

1. **Introduction:** We begin at verse 1:8 with the question of whether the “I” in the verse refers to the Father or to Jesus, the Son. The question can be addressed by studying chapters 5 and 21 and by thinking about the relationship between members of the Trinity.
2. **Revelation 1:8:** *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*
 - In the Trinity, all three Persons are fully God. The Father is the source of all life and is the uncaused cause of everything. He is eternal, uncreated, neither begotten nor proceeding. The plans of creation and redemption were established by Him.
 - The Son is uncreated and eternally begotten by the Father. He is the One who accomplishes God’s plan for creation and redemption. The Holy Spirit is uncreated and proceeds from and is sent by the Father and Son. He applies the results of the Father’s plan of salvation and the Son’s work to believers.
 - It is the Father speaking in 1:8 (and in 21:5-6). He is neither begotten nor proceeds. The Father is the eternal source of the Son. The Father and Son are the eternal source of the Holy Spirit. All three are “the first and the last,” all are eternal. The three distinct Persons share one eternal nature.
 - The Father is *“Alpha and Omega ... who is and was and is to come, the Almighty.”*
 - These statements assert God’s sovereign control over all things.
 - God is the sovereign ruler of the universe and particularly of human history. He is deliberately present personally with His people through all circumstances.
 - To enable salvation, God intervened in history by sending the Son to take on a human nature and die to pay the death penalty due sins. He will likewise intervene with Christ’s second coming to consummate salvation, to judge, and to renew creation.
3. **Revelation 1:9:** *I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*
 - Because of their faith, those “in Christ,” share alike in the suffering of tribulation, the glories of the kingdom, and patient endurance, all enabled by Jesus.
 - John identifies himself as a *“brother and partner”* in the tribulation, emphasizing his identity as one of them. For his faith, John has been exiled to the island of Patmos.
 - Tribulation for believers is a present reality, not a future prospect.
 - Tribulation is the ongoing experience of those who live as a citizen of God’s kingdom in a sinful world. Shared tribulation they may be difficult and painful but binds them together.

- Before Constantine became a Christian, the tribulation they faced from Rome was much worse. Under some Emperors, being a Christian was sufficient to be sentenced to death.
 - The Roman Emperor claimed to be “lord of all.” Christians could not accept that. They knew God is “Lord of all.” Christians in the Roman Empire needed patient endurance.
4. **Revelation 1:10-11**: *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹ saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”*
 5. **In the Spirit**: A state of being controlled, guided, and empowered by the Holy Spirit
 6. **John’s Vision of Christ**: While John is worshipping, he heard a voice behind him loud and commanding like a trumpet, clear and powerful. John is commanded to write what he sees (and will see) in a book and send it to seven churches in the Roman Province of Asia.
 - Seven is the number representing completeness, representative of all churches. There are and will be churches like each of the named seven all through the ages. That “which is to be revealed” is for all churches, but first for the seven in Asia Minor.
 7. **Revelation 1:12-16**: *Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*
 - John is surprised by voice speaking to him. He turns to see the source of the trumpet-like voice and sees seven golden lampstands (later identified (1:20) as representing seven churches) with “*someone like a son of man*” in their midst.
 - The lampstand, as a symbol of the church, is from Zechariah’s vision of a faithful Israel as a menorah or lampstand reflecting the light of God’s presence in the Temple (Zech 4:2-11).
 - The resurrected Jesus stands among the lampstands, clothed in a long robe with a golden sash around His chest. His hair is white like snow, eyes like a flame of fire, with feet like burnished bronze. His voice was like the roar of many waters.
 - 1:13-16 is a symbolic description of the glorified Jesus Christ (including His glorified human body).

- The white hair signifies ancient wisdom and eternal purity, connecting Him to God the Father and the "Ancient of Days" in Daniel.
 - Eyes like a flame of fire symbolize His all-seeing omniscience and righteous purifying judgment. Feet like refined burnished bronze symbolize His foundation of divine righteousness and His unyielding presence.
 - His voice like rushing waters symbolizes His powerful, authoritative, and majestic voice, a force that commands attention and inspires awe like the sound of a powerful waterfall.
 - In Christ's right hand are seven stars. As seen in 1:20, they symbolize the angels of the seven churches.
 - A sharp two-edged sword comes out of Christ's mouth symbolizing the powerful, penetrating, decisive Word of God that issues from His mouth, representing sovereign authority, power to judge, and ability to cut through deceit to reveal the truth and intentions of the heart.
 - ***"His face was like the sun shining in full strength"*** emphasizes the brilliant majesty of Christ's appearance.
8. **Revelation 1:17-18:** *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,"¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."*
- John, overwhelmed by seeing the majesty of the risen Christ, ***"fell at his feet as though dead."*** Jesus responds by laying His right hand on John and saying ***"Fear not, I am the first and the last,"¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."***
 - Jesus' right hand of power and protection, that holds the seven stars, touches John. Jesus then speaks words of encouragement. He is the Lord of the beginning and end and everything in between. He is eternal and holds all power including that over death and hades.
9. **Revelation 1:19-20:** *Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*
- In 1:19, the three clauses seem to emphasize how past, present, and future are intermingled throughout the revelation, making its message relevant for all ages.
 - In 1:20, Jesus provides insight into the deeper meaning of the mystery of two key symbols – the seven stars and seven lampstands.
 - The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. The word angel throughout Revelation is used primarily to refer to heavenly beings.

- But from the instruction in 2:1 for John to write to the angel of the church in Ephesus, it seems the angel here refers to the spiritual leader or messenger of the seven churches.
 - The seven lampstands are seven churches in Asia Minor which are to receive the message about John's visions.
 - The stars and lampstands are under the sovereign protection of the Lord (1:11-13, 16).
 - Jesus, in this unveiling, promises God's future intervention into history to judge evil, resurrect His people, and bring about a new earth and new heavens.
 - Believers hope is grounded in this promise. The One who is returning soon is already present among us.
 - John is commissioned by Jesus to describe in writing what he saw and heard in the visions and send it to the churches. Jesus walks among the churches and holds them in His hand.
10. **Revelation 2:1-3: To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: "The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.**
- Again, since John is instructed to write to the angel of the church in Ephesus, it appears that the angel is the spiritual leader or messenger of that church.
 - Ephesus was the capital of the Roman Province of Asia with a population of more than 250,000. It was a cosmopolitan seaport and center of business, pagan idol worship, and sexual immorality, and the guardian of the temple of Artemis.
 - The massive temple complex, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, had thousands of priests and priestesses. There was an extensive booming business in statues and other objects related to the goddess worship (Acts 19:23-40).
 - Ephesus was a center of Emperor worship, a leading center of the imperial cult.
 - Christians in Ephesus faced enormous pressure to participate in the worship of the Emperor.
 - Ephesus was also a center for occult and magical practices. In Acts 19:19 indicates that many new believers burned their magic scrolls worth a total of about 50,000 days wages.
 - Ephesus had a large Jewish population that led to tensions within the church.