

Not Just a Hunch

Special Delivery – Part II

Revelation 1:4-8

Introduction

A Church of God pastor, who travels in the United States, Australia, and other countries, has written a book entitled *2008 God's Final Witness*. In it, he claims to be predicting, literally, the opening of the bowl judgments on the planet. He believes we are already in the tribulation period.

This author mixes truth from Revelation with his own bizarre and arrogant claims. He combines scientific threats to the planet – including cracks in the Earth's magnetic field, eruptions of super-volcanoes, sunspot radiation, tsunamis, and even the collapse of the World Trade Center – with judgments of God on earth during the tribulation and concludes it is already upon us. He writes,

God's two witnesses – His two prophets, are established to witness to the whole world about the greatest phase yet of His plan and purpose for mankind. It is now with boldness, confidence and great clarity that I give to you what God has given me. I am to announce, through God's direct revelation, that I am one of the two witnesses [in Revelation]. . . . I know the timing of the events as the seals of Revelation are opening. I know the sixth seal has already opened. I know the exact day the first seal was opened. . . . Over the past 6,000 years, only 144,000 people have been . . . molded, fashioned and trained by God so that they could rule with Jesus Christ in His Kingdom.

The author/pastor's name is Ronald Weinland.

He claims that the apostle John was not allowed to reveal everything that was going to happen and that it would be up to him as God's final witness. In fact, the blurb on his book congratulates the fact that while the apostle John was given the task of recording prophetic events, Weinland was given the task by God to reveal the truth.

Never mind the fact that this book in the Bible is not called "The Recordings of John". Did you notice that? It is rightly called "The Revelation to John".

Never mind the fact that the apostle John said that if anyone added one more word to biblical prophecy, they would go to hell forever.

I really found it fascinating, and helpful, that this author declared in his book, which was published in the late summer of 2006, that by the fall of 2008, the United States will no longer exist as a nation.

Many of Weinland's followers have already sold all of their belongings and are living in caves and temporary shelters. He evidently has quite a following in Russia among untrained believers. Many of these believers are already living in caves, having sold everything, awaiting the judgment of God on the earth and hoping to survive it.

This is much like that which we saw with the publication of the *88 Reasons* book that declared the rapture would occur in 1988. Korean believers especially, followed this author's calculations and sold their homes, put their pets to sleep, and quit their jobs to wait for the rapture to occur in 1988.

It is one thing to make calculations, although it is not advisable; it is another to say you are God's final prophet.

Weinland claims to be God's final prophet and those of us living in the United States of America might as well quit cutting the grass, working on projects, and working to win our neighbors because it is too late anyway and they are probably not part of the 144,000. Besides, it is all going to end, as we know it, in 2008.

Weinland will be exposed in about eleven months – 2008 is already ticking. If his prophecy does not come true, let me tell you what I hope his followers do to him for causing personal loss and great confusion, not to mention the tremendous strain on the church, particularly among those who believed him. I hope they take him outside the city limits, wherever he lives – and, you are probably thinking, “stone him to death,” right? No, that would be too quick. I think they should make him live in Russia, in one of those caves for the rest of his life.

The truth is that Weinland is just the latest guy to sell his dateline. People flock to it because they want to know the future with more specificity than God allows.

Do you remember Y2K? Do you remember the panic? Remember the books at the Christian book store announcing that this was the time of Christ's return?

I knew of churches that were stocking grain in their basements. I knew Christians who were considering moving away from the city. I knew of one couple that was promoting buying windmills to power estates.

The only people I knew of who were really ready were the Amish. They could smile at the rest of the world.

The truth is, we want to know if Jesus is coming for the church in our lifetime, do we not? Those who love the Lord love to consider that He will soon appear (II Timothy 4:8). They long for the coming kingdom and the new heaven and new earth.

There is something good about this – and I trust that our study will make us all long to walk with Christ more closely and long for His kingdom more dearly.

Let us avoid the extremes. Let us not refuse to see what is happening around us as indicators that the world is moving closer to a global community that will foster a one-world economy and a one-world leader. There are Christians who say, “Bah, humbug,” at any discussion revolving around the developments in our world and the way they might play perfectly into the one-world church and ruler.

However, let us avoid the other extreme of setting dates for this.

It is correct to say, “His coming is closer now than ever.” However, just do not torture the text to say it is going to happen in 2008.

Beloved, avoid those and their writings claiming to have another word from God when God already said through John the Apostle that this is the final word. (Revelation 22:19)

The truth is that the human heart craves knowledge of the future.

This is the reason there are millions of connections every week into horoscope phone lines and internet sites. In New York alone, there are around one million a week who take the movements of the stars as indicators of their future.

One of the authors I read told of an event in which a believer was pressed by a fortune teller to give her some money to tell him his future. He said, “You mean to tell me that you can tell me what I'm going to be doing this time tomorrow?” She said, “Absolutely”. He responded, “Tell you what, I'll pay you double what you're asking if you can tell me what I was doing this time yesterday.” She smiled and walked away.ⁱ

Until the development of medicine, it was generally believed throughout the Middle Ages that a person with curvature of the spine had a special link with the demonic world. In fact, malformation of the spine that resulted in a hump, as in a hunched back, was considered to be a mark of great psychic powers. These people were believed to be capable of seeing into the future. We do not believe this anymore because we now understand that curvature of the spine has nothing to do with psychic powers or demons that reveal the future. But the word has sort of lingered around to this day, for we still call a sense of future events or some premonition a “hunch”.ⁱⁱ

We say, “I've got a hunch . . .”

Well, I have good news for you. We do not have to rely on false prophets with new revelation; we do not need to sell everything and head for Russia – we can operate on more than just a hunch.

We have the revealed word of God. And even though we are not told all of the “when,” we are given much of the “what” and the “where” and the “whom,” and even much of the “why”.

We are uncovering together things that are much more than a hunch.

How do we know this? How can we trust John the Apostle?

We cannot help but notice that before John reveals any of his vision, he makes sure we understand who the real Author is. The first 8 verses of Revelation chapter 1 are simply one phrase after another, authenticating the revelation as coming from the Triune God. It began, if you will look at Revelation 1:1, with these words,

The revelation of Jesus Christ . . .

Think of it this way. Often someone will come to me after a church service or by the bookstore with one of my books and ask me to sign it. Sometimes I will kid around and say, “Do you want me to sign it “Chuck Swindoll” or “John McArthur” or someone who is famous? “No,” they say, “you sign it.” I will open to the front of the book and sign it as neatly as I possibly can.

What we have in the first 8 verses – in the flyleaf of the book of Revelation – is the signature of God.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Publication of the Triune God

This book of Revelation is the publication of the Triune God. Notice Revelation 1:4.

***John to the seven churches that are in Asia:
Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and
who was and who is to come, . . .***

Signature of God the Father

This is the signature of God.

In the Hebrew language, His name, “Yahweh,” was simply the verb “to be”. It can be translated, “I AM”. “I AM” sounds like a statement referring only to the present tense, but within this verb is the expression of all the tenses.

This is the book of Revelation from I AM who was, and I AM who is, and I AM who is to come.

The Father is present in the past and our future is His present.

We are immortal. We will never cease to be, but we did have a beginning.

God had no beginning and will have no ending. To Him, all things are at the same time past, present, and future.

This is the declaration of eternity. This is the announcement of deity.

By the way, the signature of God the Father is interchangeable with God the Son, for they are equally God.

This is the reason Christ created such a stir when He chose this verb to announce Himself. He said,

***. . . before Abraham was born, I AM.
(John 8:58)***

Jesus was not telling them, or us, that He was a prophet, as Islam believes, or a child created by the sexual act between God the Father and Mary, as the Mormons believe. He was saying, “I AM God and I have no beginning.”

This explains why the next verse says,

***. . . they picked up stones to throw them at
Him . . . (John 8:59)***

They were thinking, “We need to put this blasphemer to death.”

They clearly understood that Jesus was declaring equality with God the Father; Himself as equally divine.

When we look at Revelation 1:8, we read the signature,

***“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the
Lord God . . .***

Most believe this is Christ speaking in this verse. In my Bible, it is in red letters, so it has to be Jesus speaking – that settles it. John did not have a black pen and a red pen – the ink color is not inspired. I know that really messes things up for you – I am sorry. In fact, I will show in the very last chapter of Revelation where the English publishers got it wrong. Not now – you will have to come back in a couple of weeks.

In the last chapter of Revelation – chapter 22 – the Lord Jesus is clearly the one speaking in verse 13, and He refers to Himself as,

. . . the Alpha and the Omega . . .

“I am A to Z!”

It is really amazing to recognize that Christ is speaking in Revelation 1:8 and the titles for Jesus Christ and God the Father are used interchangeably. This reveals the equality of attributes and essence within the Triune God.

In fact, notice in the beginning of Revelation 1:8 that the one who is “the Alpha and the Omega” is also called “the Lord God”.

Notice further that this verse ends by the Alpha and the Omega referring to Himself as,

. . . the Almighty.

This is the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew name, “Shaddai”.

Jesus Christ can legitimately lay claim to the divine title of omnipotence, “Shaddai”. This is the title of divine power and might.

By the way, throughout the Old Testament, “Shaddai” was often the name linked with God’s ability to fulfill any promise He made to His people. It first appeared when God reinforced His covenant promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:1.^{iv}

It is interesting, is it not, that at the outset of this prophecy, Jesus Christ would remind John the Apostle that all these promises of prophecy, though impossible as they might seem, will come true, for “Shaddai” has spoken.

This is not just a hunch from John – these things will come to pass.

Signature of God the Spirit

The next person of the Godhead to sign the flyleaf of this book is the Holy Spirit. Notice in Revelation 1:4 that this is a publication of prophecy, coming not only from God the Father, but,

. . . from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

For the first time we read a significant number in the book of Revelation – the number seven. Whenever seven of anything is encountered in this book, it is a symbol of completeness and perfection.

In fact, this number seven, in reference to the Holy Spirit, comes right out of Isaiah 11:2. In this verse, the prophet speaks of the perfection and completeness of the Spirit of God coming upon the Messiah.

Isaiah describes the Spirit in a sevenfold manner, in Isaiah 11:2. He is:

1. the Spirit of the Lord;
2. the Spirit of wisdom;
3. the Spirit of understanding;
4. the Spirit of counsel;
5. the Spirit of strength;
6. the Spirit of knowledge;
7. the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

The seven-spirits is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in His sevenfold completion and perfection and fullness.^v

Signature of God the Son

The third person within the Godhead to officially sign His name to the flyleaf of this book is Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation is a publication not only from God the Father and God the Spirit, but God the Son.

God the Son is described in three ways, in Revelation 1:5a:

- First, He is *the faithful witness*.
- Secondly, He is *the firstborn of the dead*.
- Thirdly, He is *the ruler of the kings of the earth*.

1. First, God the Son is the faithful witness.

This description has to do with His responsibility.

The apostle John was passionate to reveal the authentic testimony of Christ.

He described Christ as the one who came into the world to explain the person and plan of the Father. (John 1:18)

He recorded that Christ stood before Pilate and said,

. . . “I [came] into the world, to testify to the truth. . . .” (John 18:37)

When Jesus Christ speaks, He speaks the truth – the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Like a witness on the stand, Christ stands as *the* blameless faithful witness declares,

. . . the way, the truth, and the life . . . (John 14:6)

2. Secondly, Christ is also called the firstborn of dead.

This is not a reference to Christ being God’s first baby boy among many more baby boys and girls born later and raised from the dead.

The Greek word refers to His supremacy in conquering death and rising from the grave. Firstborn does not refer to time sequence, but to preeminence as the One who conquered death forever.^{vi}

Christ is the faithful witness, which refers to His responsibility.

Christ is the firstborn of the dead, which refers to His resurrection.

Let us look at the third description of God the Son.

3. Thirdly, Christ is called the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth, which refers to His reign over all.

Christ will reign on David’s throne over all the kings of the earth. He is:

- Psalm 24:7 – the King of glory;
- Daniel 4:37 – the King of heaven;

- Matthew 2:2 – the King of the Jews;
- John 1:49 – the King of Israel;
- I Timothy 1:17 – the King of the ages;
- Revelation 15:3 – the King of the saints;
- Revelation 19:16 – the King of Kings.

This is not just a hunch from John, this is the publication of the Triune God – and all three have signed their name to it.

Then John breaks out in a hallelujah – a doxology of praise. Let us look at what the publication of the Sovereign leads to.

The Praise of the Saint

What do we do after discovering that God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit have so moved to reveal the supremacy of Christ and the glory of the Father and the perfection of the Spirit; what can we do but praise the Lord. Amen?

This is what John does. He is exiled on the little island of Patmos by the Roman emperor Domitian who hated Christ and everything about Christians. He says, “I’ve just heard from the heavenly Emperor, Domitian, and you’re not it; you’re not the ultimate ruler; you’re temporary. Christ’s reign shall be eternal. Do your best to stop Him, but He shall rule over all as King of Kings.”

Look at the three stanzas of John’s doxology. In fact, you should circle them.

1. First, Jesus loves us.

In Revelation 1:5b, John writes,

. . . To Him who loves us . . .

This is present tense. We tend to think that God loved us – some time in the distant past. No, my friend, He loves us now.

Ray Stedman, in his commentary on this doxology, told the story of a trip he was taking through Virginia. He was traveling with the well known pastor and author, Dr. Harry Ironside, who pastored Moody Church for many years. They met another pastor, an older man, who told them his testimony of conversion to Jesus Christ.

This older pastor was a student at Cambridge University in England when D. L. Moody was invited to speak to the students. He and many other university students were furious that such a distinguished institution as Cambridge would invite an unschooled American preacher to give a lecture. Moody murdered the king’s English so badly that his

critics were constantly amazed at his effectiveness in preaching.

The night of Moody’s speech, a group of guys sat on the very front row, waiting for just the right time to humiliate Moody with jeers and mocking. Just before Moody stood to preach, Ira Sankey sang. As he sang, the restless audience grew quiet and respectful. Immediately after the song and without introduction, Moody walked to the lectern, pointed his finger at the young men in the front row, and said, “Young gentlemen, don’t ever think God don’t love you, for He do.”

This was perhaps the most ungrammatical sentence ever uttered at Cambridge University. Yet there was such power in Moody’s face and passion in his voice that these young men in the front row listened as God’s love was declared in the gospel. Throughout the course of his message, Moody would repeat at different times this same phrase, “Don’t ever think God don’t love you, for He do.”^{vii}

Bad grammar – great theology.

Jesus’ love is present tense. It is not, “He did,” not, “He might,” not, “He will one day,” but “He does”.

Not only does Jesus love us, but let us continue to the second stanza.

2. Secondly, Jesus released us.

John continues in Revelation 1:5b, to say,

. . . [He] released us from our sins by His blood

Those who have believed the gospel of Christ’s atoning work on the cross have been released – set free!

My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought!

My sin, not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul!^{viii}

He breaks the power of canceled sin,

He sets the prisoner free;

His blood can make the foulest clean,

His blood availed for me.^{ix}

So sang Horatio Spafford and Charles Wesley, and so sing the saints.

Jesus loves us and He released us.

3. Thirdly, Jesus assigned us.

Look at Revelation 1:6.

and He has made us to be a kingdom . . .

(That is, we are now assigned as royalty; members in His kingdom.)

. . . priests to His God and Father – to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

We are now a holy priesthood. (I Peter 2:9)

What did the priests in the Old Testament do? They brought people near to God. We also, as believers, bring people the gospel, which, by the power of the Spirit, draws them near to God.

Priests sacrificed. What are we to sacrifice?

We are to offer to Him,

. . . [our] bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God . . . (Romans 12:1)

It was messy, but easier for the Old Testament priest to offer animals that had been killed. Offering a dead sacrifice is easier than offering a living sacrifice. Dead sacrifices do not have the ability to crawl off the altar.

We also must offer ourselves daily to this One who is worthy.

Hebrews 13:15 informs us that we are to,

. . . continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God . . .

We, beloved, are all, by faith in Christ, a company of priests. And we are exercising our occupation even in here in church, as we offer to God our lives and our time and our treasure and our praise.

This is the publication of the Sovereign, which leads to the praise of the Saint. Let us look at what happens next.

The Prediction of the Savior

Notice Revelation 1:7.

Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

The rest of the book of Revelation does little more than reveal the details of this one verse. This is the revelation of the coming of Christ.

John says, “This is not just a hunch; this is the promise of the revelation, signed by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.”

One rabbi told a pastor, “What you Christians believe is that when the Messiah comes, we’re going to say, ‘Welcome,’ and you are all going to say ‘Welcome back.’”

According to this text, this is not exactly true. For all the people who survive the tribulation – especially the huge number of Jews who come to place their faith in Christ, the Messiah, and will also see Him coming – as the Bride will be with Him, coming in His glory and victory, and all the earth will look upon Him and know that it is not “Welcome,” but, “Welcome back!”

John Phillips, a British Bible teacher and author, wrote in his commentary called *Exploring Revelation*, one of the most stirring pages in English history. It told of the conquests of Richard I, the Lion-hearted. While Richard was away in battle, his kingdom fell on bad times. His sly and graceless brother, John, usurped all the rights of the king and misruled the realm. The people of England suffered, longing for the return of the king and praying that it might be soon.

Then one day, Richard came back. He landed in England and marched straight for his throne. About his return, many tales are told and have become woven into the legends of England, like the legend of Robin Hood. In reality, however, the obstacles placed in his way by John, Richard knocked over one by one until he reached his throne. The people shouted their delight. They rang peal after peal on the bells. The Lion-hearted was back. “Long live the King.”

Phillips went on to write, “One day a King greater than Richard will lay claim to a realm greater than England. Those who have abused the earth in His absence, seized His domains, and mismanaged His world will all be swept aside. What a day that will be.^x

This is not some wild calculation. This is not just a hunch. This is the truth and God has signed His name to the flyleaf – Father, Son, and Spirit.

So what shall we do? Offer Him our bodies, our lives, our loyalty, our devotion, and our continual sacrifice of praise.

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow,

Praise Him, all creatures here below,

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 1/13/2008 by Stephen Davey.

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- ⁱ John Phillips, Exploring Revelation (Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), p. 18.
ⁱⁱ Webb Garrison, What's in a Word (Rutledge Hill Press, 2000), p. 190.
ⁱⁱⁱ Ray Stedman, God's Final Word (Discovery House, 1991), p. 11.
^{iv} Larry Richards, Every Name of God in the Bible (Nelson, 2001), p. 33.
^v Stedman, p. 6.
^{vi} MacArthur, p. 25.
^{vii} Stedman, p. 8.
^{viii} Horatio G. Spafford, "It is Well With My Soul".
^{ix} Charles Wesley, "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing".
^x Phillips, p. 22.