived, but they were surprised when Jesus did not partake. He told them in v.32 that He had food to eat that they did not know about. Go back and read John 4:31-38. Do you see what He is telling us here in His Revelation? The hidden manna is the same unseen food that sustained Him at the well in v.34. Now **He offers His Own Food to us!**

The promised white stone also conveys a personal message to me. Recall Paul speaking in Acts 26:10 of having previously “cast his vote” against the Christians being condemned to death. The actual Greek word used by Paul was the word for “stone”, not “vote”. Jurors would cast a black stone for guilty and a white stone for innocent. Again, it is intensely personal with Him. You won’t know the name He writes on **my** stone. It remains just between me and my Revealed Lord and Savior.

But please don’t get hung up on figuring out this Revelation. You can “understand” something about manna and stones without knowing Him. What you and I need is the Personal Revelation of Jesus the Christ!

## Study 8: The Word Revealed to the Church at Thyatira *et alia* (Read Revelation 2:18-29)

We now turn southeast and go almost 50 miles to Thyatira. The words “*et alia*” mean “and others”. If we have ears to hear His Word, the Revelation is for us also. Thyatira was a center for textiles and their dyeing. Colorful fabrics were uncommon and prized by the rich. The numerous guilds formed here among the textile workers were the beginnings of trade unions. Both John and Paul may have come here. While in Philippi, Paul stayed in the home of a new convert from Thyatira named Lydia, *a seller of purple fabrics* (Acts 16:14-15).

The Source of the letter remains the same. Here it is stated very clearly. It comes not from John or Paul but from *The Son of God*...(v.18). He knows our deeds, love, faith, service and perseverance. The Greek word for service here is “*diakonia*”, from which we get the word for deacon. V.19 says all these activities have improved among the church members, but v.20 says there remains a problem, similar to that of some of the other churches. They tolerate a “Jezebel” who leads some astray. (You can read of the original Jezebel in I Kings 21 and II Kings 9).

Be careful here. He is not telling us that our fellowship must exclude all who fail to consistently exude only perfection. The Church is for repentant sinners who continue growing into the experience of the perfection Christ has wrought in us. But churches must not tolerate or endorse perverse teaching or influence that is counter to all that Christ Reveals of Himself. I fear that such tolerance may be more common than not, at least in some of the commercial churches of these days.

It is not that these people say, “Let’s do something perverse!” It’s usually more subtle than that. For example, what’s wrong with trying very hard to do **your best**? The problem is that it always falls far short of Christ’s desire to do **His Best** in us! Consider the issue of meat sacrificed to idols. The problem is not the meat, but our acceptance of the process. (Take the time to read Paul’s discourse on this in I Corinthians 8 and 10.)

We may find it attractive to “go along”, to our detriment and that of others, but He counsels us to “hold fast” to Him. I remember being troubled as a young Christian as I would read of God’s Word to Joshua to “...*be strong and courageous...*” (Joshua 1:6). It was hard to figure out how I could do that when I felt weak and afraid. I think I was missing the preceding verse, but I finally learned that the words to Joshua in v.6 also had the sense of “hang on and pay attention”. Christ is the One who will wield the sword. He is not asking me to do great things. He is promising to be the Great God doing Great Things in me.

Again, He makes two amazing promises to those who hold fast and keep His Deeds instead of our own. It may seem puzzling in vv.26-27 for us to be given authority over the nations, but there is a reason why this is here. The passage is actually a quote from Psalm 2. There, the promise of authority and a rod of iron is clearly a promise directly to the Son of God. Here, the Son of God is promising to abide in us and that we will abide in Him, so that we simply share the experience of His Promise.

The second promise, in v.28, is even more profound. He will give me **The Morning Star**! At first glance, that may seem to us like a sweet and beautiful gesture, but it is far more. The word for “morning” means the very early morning. It only appears in **one** other place in all the Bible.

Look afresh at Job 38:1-7! I think it was God, in the Very Person of Jesus Christ, who spoke of His Creation in v.7, *when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy...* . But this is **not** that **one** other place. This is different. This isn’t **The Morning Star**. These are just morning stars that are only reflecting His Glory. This is not **The Son of God**. These are just sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ. I am among them. And this is not the same word for morning. This one is from the Hebrew. The word in Revelation 2:28 is from the Greek. Actually, the **one** other place we find it is in Revelation 22:16. It is Jesus speaking again. He is both the One who created David and He is David’s Royal Son. And He tells me **He is The Bright Morning Star**. In Revelation 2:28, my Lord Jesus is promising to give me **Himself**!

## Study 9: The Word Revealed to the Church at Sardis *et alia* (Read Revelation 3:1-6)

We continue on our southeast course another 30 miles or so to Sardis, an important city where the rich King Croesus had previously ruled Lydia. It was also a center for textiles and their dyeing, as well as jewelry. Sardis had another famous temple to Artemis. The city was idolatrous.

The Revealed Christ “sees” (*eido*) the Sardis church to be alive in name only. No good qualities are listed. He pronounces the church to be dead. Such churches are common today: people going through the motions. Their preachers have taken courses on how to prepare a sermon. They have no teachers, only talkers. They have music, meetings, activities, buildings, statements of faith, incorporation documents and a budget. They are exempt from federal taxes. They have prayer lists, but prayer has become a recitation of words. Like Sardis in v.1, they can be dead.

Since that’s the case, why, pray tell, does Sardis still have a lampstand? Why would there still be an angel (or Spiritual Messenger) to Sardis? Why would this church qualify to receive a letter from the Son of God?

The reason is never **our** qualifications. It is always God! He so loved the world, even when we were dead in sin, that He gave His Only-Begotten Son, that we should not perish, but have everlasting Life! Remember??

In v.2, the Revealed Christ calls on those in the Sardis church to “emerge, come into being” (*ginomai*) and “wake up” (*gregoreo*)! It’s literally a “Lazarus, come forth!” moment (John 11:43). They are then to “strengthen” (according to many translations) that which remains, but the Greek (*sterizo*) has more of the sense of “hold fast” or “establish”. They must hold fast to the One who is able to establish them in Himself. Only then can their deeds be “made full or completed” (*pleroo*). In v.3, they are to remember and “guard or watch over” (*tereo*) what they have received. Repentance or turning is produced, because what they, and we, have received is the Revelation of Christ. Otherwise comes the sword.

V.4 tells us that there remained a precious few “called-out-ones” who had come to this church, apparently seeking to be “called-close” and to know the One who calls. I doubt their names had made it onto any lists of the church leaders, but there they were. Christ had died for them all, and God had drawn these few to this church for His Good Purpose.

My Lord makes a remarkable statement here about these few. Having their garments unsoiled, these are called to walk with Christ in white. The reason for this is even more overwhelming to me. It is because they are **worthy**! We will soon see multiple references to **The Worthy One**. Look forward to Revelation 4:9-11 and 5:8-14. We see Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is acknowledged to be **The Worthy One**. And here He is calling these people **worthy**!! The Revealed Christ is confirming that **each one** who receives Him also becomes a child of God and a fellow heir of God with Him (John 1:10-13, Romans 8:16-17). We become sharers of His Glory (John 17:22-24) and His Worthiness by His Doing!

Once again, we must know that we are not overcomers by our own doing. It is Christ who does the overcoming in us (John 16:33). In v.5 of our study, we find all the overcomers clothed in white, and Christ promises **not to erase** any of their names from the Book of Life.

I also suggest that you not presume to understand more than He has given you to know about the Book of Life. You may have been given more understanding than have I regarding “erasing names”, and that may be well and good. But I confess that, while I have at times thought I understood some of this, I cannot suggest anything to you here other than to thrill at His Promise. I have been helped by seeing Moses standing in the Place of Christ (Exodus 32:32) by offering to die in the place of his people. I have read the suggestions of names to be blotted out of the book when David spoke prophetically in Psalm 69 of the Crucifixion. But I have also read Christ’s Prayer, apparently for the same people, that they be forgiven for they knew not what they did. I may not understand the mechanics, but the Revealed Christ assures me that my name is written there from the foundation of the world, **not** to be erased.



## Study 10: **The Word Revealed to the Church at Philadelphia *et alia*** (Read Revelation 3:7-13)

We continue along our same southeast course almost 30 miles farther to another idolatrous city, but its church differs dramatically from that of Sardis. You know the name of Philadelphia, but this “City of **Brotherly Love**” was not founded on the idea of brotherly love in general. Its founder was Attalus II Philadelphus, a king of Pergamon (Pergamum) who founded the Lydian city of Philadelphia years before Christ’s Birth. This king actually co-ruled for a time with his **beloved** but ailing elder **brother** Eumenes II. Their “love” was *phileo*, or brotherly, not *agape*.

We heard about keys in Revelation 1:18 (See also Matthew 16:19). But the Key of David we find in vv.7-8 is different. That key is discussed prophetically in Isaiah 22:22, where God placed it upon the shoulder of a man serving under King Hezekiah. The man’s name was Eliakim, meaning **the One God will raise up**. He was the son of Hilkiah, meaning God’s Portion. The function of the Key is the same in both places: to open so that nobody can shut and to shut so that nobody can open. The Revealed Christ is indeed **the One God raised** from the dead.

Those in Philadelphia’s church were not criticized as much as others. An **open** door was offered them because they had kept (guarded) His Word. The synagogue of Satan is mentioned again in v.9 as it was for Smyrna. These said they were Jews but were not. Similarly, in today’s churches, we may also find those who say that they are Christians but are not. All will be made known, for the sake of those whom He has loved (*agape*).

In vv.10-11, we are told of difficult trials that will come upon the whole world. Things will not just get better. Instead, they will get much worse. But those who continue to persevere (bear under or endure) will be delivered, not because they have passed some kind of test, but because of the All-sufficient Christ in them. We will not be tempted beyond what **we are able** simply because of Him (I Corinthians 10:13). **He is Able** to keep us from falling (Jude 1:24-25), and He is coming quickly.

Jesus tells us clearly that we have peace in the midst of our tribulation because He has **overcome** the world (John 16:33). Our faith relationship in Him allows us to participate in His Victory even now (I John 5:4). The **overcomers** in this church, and those who make up the *et alia*, receive yet another glorious promise here in v.12. Christ says He will make them to be ***a pillar in the temple of My God***. That may sound like they will become a structural component of a grand edifice of worship that will be built, but it is really far more overwhelming than that.

Consider the other elements of His Promise in v.12:

- They will not go out from the temple anymore
- Christ will write the Name of His God on them
- ...and the name of the city of His God (New Jerusalem)
- ...and His Own New Name

Now consider the setting of God's Holy City in Revelation 21:10-27. You will find in v.22 that there is no temple edifice in the Holy City! Instead, ...*the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb **are** its temple*.

What could this mean? How could someone be *a pillar in the temple of My God* if there is to be no edifice there in need of structural support? Once again, this is not something we need to figure out for ourselves. This is surely and simply the Revelation of My Lord Jesus the Christ! It is not that there is no temple there. **He is the Temple!!** God the Father and Christ the Son need no building made with hands. Not even heavenly hands. **They are** the Temple! (II Corinthians 5:1)

I become a pillar in this Temple only if I am built into Christ by His Holy Spirit. The Temple has no other pieces or parts. It is **living!** Christ in me and I in Christ **is** my Hope of Glory (Ephesians 2:4-7 and Colossians 1:26-27). ***Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?...*** (I Corinthians 3:16-17).

Remember the white stone in Revelation 2:17? Will the New Name on my stone be His New Name, His New Name for me, or somehow both?

Study 11: **The Word Revealed to the Church at Laodicea *et alia***  
(Read Revelation 3:14-23)

Yet another 40 miles along our southeast course brings us to Laodicea. We are almost back where we started. Ephesus is only about 100 miles west. The city was founded by Antiochus II, who named it after his wife Laodice. Colossae was less than 10 miles from Laodicea. Paul wrote letters to both of those churches and asked them to share them (Colossians 4:12-16), but we don't have a copy of his Laodiceans.

Christ says in v.14 that He is *the Amen* (the One who will surely Be), *the faithful and true Witness* and *the Beginning of the creation of God*. God the Father spoke the creation into being, but Christ was fully involved. *All things came into being **through Him**...He was in the world and the world was made **through Him**...* (John 1:1-14). *For **by Him** all things were created...* (Colossians 1:15-20). The same is true for the New Creation. II Corinthians 5:17 says anyone **in Christ** is a New Creature.

Once again, He “sees to the point of knowing” (*eido*). In vv.15-16, He pronounces them to be neither hot nor cold. “Hot” here is the Greek “*zestos*”, meaning “boiling hot or fervent”. It only appears in these two verses. Christ would have them be hot or cold, but they are just lukewarm. How could cold be better? Could it be that lukewarm ones may think they are really okay? Truly cold ones may be more ready to come to heat. Jesus does not use a mild word here for “*spit you out*” of His mouth. The Greek word is “*emeo*”, used only here in all the Bible. This is where “*emesis*” comes from. He will vomit them forth.

I recall a few brand-new Christians over the years whose excitement seemed boundless. That is, until the “conventional” church members got them “settled down” so that lukewarm could continue undisturbed. This church is basically the opposite of the last one. Those in Philadelphia knew their poverty but were told they were rich in Christ. Here in Laodicea, they think they are rich, but Christ says they are miserably destitute, blind and naked. The world values transitory illusions.

Christ advises us to obtain a relationship in Him which is of inestimable present and eternal value. We are to purchase **His Gold** (v.18)! Where would I find the money? Once again, the groundwork for the Book of Revelation has been laid elsewhere in His Word. Consider Isaiah 55. Read the whole chapter! Delight in His Eternal Abundance without cost! His Gold has been refined in the fire of the cross. I Corinthians 3:10-15 helps us here. We must build only on the Foundation of Christ and only with the materials which we receive in Him. The poor materials we may try to substitute are not suited for battle, but His Work in us will remain.

In v.19, Jesus says He will reprove and discipline those He **loves**, but I struggle with the translations. The word in the Greek is not the expected, self-giving *agape* of Hebrews 12:6, but the brotherly affection of *phileo*. Jesus had asked Peter twice if he had *agape* love for Him, and Peter kept responding with the lesser *phileo*. The third time, Jesus asked him if he even had *phileo* love, and Peter was grieved (John 21:15-17). My Lord loves me with *agape* love and calls forth *agape* love in return. Our v.19 Greek has a complex structure with the word, “*ean*”, a **conditional** “if” word, that the translations seem to ignore. Could the *phileo* love be not Christ’s, but instead that of the lukewarm ones He is calling into *agape*?

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock...* (v.20). Some might assume this verse is from a Gospel, but here it is, addressed to this lukewarm church! But it’s **not** their **church** door. It’s **their** doors! It’s **your** door and **mine**! He could simply push our doors down, but salvation is not by force. It is by personal invitation. He could have said, “**Someday** I may possibly stand at **your heart’s door...**”, but He didn’t. If you have an ear, it just means **He is Here! Now! Behold Him!** And He’s bringing your Supper!

The greatest promises are always promises to the overcomers (v.21). We are reminded that we are not the ones who do it. Christ is the One who Overcame All and Reigns with the Father. I have heard those facing death wondering if they had lived “good enough” lives. They hadn’t! Those who sit on His Throne are **in Him** and **He in them**. The cover is off. They have received the **Living Revelation of Jesus the Christ!**

## Afterword

This is not the end of the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, but it is a most graceful stopping place. The Great Divide in the Book occurs at the beginning of Chapter 4 when John is called up through the open door to see the remainder of the Revelation from a Heavenly Perspective. I feel compelled by My Lord to divide this “study companion” here too.

If He provides opportunity, I will seek to be your study and prayer companion through the remaining 31 studies given to me in this Book. However, at this point, I have already received much more time on this side of my own Great Divide than I have had any reason to medically expect. I will take these first 11 studies to the printer and make them available without charge to any who may be led to use them. I expect to continue writing the rest of the studies until He chooses otherwise.

I am thankful to have been given these days to share them with Janie and to complete these brief, early studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. May they be used for His Good Purpose in Revealing Himself!

Janie and I have been most blessed to have personally received the Revelation of Christ directly from God. He has convinced us that’s the only way such a Revelation could possibly come to anyone. It cannot come from a preacher, a teacher, or a book. Those may be **used** by Him, but **the Revelation IS Jesus the Christ!** He directly Reveals Himself to us! Thanks be to God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! May we hear and see Him! We need no interpreter. **We only need to know Him!**

For now, I’ll close with the wonderful words given to a man named William Featherston back in the 1860s. I believe he had *agape* in mind.

*My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine.  
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou.  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus ‘tis **now!***

The Book of the Revelation can seem difficult if you are looking for revelations of things that will occur in the future. It is actually the Revelation of Christ right now. He is the One who takes the cover off, so that we may know Him in all His Glory. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says...*

### **Other Books by Jim Raddin**

Experiencing the Holy Days (2017)

Recognizing Christ in the Old Testament  
(2019)

Beholding Christ, Just Now (2020)

Singing the Song of Songs (2021)

Knowing Jesus Christ (2022)

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### **About the Author**

Dr. Jim Raddin is a Christian. He and Janie celebrated their 56th anniversary in June 2023. They have two children, six grandchildren and a greatgrandchild. Jim retired from the US Air Force as a Colonel in 1988 after serving as an aeronautical engineer, physician and flight surgeon. His last assignment was as vice commander of the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks AFB, Texas. Jim holds two degrees from MIT, an MD degree from the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, and is board certified in Aerospace Medicine. After retirement, Jim was a consultant in impact injury causation and protection for over 20 years with Biodynamic Research Corporation in San Antonio, Texas. His clients included aircraft and automotive manufacturers and NASCAR. He is now retired. Jim and Janie live in San Antonio with part-time in Rockport, Texas.