

CHAPTER 1

It's All About Jesus

The Nature of Revelation

What kind of writing is the Book of Revelation? First of all, it is an *apocalypse*. The word apocalypse simply means an unveiling—taking the cover off. That should give us a clue that Revelation is not supposed to be confusing. It's not supposed to be frightening. Its meaning is not supposed to be up for grabs. It is meant to be the removing of a veil so that we can see clearly. And the first recipients of this book, the first-century church, would have understood it without recourse to the morning's newspaper. They would have understood it without studying the political situation around the world. Politics certainly comes into it, but it would have been relevant and meaningful to them in a way that it is not always to us.

Secondly, it is a *prophecy*. We are told this right at the beginning. We are to hear and respond to the words of this prophecy (Rev. 1:3). That makes it unique in the New Testament, for it is the only prophetic book found there. Most of the prophets we discover in the Old Testament. And yet in reading what those prophets wrote, we discover that they all prophesied about the days into which we have come. They prophesied about the Christ who was yet to be born (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Because it is about the one to whom all the prophets pointed, this book is not only an apocalypse, but more specifically a revelation of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:1). It is not a revelation about the dragon, the beast, or the false prophet. It is a revelation of Jesus Christ. The book is all about Jesus. It is very important that we understand this. This book is not here to give us nightmares. It is here to give us comfort and hope, because it is all about Jesus.

Because it reveals Jesus to us, we can say that the Book of Revelation is also a very *devotional book*. Reading it should cause your heart to soar in thanksgiving to God. Reading the Book of Revelation should excite you because of the portrait that it paints of Jesus. Nowhere else in the New Testament will you find the dramatic and awesome pictures of Christ that are revealed to us in this book. Even the first chapter opens with a vision of Jesus that is heart warming, soul stirring, and awesome in its magnitude. There are other varied portraits of Christ that Revelation paints for us, and we will look at many of them in the course of this book. And as we look at them, they should cause our hearts to respond in adoration of Him; for, as we read the Book of Revelation, we discover again and again that the inhabitants of Heaven and the inhabitants of Earth are moved to worship Him who sits upon the throne and who lives forever and ever!

The Structure of Revelation

In terms of structure, we find that it is a book of *repetition* or *recapitulation*. Let me explain. You know what happens when you sit at home and watch the big game. You enjoy the action, get excited by the skill of the team you support, and are thrilled when they score. It is a tremendous moment of excitement and involvement. And then, when there is a particularly good moment, or a great score, there will be a replay, perhaps in slow motion. And then one of the announcers will say, "Let's look at that play from another angle." And so you often see the same goal played four or five times from different angles, with different views, from different perspectives. That is what the Book of Revelation is like. It repeats and recapitulates. It shows us something and then it is as if John says, "Let's look at that from another angle," and he goes back over the same ground and paints the picture from a different perspective. Sometimes you will see things that you did not see in the first account. That is the whole point of it. You will see things that were hidden from you in the first act, but when you see it repeated, you see it from a different angle and you get a fuller picture. That is what happens in the Book of Revelation. It does not progress chronologically. It is watching the same scene very often, from different angles.

Now this is a very important point if we are to understand the book correctly. And so for those of you who are not taken with sports and who are not interested in watching replays, let me put it in another way. Did you ever sit and watch a movie, and suddenly it goes blurry, or it wobbles, or it goes from color to black and white? And it's meant to happen—there's nothing wrong with the TV. It is the director's clue that you are watching a flashback. And

the flashback is essential to the plot because you cannot understand what is going to happen next unless you see what happened before. It is a device that filmmakers use to keep the story flowing. Now, the apostle John does that. He takes us forward in the story line of Revelation, but then he will go back again and show us how we got there. He will show us the reason it all happened. He will give us the clue to the plot that is unfolding. As we go through this book, we will try to look and gather together some of those concepts and ideas that recur throughout Revelation.

What we have said about structure so far concerns the time element in Revelation. But its structure is also affected by place. As well as the interaction of different time dimensions, there are also two main places or backdrops against which the action of Revelation takes place. As you read the book you discover that there are *two main locations*. The first location is the *Heavenly temple*. All kinds of things are going on in Heaven. The second location is the *sinful world*. The Heavenly location is full of praise, worship, and adoration. The sinful world is full of rebellion, pestilence, and plague. But the whole purpose of Revelation is to bring Heaven down on the earth so that the peace and the blessings of Heaven might be seen and experienced in the world.

The Book of Revelation also has *two major motifs* that continually emerge. A motif is simply a recurring picture or image, a repeated metaphorical pattern or theme that the writer uses to convey something. The two motifs used in Revelation are the Old Testament events related to Egypt and Babylon. Both were places of captivity and oppression for God's people, and from both the Lord graciously delivered them. Egypt was the place of Israel's slavery, and Babylon came more and more to epitomize the dangers of captivating deception and so, in a

sense, both continue as metaphoric pictures of those dangers. We will return to these in later chapters, but let us note here that there is more Old Testament in the Book of Revelation than probably anywhere else in the New Testament. It is packed with Old Testament illustrations and metaphor, Old Testament Scriptures, Old Testament events, Old Testament history. It is just full of the Old Testament. That is why it is very important for us as New Testament believers to be very familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures. We cannot ignore them. In fact, we ignore them at our peril, for ignoring what they say leads us into error in the New Testament. God does not have two different books. He has one book, and the two parts are inseparably joined together. The Old Testament prepares us for everything that is to come. The New Testament explains to us everything that has happened so far. I think it was Augustine who said, "The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed," and we will find it extremely difficult to come to terms with the Book of Revelation in any meaningful way if we are not familiar with Old Testament Scriptures. This is so important that we need to take time to look more closely at the Old Testament backdrop.

The Old Testament Background

One of the things we need to appreciate is that the New Testament Church was soaked in Old Testament Scripture. It was their missionary Bible. It was the only Bible they had. Paul can write to Timothy and say, "From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). As far as Paul was concerned, you could get saved by faith in Christ through the Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, it tells us that Apollos proved from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:28).

The whole of the New Testament finds its root and its inspiration in Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus himself made that very clear. He said to the Pharisees, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me" (John 5:39). Another time, on the Emmaus Road, when those two disciples are downcast because Jesus has been crucified, Jesus says, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

The prophets who prophesied of the coming salvation, Peter tells us, "searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1 Pet. 1:10-12). They were speaking for a generation not yet born. They were speaking for a nation not yet on the earth. They were speaking for you and me. They were prophesying for us, because they were speaking about Jesus.

It's All About Jesus!

The great divide in peoples' understanding of Scriptures comes down to this. Is the Bible all about Israel, or is the Bible all about Jesus? That is the great divide. If it is all about Israel, I have nothing to say, but if it is all about Jesus, then I do not have enough space to say all that I need to say. My premise is that the Bible is all

about Jesus. From Genesis to Revelation it is all about Jesus. Let me give you just one example for now. Do you remember when God brings Eve to Adam and Adam says, this is it, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24)? Now that was true for Adam and Eve, but Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment even of that statement way back in Genesis. Paul takes it up in his letter to the Ephesians when he is exhorting husbands to love their wives and speaks of us being one with Him. He writes, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:31-32). The whole of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, is about Jesus. God's purpose for His Son was that in all things He should have the preeminence, and all things includes the Bible. In the Word He should have preeminence, and in reading and studying and seeking to understand the Book of Revelation we want to give Jesus the preeminence. We want to be moved toward Christ again, to be touched by His love, stirred by His power, and inspired by His goodness. It is all about Jesus. We will have to touch on some things that are clearly anti-Christ, but we only touch on them to show that they pale into insignificance before Christ. They lose their horror, their darkness, and their fearsomeness in the light of Him who is truly King of kings and Lord of lords. This book is all about Jesus.

Revelation One

Let us start then by looking at part of chapter one that gives us one of those awesome portraits of Christ:

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was

on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Revelation 1:9-20).

We only have to read this description and some of the interpretations of the vision that Jesus Himself gives to understand

that the number seven is of special significance. The number seven of course represents fullness, or completeness. It is a number that will recur again and again through the Book of Revelation, in obvious statements like this but also in less obvious ways, and we will deal with that in more detail in a later chapter. For now, I want to focus on some of the descriptions of Jesus.

The Glowing Feet

I noted earlier that there are *two motifs* that dominate much of this book. They are two periods of Jewish history that form a kind of metaphorical basis or backdrop for the book: firstly, *Israel's slavery in Egypt* and secondly, *their bondage in Babylon*. We will find that the Egypt scene recurs again and again throughout the Scriptures, and we will look at this more closely in a chapter in Volume 2 called "The Exodus Paradigm" because there is so much of the Exodus that finds repetition in Revelation. Then, as you read through the Book of Revelation, you see that the great antagonist toward the people of God is revealed toward the end of the book as Babylon, the great prostitute.

Egypt and Babylon form part of the backdrop because, as people suffered under the taskmasters of Egypt, so people suffer today under the taskmasters of corrupt governments and anti-Christian philosophies. Just as people were carried away to Babylon, so people are carried away in the deceptions of the great prostitute who entices them away from their relationship with Jesus. These, therefore, are still relevant, and they were relevant in the first century when John wrote this letter from Jesus to His churches. He wrote to seven churches in Asia, although at this time there were more than seven churches. We will explore why it is seven churches a little later on.

One of the ways that periods of captivity for Israel were described is indicated by the words of Moses in Deuteronomy: "The Lord...brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt" (Deut. 4:20). God looked at their time of slavery as an iron-smelting furnace. He saw it as a time of tremendous pressure, of intense heat, of great persecution. When Solomon prayed prayers of dedication for the temple he had built, he spoke of "Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace" (1 Kings 8:51). When God confronted His people at a later period in their history through the ministry of Jeremiah, He reminded the prophet that "I brought them out of Egypt, out of the iron-smelting furnace" (Jer. 11:4).

It is difficult for us to imagine the intensity of that kind of a metaphor. It is difficult for us to imagine the cruelty or the unbearable pressure that there must have been on the people. With this iron-smelting furnace, you can almost feel the heat, smell the flame, and get choked on the smoke. It was a time of terrible oppression, and God Himself likened it to a people in a furnace. When the people went into Babylonian captivity, Daniel and his companions were among the first taken away; they were among the choice young men Nebuchadnezzar took away from Jerusalem to Babylon, and during their sojourn there, there came a period where Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden statue. The golden statue, by the way, was sixty cubits high and six cubits wide. Anyone who refused to bow before this wretched idol of evil was to face the horrific death of a fiery furnace. But Daniel's three companions refused to bow down and worship the idol. What they said is a fantastic statement of faith, and it is very relevant to our study of the Book of Revelation. They said:

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it... (Daniel 3:17).

Now that is a great statement of faith—our God is *able* to save us,

And he will rescue us from your hand, O king (Daniel 3:17).

Even bolder—not only is our God able but our God *will*. However, the ultimate statement of faith surely is this one:

But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up (Daniel 3:18).

These men had incredible faith. They believed God could, and they believed God would, but they were prepared for the fact that God might not, and yet still they would not compromise, they would not bow. That is the message of the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation is a book for winners, but here is its great and wondrous enigma. You can win even if you die! We do not give in under pressure, we do not give in under persuasion, and we do not give in under bribery or corruption. We stand firm and, even though they slay us, yet we win, for “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55). Jesus is alive, and because He lives we shall live. Jesus’ promise and Jesus’ encouragement throughout this book are for a people in a hostile world, people under persecution, and people being put to death by the sword and imprisoned in deep dungeons of great darkness. He is saying, “Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life.” (See Rev. 2:10.) What confidence can we have in that? Well, because that is what He did—that is the way He went, the road He trod—and His resurrection is the

guarantee of our eternal life. God does move, in this case, with a deliverance miracle. The men are thrown into the fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter than it ever has been before, such an intense heat that the guards accompanying the prisoners to the door of the furnace die. Nebuchadnezzar takes his ringside seat to watch, and suddenly his eyes pop and his chin drops, and he says, "Look, wasn't it three men we cast into the fire? But I see four men walking unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

Egypt had been an iron-smelting furnace, Babylon had been a furnace of affliction, but when John sees Jesus and describes Him from His snowy woolly head all the way down to His feet, he notices this: His feet are like bronze that has been caused to glow in a furnace. That is because He had been there. He had been down into the iron-smelting furnace of Egypt, He had stood in the midst of His people, and He had taken the heat Himself and had led them out of their bondage on two great fiery feet. At night you could see the fire, and in the day it looked like a cloud, but the two great legs of Jesus marched out before His people and brought them into deliverance. Nebuchadnezzar saw Him, one like the son of the gods standing in the furnace, and he went and pulled out Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The only thing that had burned was the rope that had bound them, and they came out into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

The good news about the Book of Revelation is this. He is speaking to His people facing persecution, facing death, to a people under all kinds of intolerable pressures, but He is saying to them, "It is all right, I have taken the heat. I come down into the place where you are. I come down into the furnace of your

despair. I come down into the furnace of your heat, and I will bring you out." The good news for us—and this is why we must always approach the Book of Revelation as a devotional book—is that in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, under whatever pressure we are under, whatever furnace we feel we are living, however hot it is getting for us where we are, Jesus says, "I am with you! I am with you to bring you out. I am with you to save you. I am with you to deliver you."

Now, I am sure there are many more acceptable theological reasons why Jesus has feet that look like bronze glowing in a furnace, but I like this one. I like to know that when it is too hot to handle where I am, Jesus is there with the guarantee of bringing me out of my dilemma, out of my pressure, and out of my unbearable difficulty because He is committed to me. That is His message here to this whole church in the first century.

He said to His disciples, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). Today's church does not like speaking about persecution and pressure and problems and difficulties; it only likes to speak about success and to emphasize progress and peace and prosperity. I believe in all those things, but the Bible is full of persecution and difficulty. And Jesus made this promise: "In this world you will have trouble." I wish He had not said it, but He did. You do not have to be in the Kingdom very long to know it is true. In the world you do have trouble. But then He says, "But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Revelation is written to overcomers, and I will just make this observation here: you do not need to be an overcomer if there is nothing to overcome! When Jesus challenges us to overcome, it gives me a strong clue that there is some stuff out there that I am going to face that is not going to be a walkover. I need to be

prepared for that. I am appalled by the number of believers who seem to go on well, who are the most vocal in the worship, who always give their amen to the message, and then, when trouble comes, collapse in a hopeless heap. They have not been taught that pressure is part of the process. They have not been taught what James taught: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4). Paul puts it like this: "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

If you do not know that you are called with a purpose, that you have been born into the Kingdom of God with a divine destiny to fulfill, then every problem, every pressure, and every disappointment that comes your way becomes a stumbling block over which you fall. However, if you know that there is a destiny to be fulfilled—if, like your father Abraham, you have seen the city (we will find it at the end of the Book of Revelation and discussed in Volume 2) and know that you have got a destiny there—then the things that were once stumbling blocks that caused you to fall are transformed into stepping stones by which you make progress. Jesus appears in glory in the opening chapter because He wants us to know, "I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I have been where you have been, I have felt what you have felt and I have overcome it all and because I live, you shall live also."

The Speaking Mouth

Let us take another look at this Jesus, not now with His glowing feet but with His speaking mouth. As we read this description

of Christ, it is a wonderful, full description, a head-to-foot description, and yet John seems to be drawn magnetically to one particular feature above all the others. The others get a mention, a description, but this one he focuses on three times: the mouth of Jesus. Jesus, although risen and ascended on high, is the Jesus who still speaks. Jesus is the last word from God to the world. The writer of the Hebrews begins his book like this: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2).

Jesus is God's last word; but it is not a word that was heard two thousand years ago and then went silent. It is a word that continues to impact our world. It is a word that is still heard by those who have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. The writer of the Hebrews not only said God spoke to us through His Son, he also says He upholds all things by His powerful word. You see, the whole of the universe was created with a word, and that word is still speaking; that is why the universe does not fall to pieces. Jesus, who spoke two thousand years ago as the ultimate revelation of God, is still speaking; and John meets Him and is fascinated by His voice. In fact, his first encounter with Christ is a voice behind him, "like a trumpet." He turns to see and, in the midst of the lampstands, he sees the Son of Man and "His voice was like the sound of rushing waters." He looks at Him again and says, "Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword." There are three focuses on the mouth of Christ: the trumpet sound, the mighty rushing waters, and the double-edged sword. All those things communicate to us a Christ who is constantly vocal, a Jesus who speaks.

One of the things the first-century church was learning was how to hear and respond to the voice of God. We, too, need to rediscover first how to hear the voice of God and then how to respond. You and I have probably been in various situations in our lives when we have been in a dilemma, and we have not been sure what to do or which route to take, and we have prayed and nothing has happened. And we have probably said, "I wonder what God is trying to say in this." Well, God never ever tried to say anything. God only ever says things. We treat Him as if He has some kind of speech impediment. If we do not hear, it is not because there is something wrong with God's mouth; the problem lies with our ears. That is what Jesus makes very clear when He writes to the seven churches. He says, "He that has an ear to hear let him hear." We need to learn to hear again the voice of the Spirit, and, having learned how to hear, we need to learn how to speak with the anointing of God. Jesus speaks clearly the word of God, and He speaks it in three different directions.

He speaks with a trumpet voice, and the trumpet voice in Scripture always represents God speaking to His people, God addressing the covenant community, God speaking to the church. Just a cursory reading of Scripture will tell you that. Let me give you just one example. God speaks to Ezekiel. He says, "I have made you a watchman, a prophet-watchman on the wall of the city." What does the watchman do? He blows the trumpet, he warns the people, he prepares the people for what is coming. It is not just an Old Testament picture. Paul, when he is teaching the Corinthians how to move in spiritual gifts and particularly in the gift of prophecy, says to them, "If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8). The trumpet is God speaking to His church. It is how Jesus first addresses John and gets his attention. We need to learn how to

blow the trumpet again, how to blow the trumpet in Zion and get the attention of the people of God that they might hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

Then John said His voice was like the sound of rushing waters. That is a strange concept, a difficult one to handle. However, the same words are used in two other places in the Book of Revelation, in chapter 14 and in chapter 19, and in both places it represents the praise and worship that surrounds the throne of Heaven.

We must understand that there is a prophetic dimension to our praise and worship. When we move prophetically in song and worship and praise, something happens in the Spirit that is inexplicable, but it is dynamic and real. Jesus Himself is pictured as one who speaks with a voice that sounds like rushing waters, which is strange. You think that surely Jesus does not worship in the presence of God, does He? Yes, He does. What is more, the Bible reveals to us that the Father sings. That might be a totally new concept to some of us, but at the end of Zephaniah it says, "The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing" (Zeph. 3:17).

I want to suggest to you that when God sings, God sings prophetically. God sings over you and me not because of what we are now but because of what He knows we will be. He loves us as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us as we are. His ultimate aim is to make us just like His Son, and He has every confidence that He will succeed. Not for a moment does God entertain the thought that He could fail. It has no place in His mind; there is not a possibility, not the slightest or the most extreme chance, that God could fail in anything that He determines to do—and

He is determined to make us like Jesus. He is very happy about this. He actually has more faith in you than you have in yourself. Even if we deny Him, He cannot deny Himself. So He sings over us. What is more, Jesus sings. Hebrews speaks about Him bringing many sons to glory, and He sings prophetically about it for it tells us that "in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises" (Heb. 2:12). The Son walks in our midst, just as we saw Him standing amongst the lampstands, and He is full of song; He is praising God that what God has begun He will complete. Jesus is full of confidence. We have to learn to sing songs of prophetic worship that declare not only what God has done, not only how we feel, but that declare our confidence in all that God is going to do and to speak back to God the promises He has made.

Then it says that out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and that sword is God's word to the world. We have to learn to prophesy in these dimensions. We prophesy to each other with the trumpet sound, we prophesy to the Heavens with the sound of rushing waters, and we prophesy to the world with a sharp sword that comes out of our mouths. Later on, in chapter 19, we see Jesus riding out to conquer the world, and out of His mouth comes the sword with which He is going to strike down the nations. Does that mean He is going to kill them? Is this the last battle? Is this Armageddon? No, this is the triumph of the Gospel because He says He will smite them, He will cut them down with the sword of His mouth, and then He will rule over them with an iron scepter. He has no desire to rule over corpses.

Let me give you a clue that will help us understand this. On the day of Pentecost, Peter got up and wielded the sword of the Spirit under great anointing and with such tremendous effect

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that the people who heard him were cut to their hearts. They died to sin and came alive to God, and what we find in this first portrait of Christ is a Jesus who truly is ruler of the universe. He is a Jesus who has determined to bring His people out of all their afflictions and cause them to be just like Him. He is a Jesus who is determined to bring the world into submission to His lordship. It is a good place to begin. So many people want to rush on and find out who the beast is, but the most important thing is for us to know who Jesus is.

As I indicated in the last chapter most people's fascination with the Book of Revelation comes from the more bizarre and horrific comic kind of images often associated with it. Many people, for instance, are easily captivated with glorifying the beast. You may well have someone in your church that thinks the beast is married to him—and that is a far more immediate problem. However, it is much more important for us to know not who the beast is, but who Jesus is. When we know who Jesus is, when we see Him as He really is, then the things that would cause us disturbance and fear are easily dealt with. When we know Him, what can we fear? If God is for us, what can be against us? God is on our side; God is committed to us; God comes down to us in our most desperate moments. He walks in our furnace to deliver us and bring us into freedom. We saw in John's vision of Jesus