

Two weeks ago tomorrow I was driving to church around 8:00 in the morning. To avoid school zones I take Hefner to Rockwell, then south on Rockwell to Wilshire, then I come straight down Wilshire to church. I took notice at Rockwell and Wilshire of the new flashing stoplight at County Line Rd. That's two miles away. At Council the new and improved, wider Wilshire I noticed something else. The orange construction barrels were on the grass. I thought I was losing my mind. For the last eighteen months all I've seen are orange barrels, lane closures, and construction vehicles. It couldn't be real, maybe I was dreaming, suddenly there was nothing. The road widening project seems complete.

Just one week ago you and I gathered and heard something even more amazing than a long running road project finally concluding. We heard the cry, **"He is not here, he has risen."** But what we heard doesn't match up with what our reason says could be true. We'd have to be out of our minds to believe something that farfetched. People don't come back from the dead. It must have been a dream, it couldn't be real.

The last book in the Bible, Revelation, some people feel is farfetched, not real. Is it a mystical book too crazy, messed up, and hard to figure out? There's heavy graphic language, yes. It's filled with visions, yes. These all have lessons to learn. The Apostle John received these visions including the one from the second lesson. It may seem like he's out of his mind, his imagination is running wild, or he's making it up. But the vision really happened. We don't need to think that we're...

**Out of our minds believing in the Living One  
Seen in the vision  
Was dead now alive forever**

John was a real person. He lived at the end of the first century during a time of intensifying persecution. He was pastor to at least seven churches in real locations in western Asia, what is now Turkey. Some of these we can still get quite close to identifying. He wrote this book from a small island off the coast of Turkey called Patmos. John was likely here because of his preaching and teaching about Jesus.

John received a real vision. **"On the Lord's Day I was in the spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet."** This was a real experience for John that he ties to a specific date, Sunday, the Lord's Day. What he saw was more than a dream but stopped short of real conscious experience. It's important to understand that. This vision was images, pictures of real things, but not to be understood literally. John was in the spirit, a highly tuned spiritual state. The voice he heard was like a trumpet. He didn't hear an actual trumpet. We draw the comparison between a trumpet and apply how that relates to the voice John heard. In vision language what's important is the main message and point being made, not so much figuring out each detail.

Let's look at what John saw in vision. **"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."** Do you have the picture? Lampstands might call to mind the lampstands of the temple in the Old Testament. They were elaborate candle holders with one support coming up for each of the seven candles. Verse 20 tells us what these represent, **"the seven lampstands are the seven churches."** Those are the seven named churches to whom John wrote this letter. That helps understand why the lampstands are golden. Gold is precious and valuable, and there is nothing more valuable than churches sharing the Word of God and the gospel.

In the middle of those lampstands John saw a human figure. But he was more. Exalted and glorified, his white hair called to mind holiness and purity. His fiery eyes described how he could see into unseen places like people's hearts. His bronze feet show his strength and power against enemies. The power of his voice indicated the life giving power his Word has. The bright beaming face showed majestic glory. Seven stars were in his powerful right hand and a sharp sword came from his mouth. The seven stars are the spiritual leaders of the seven churches. These he holds in his protective grip. The sharp sword is the Word which he speaks. There is no question who this human figure was, **"like a son of man"**. He told John. **"I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."** This is Jesus.

When you have a particularly memorable dream you may wake up wondering what it means. Visions, especially those here in Revelation, make us ask what it means for us. Why this revelation from Jesus and what point does it make in my life? **"I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus."** John saw this vision of Jesus after making this statement. The vision reminded John he was still in Jesus. As believers we will endure much tribulation and suffering. It comes with the territory of being Christian. It might take many forms. It might be losing a job because of the oil economy. Health problems because of allergies. A nest egg we were counting on not as big as we thought or hoped. Then there's suffering that comes because we're Christian. Friends look at us weird for things we say. Promotions pass us by because of our beliefs. We may not be trusted by family members thinking we have an agenda. We face suffering. This vision reminds us you and I are in Jesus too.

Yes, the suffering comes because we're in Jesus. But the kingdom comes too. This kingdom isn't a location, it's an activity. The kingdom of God is God's ruling and saving activity in the world, happening in the hearts of people. The saving activity of Jesus is happening in your heart right now as you hear his Word. That leads to patient endurance in Jesus too. There's no reason for despair in Jesus. Rejoice in Jesus. God rules in your heart by faith. God strengthens you to go against the suffering because you're in Jesus. We'd be out of our minds to go alone against suffering. But in Jesus we confidently go against it.

John spent three years with Jesus. He saw miracles, witnessed the crucifixion up close, and was at the tomb on Easter morning with the grave clothes and empty tomb. He was eyewitness in the upper room on consecutive weeks as Jesus appeared to the disciples. An apostle for almost 60 years he was convinced Jesus was dead and now was alive forever. Jesus loved John, and John loved Jesus. But after all that when John sees the object of his love he falls on his knees in fear. **"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."** Jesus lifted him up because he loved him. Christ's eternal power and glorious majesty was in service to his divine love.

What else could John do? He was out of his mind for believing in a Living One, yet here was that Living One standing before him in full glory and divine power. We'd fall on our faces too. What else could we do? We're nothing compared to Jesus. Our sins make us small. Fear is the right emotion before an all-powerful, all glorious, all just God. But with his right hand Jesus extends grace to us. In love he lifts you and me up and says don't be afraid. We have no reason to fear Jesus. He clearly spoke of his resurrection. **"I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One, I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever!"** He was dead. Now he's alive. The Living One extends the way for us to live. Our pathway to God is through the Living One. Our peace is through the Living One.

Are we out of our minds to believe in the Living One? It seems unbelievable. He was dead, and came back. He lives now forever. But that's exactly what we have. He holds the key to death because death locked him up, but Jesus broke its clutches. Jesus lives and conquered death. Now anyone connected to him does too. That's you and me. It's amazing! We have life because Jesus is life. We have peace because Jesus is the Living One, our Savior who was dead but is alive.

You're out of your mind. It couldn't happen. That's what others might say. Believing the resurrection shows you're out of your mind. If that's true, then being out of our minds is okay. We have witnesses. John saw Jesus many times, and again here in a vision, showing off his divine power and glory. That power and glory assures us we will see Jesus too. What now is only picturesque vision language in the book of Revelation will be our reality when we see the Living One, Jesus for ourselves.