



Introduction & Chapter 1

Introduction

The Revelation of Jesus Christ: What This Book Is — and Why It Matters



Revelation 1:3] *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."*

Revelation is the **only book of the Bible** that opens with a direct promise of blessing simply for reading it, hearing it taught, and taking it seriously. That alone should cause us to pause. Many Christians avoid Revelation. Some find it intimidating. Others have been told it is confusing, symbolic, or impossible to understand. Ironically, the book itself says the opposite. Revelation was written to be **read aloud, understood, and obeyed**.

This study begins with a simple conviction: **God would not promise a blessing for reading a book He never intended His people to understand.**

What "Revelation" Actually Means

The title of the book is **The Revelation of Jesus Christ** — singular, not plural. The word *revelation* comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which means:



- to uncover
- to unveil
- to pull back a curtain

Revelation is not about hiding truth — it is about **revealing** truth. Above all else, this book reveals **Jesus Christ**:

- Who Jesus is...
- What authority Jesus possesses...
- How history concludes under His rule!



It does not invent new ideas — it **completes** old ones.

If Revelation ever feels strange to us, it is usually because we are unfamiliar with the Old Testament. The book **assumes** biblical literacy, especially of the Old Testament, and, unfortunately, many pastors do not have it; therefore, it is not regularly taught to parishioners.

Here are **common unspoken reasons** Revelation is often avoided at the parish and Bible Study level, even in otherwise Bible-teaching churches:

1. **Fear of controversy:** Revelation exposes eschatological fault lines (rapture timing, Israel, judgment). Many pastors/teachers avoid it to prevent division or complaints.
2. **Perceived complexity:** The book **demands** cross-biblical literacy (Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah). Leaders fear overwhelming or confusing lay audiences.
3. **Symbol anxiety:** Pastors worry symbols will either be over-literalized (sensationalism) or over-spiritualized (allegory), putting them in a no-win situation.
4. **Doctrinal accountability:** Teaching Revelation forces pastors to take clear theological positions they may prefer to keep ambiguous.
5. **Cultural discomfort:** Judgment, wrath, and divine authority clash with modern therapeutic Christianity focused on affirmation and personal well-being.
6. **Lack of training:** Most seminaries give minimal exposure to eschatology; pastors often feel under-equipped to teach it confidently.
7. **Time commitment:** Revelation resists short sermon series. Churches oriented toward topical preaching avoid long, sequential studies.
8. **Fear of being labeled “extreme”:** Teaching prophecy can trigger accusations of date-setting, conspiracy thinking, or political entanglement—even when taught responsibly.
9. **Past abuse:** Ridiculous and sensational claims have created institutional caution and embarrassment by association.
10. **Undertraining in eschatology:** Revelation quickly reveals gaps in biblical literacy, OT knowledge, and prophetic frameworks.

How God Delivered the Revelation

Revelation 1:1–2 gives us a clear chain of communication:

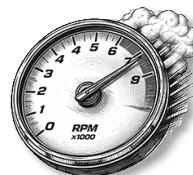
God → Jesus Christ → an angel → John → God’s servants

This matters. Revelation is not John’s imagination, nor is it a collection of dreams. John repeatedly says he is recording **what he saw**.

The text tells us the events described will occur “*shortly*.” The Greek word does **not** mean “soon” in the sense of timing. It means **rapid once begun**. When these events start, they unfold quickly, decisively, and progressively.

God is telling us: **What I begin, I will finish. History is not endless.**

Rev. 1 → Direct revelation from Jesus
Rev. 2 & 4 → Christ directly to the Churches
Rev. 4-22 → Angel under Christ’s authority



Who John Is — and Why He Matters

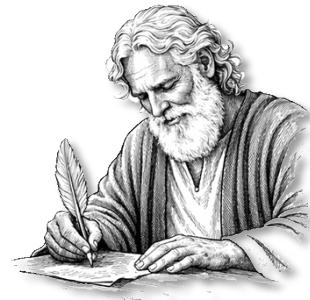
The author identifies himself simply as **John** — no title needed.

He was well known to the churches. This John:

- Was one of the original apostles
- Part of Jesus’ inner circle
- An eyewitness to the Transfiguration
- Present at the cross
- Entrusted with the care of Mary
- The last living apostle when Revelation was written



By the time he received this vision, John was an elderly man, exiled to the island of Patmos for his faith during the reign of Emperor Domitian (late first century). Early church historians consistently affirm this late date. Revelation is written by a mature believer, a trusted eyewitness, and a man deeply grounded in Scripture.



Revelation Is Meant to Be Understood

There is a widespread myth that Revelation is a “sealed book.” Scripture says the opposite. Daniel was told to seal parts of his prophecy until the time of the end. John is told to **write** and **send** what he sees. Revelation uses **symbols**, but symbols are not allegory. Symbols represent **real things**, and the Bible itself explains them. Scripture interprets Scripture. This study will consistently follow one principle:

God means what He says and says what He means.

The Divine Outline of the Book (Revelation 1:19)

Revelation provides its own outline: “*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.*” **Rev. 1:19**

This single verse is the backbone of the entire book.

- **The things you have seen** — the vision of the risen Christ (Chapter 1)
- **The things which are** — the present Church Age (Chapters 2–3)
- **The things which shall be after these things** — future events following the Church Age (Chapters 4–22)



The phrase “*after these things*” (Gr. *meta tauta*) marks a clear transition into the future. Revelation is **chronological**, not cyclical. The judgments progress forward →. They increase in intensity ↗. They move toward the visible return of Christ.

Where We Are Right Now

We are living in “**the things which are**” — the Church Age. Chapters 2 and 3 address seven real churches that existed in Asia Minor. These letters apply on multiple levels:

1. Local (historical churches)
2. Personal (individual believers)
3. Church-wide (patterns of faithfulness and failure)
4. Prophetic (the span of Church history)



After Chapter 3, the Church is no longer seen on earth in the narrative. Chapter 4 opens in heaven. This transition will become critically important as we move forward.

Israel and the Church — A Crucial Distinction

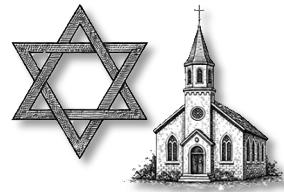
One of the most important foundations for understanding Revelation is recognizing that **Israel and the Church are not the same entity**. They have:

- Different origins
- Different covenants
- Different roles in prophecy
- Different destinies

Please Notice This



Confusing Israel with the Church leads to confusion throughout the Bible, especially in Revelation, particularly in chapters involving tribulation, judgment, and restoration. This study will consistently maintain that distinction.

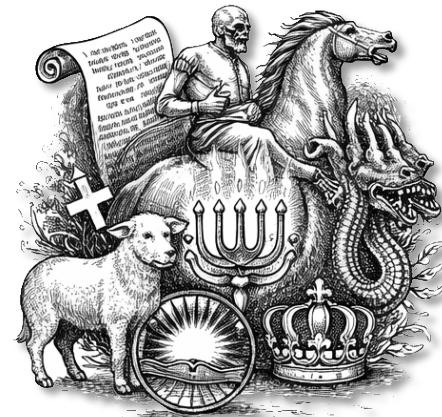


Why Revelation Uses Symbols

Revelation is rich with imagery because God often communicates truth through pictures. These images are not random. They are rooted in:

- ✓ The Old Testament
- ✓ Consistent biblical patterns
- ✓ Established symbolic meanings

Symbols communicate truth efficiently and memorably — especially during times of persecution when open language could be dangerous. Symbols point to **real events and future and real judgments (past and future)**, and a real King.



Along with symbolic imagery, Revelation also uses repeated patterns to communicate order and completeness.

A Pattern You Will See Repeated: The Sevens

As we move through Revelation, you will notice a recurring pattern built around the number **seven**. In Scripture, seven is commonly used to express **completeness or fullness**, especially in connection with God's work.



Revelation is deliberately structured, not chaotic. Early in the book, we encounter **seven churches**, and later we will see **seven seals**, **seven trumpets**, and **seven bowls**. These are not separate storylines but ordered stages that move God's plan forward toward its climax.

For now, it is enough to recognize the pattern. We will examine each group of seven and other symbols in detail when we reach them. The repeated use of seven signals that Revelation unfolds according to a purposeful and carefully designed structure.

Different Ways People Interpret Revelation (Briefly)

Over time, several interpretive approaches have emerged:

- ✗ **Preterist:** Revelation was fulfilled in the first century.
- ✗ **Historicist:** Revelation symbolizes church history.
- ✗ **Idealist:** Revelation is symbolic of good versus evil.
- ✓ **Futurist:** Revelation describes real future events.



This study follows the **futurist** view because Revelation itself claims to describe future prophecy, and because the text naturally reads that way when interpreted consistently.

A Glimpse of the Risen Christ

Before Revelation reveals judgments, kingdoms, or the end of the age, it reveals **Christ Himself**.

John sees Jesus:

- Glorified
- Authoritative
- Walking among the lampstands (the churches)
- Holding the stars (their messengers)



This is not the suffering Servant of the Gospels. This is the risen King, High Priest, and Judge. Revelation begins with Christ because **everything else flows from Him**.

Why Prophecy Matters

The Bible does not portray history as an endless cycle. God intervenes. God judges. God restores. Jesus fulfilled hundreds of prophecies at His first coming. Prophecies about His second coming outnumber those by a wide margin.

- **In the Old Testament:**
 - There are 1,845 references to Christ's **future** rule on the earth.
 - 17 Old Testament books give prominence to the event.
- **In the New Testament:**
 - Of the 216 chapters, there are 318 references to the Second Coming.
 - It is mentioned in 23 of the 27 books.



For every prophecy relating to Jesus' First Coming, there are **eight** referencing His Second Coming.

Despite this, most people assume that the future is a linear extrapolation of the present (2 Pet. 3:4). Most people assume that life will just go on, but the Bible says otherwise. The idea of the God of the universe once again directly intervening in the affairs of mankind is a foreign concept to much of society.

If Jesus came the first time fulfilling hundreds of prophecies, and the prophecies of His 2nd coming outnumber those of His 1st by a ratio of 8 to 1, why wouldn't He come as predicted the 2nd time?

If God kept His promises once, He will keep them again. Prophecy is not about fear; it is about **hope, accountability, and confidence in God's sovereignty**.

How Our Study of Revelation Will Proceed...

Our Study will:

- Follow the text in order
- Deviate only when necessary for background
- Let Scripture explain Scripture
- Maintain clarity about where we are in the timeline
- Emphasize understanding

We will move progressively:

- Seals → Trumpets → Bowls
- Increasing intensity
- Advancing toward Christ's return

What to remember from the introduction:

- Revelation is an unveiling, not a mystery
- It is centered on Jesus Christ
- It provides its own outline
- We are currently in the Church Age
- God's plan is moving toward completion



Chapter 1

The Unveiling of Jesus Christ



Revelation 1:1] *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which **must shortly** come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*



Revelation 1:2] *Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

The Book of Revelation opens by telling us **exactly what it is, where it comes from, and why it was given**. This is “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.” Not revelations — singular. One unified unveiling. The source follows a clear chain:



God the Father → Jesus Christ → an angel → John → God's servants

This matters because Revelation is not speculation, philosophy, or theological reflection. It is a **divinely initiated revelation**. John tells us this book was given “*to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.*”

The word “*must*” tells us these events are **certain**, not conditional. Also, the Greek word translated as “*shortly*” (en taxei) does not mean “soon” in terms of calendar time. It means **rapid in execution once begun and** building one right after another; think of birth pains. When God’s end-time program starts, it accelerates steadily and decisively.



John emphasizes that he is recording “*all things that he saw.*” Revelation is visual, concrete, and observational. John is not inventing imagery — he is describing what unfolds before him. **Now the blessing and Revelation’s prophetic declaration (Rev. 1):**



Revelation 1:3] *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

Before judgments, symbols, or timelines appear, Revelation offers a promise we talked about earlier. This is the **only book in the Bible** that promises a blessing simply for engaging it.

Notice three actions:

1. **Read** — it was meant to be read publicly
2. **Hear** — it was meant to be understood
3. **Keep** — it was meant to shape how we live



Revelation explicitly calls itself **prophecy**. It is not a myth, an allegory, or inspirational symbolism. It is God speaking about real future events.

The phrase “*the time is at hand*” does not mean fulfillment occurred in the first century. It means history is moving toward a divinely appointed climax. Nothing will delay it indefinitely.

John now lists the recipients of the letter, and the greeting (Rev. 1:4–6)



Revelation 1:4] *John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;*



Revelation 1:5] *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*



Revelation 1:6] *And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

John writes to “seven churches in Asia” minor — real congregations located in what is now western Turkey. He greets them with “*grace*” and “*peace*.” Grace reminds us that salvation is God’s gift. Peace reminds us God is sovereign — even when the world is not.

Jesus Christ is introduced with three titles:

1. **Faithful witness** — His testimony was true
2. **Firstborn from the dead** — His resurrection guarantees ours
3. **Ruler of the kings of the earth** — His authority is real and ultimate

Believers are described as:

- Loved by Christ
- Washed from sin by His blood
- Made kings and priests

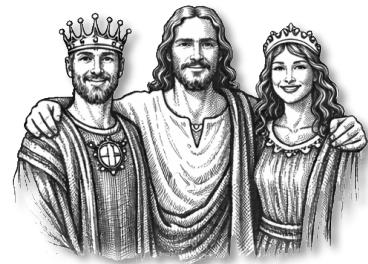
Redemption precedes reign. Before Christ rules openly, He redeems His people. Now we have the promise of **Christ’s Visible Return** (Rev. 1:7–8):



Revelation 1:7] *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*



Revelation 1:8] *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*



Revelation leaves no ambiguity about the nature of Christ's return: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him."

This is a **public, global, visible** event. It is not secret, spiritualized, or hidden. Those who rejected Him will mourn — not because He is unjust, but because they realize too late that His claims were true. God then declares Himself the **Alpha and Omega**, the beginning and the end. Nothing in Revelation unfolds outside His authority. John now talks about his authority and circumstances (Rev. 1:9):



Revelation 1:9] *I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

John identifies himself as a **brother and companion in tribulation**, writing from exile on the island of Patmos because of his faithfulness to the Word of God.

Here, it is important to clarify what John means by *tribulation*. The word is being used in its **ordinary sense**—referring to **trials, pressures, and persecution** that believers experience in a fallen world. John is describing the shared suffering that Christians face for following Christ.

This should **not** be confused with "**The Tribulation**" spoken of later in Revelation, which is often confused throughout scripture. "**The Tribulation**" is a distinct future period of **God's wrath and testing upon the earth**, unlike the everyday trials believers endure now. John is not saying he is living in that time. He is suffering *for Christ*, not experiencing divine judgment.

He writes from the island of **Patmos**, exiled for his faith during the reign of Emperor Domitian (late first century). By this time, all other apostles have been martyred. John is elderly, experienced, and grounded in Scripture. He is not an unstable mystic, but a faithful servant who endured suffering for Christ. John now tells us about his Revelation initiated by the Holy Spirit (Rev. 1:10,11).



Revelation 1:10, 11] *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

John tells us he was "*in the Spirit*." This signals that what follows is **Spirit-initiated revelation**, not imagination.



He hears a commanding voice instructing him to **write what he sees** and send it to the churches. Revelation is intended for **local churches**, the body of believers, not hidden elites. It was meant to be read aloud and taken seriously by ordinary believers.

John says he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” This phrase has been understood in different ways, and it is important to be precise. At minimum, John is describing a **Spirit-initiated prophetic experience**, not merely noting a day of the week.

The text does **not** require us to conclude that John is referring to Sunday worship, nor should it be confused with “**the Day of the Lord**,” a technical prophetic term describing a future period of divine intervention and judgment, which we will focus on later in the book. Here, the emphasis is not on a calendar date, but on the fact that John is sovereignly carried by the Spirit into a revelatory experience.



Revelation 1:12, 13] *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw **seven golden candlesticks**; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

John turns and sees **seven golden lampstands**. In their midst stands “*one like unto the Son of Man*.” Lampstands represent churches. They do not create light — they **bear** it. Christ is **in the midst** of His churches. He is present, attentive, and authoritative.

His clothing reflects priestly imagery. He tends the lampstands — inspecting, maintaining, and, if necessary, correcting them. This prepares us for Chapters 2 and 3. We will now see the **Glory and Authority of Christ (Rev.):**



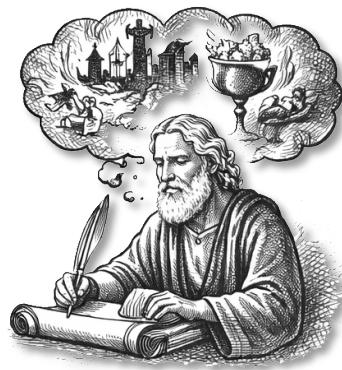
Revelation 1:14] *His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;*



Revelation 1:15] *And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*



Revelation 1:16] *And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*



John describes Jesus using symbolic imagery:

White hair → **purity and wisdom**

Eyes like fire → **penetrating judgment**

Feet like glowing metal → **strength and authority**

Voice like many waters → **overwhelming power**

A sword from His mouth → **His word judges**

His face shining like the sun → **divine glory**

This is not the suffering servant of the Gospels. This is the **glorified, risen King**. The emphasis is not on artistic description, but on **authority**. **We will now see John's Response and Christ's Assurance (Rev. 1:17–18)**



Revelation 1:17] *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, **Fear not**; I am the first and the last:*



Revelation 1:18] *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

John falls at Christ's feet as though dead. This is the natural response to unveiled glory. Christ immediately reassures him: "Fear not." Authority and compassion coexist. Jesus declares:

- He lives
- He was dead
- He lives forever
- He holds the keys of death and the unseen realm

The future belongs to the One who conquered death. Jesus gives John **The Divine Outline of Revelation (Rev 1:19)**



Revelation 1:19] *Write the things which **thou hast seen**, and the **things which are**, and the **things which shall be hereafter**;*

This verse provides the **structural key** to the entire book:

- **The things you have seen** — the vision of Christ (Chapter 1)
- **The things which are** — the present Church Age (Chapters 2–3)
- **The things which shall be after these things** — future events (Chapters 4–22)



Revelation is **progressive and chronological**, not cyclical. Events move forward toward Christ's return. We are currently living in "*the things which are*."



Revelation 1:20] *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

Revelation often explains its own imagery. Here we are told that the lampstands are the churches and the stars represent their angelic messengers. Christ is both **among** the churches and **holding** them. He is present with His people and sovereign over them.



Revelation Chapter 1 accomplishes three things for us:

1. It establishes the authority and source of the book
2. It reveals Jesus Christ in glory and power
3. It gives us the outline that governs everything that follows



Before judgment, Revelation shows us **Christ**. Before prophecy unfolds, it establishes **who controls history**.

Next Lesson: Read Revelation chapter two. We will discuss the first three churches, Ephesus (1-7), Smyrna (8-11), and Pergamos (12-17), as found in Rev. 2:1-17, in the next lesson.

Appendix A: Reference Framework for the Book of Revelation

This appendix provides a brief reference framework to support our study of Revelation. It is not intended to teach the material in full, but to help orient us as the study progresses.

1. A Simple Timeline Overview

Revelation unfolds within a broader biblical timeline. At a high level, Scripture presents the following sequence:



- The Church Age** – The present period before the outpouring of divine judgment
- The Rapture of the Church** – The removal of believers prior to God's wrath
- The Tribulation (Daniel's 70th Week)** – A future, defined period of seven years where judgment and testing fall upon the earth.
- The Great Tribulation** – Is the last 3 1/2 years of The Tribulation, also known as the Time of Jacob's trouble, it is the most fearful time of the tribulation period.
- The Second Coming of Jesus Christ** – Christ's visible, bodily return in power and glory
- The Millennial Kingdom** – Christ's literal 1000-year reign on earth
- Final Judgment** – The Great White Throne judgment of the wicked
- The New Heaven and the New Earth** – The final, eternal state

This framework will be referenced repeatedly.

2. The Structural Key to Revelation (Revelation 1:19)

Revelation supplies its own outline:

- **The things which you have seen** — the vision of Christ (Chapter 1)
- **The things which are** — the present Church Age (Chapters 2–3)
- **The things which shall be after these things** — future events (Chapters 4–22)



This structure establishes a **progressive, forward-moving chronology**.

3. The Pattern of Sevens

Revelation is deliberately organized around certain numerics. For example, repeated groups of **seven** is a number associated with completeness in Scripture. Key 7 groupings include:

- Seven Churches (Rev. 2–3)
- Seven Seals (Rev. 6–8)
- Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8–11)
- Seven Bowls (Rev. 15–16)

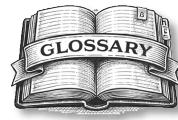
These are ordered stages, not competing storylines.



4. Key Terms Used Precisely in This Study

To avoid confusion, the following distinctions are maintained consistently:

- **Tribulation ≠ The Tribulation**
- **Persecution ≠ God’s Wrath**
- **The Lord’s Day ≠ The Day of the Lord**
- **Israel ≠ The Church**



Refer back to these distinctions as needed.

5. The Old Testament Foundation of Revelation

Revelation draws heavily from other Books of the Bible, especially:

- Daniel
- Isaiah
- Ezekiel
- Zechariah
- Psalms



Many symbols and themes in Revelation develop truths already revealed in the Old Testament.

6. How to Read Revelation Responsibly

This study follows these principles:

- Scripture interprets Scripture
- Symbols represent real persons, events, or truths
- Revelation unfolds in sequence
- Context and timeline placement matter
- God’s sovereignty governs every event



Final Note: This appendix is a reference tool. Each topic will be addressed more fully at the appropriate point in the study.

Introduction and Chapter 1

V	I	S	I	O	N	G	T	I	X	S	R	REVELATION
A	U	T	H	O	R	I	T	Y	D	H	E	PROPHECY
C	P	A	T	M	O	S	Q	N	Y	R	V	BLESSING
B	H	K	X	X	I	E	A	N	I	N	E	SERVANT
L	W	L	J	A	E	T	O	O	O	F	L	WITNESS
E	D	J	G	I	S	M	R	C	X	X	A	TESTIMONY
S	D	E	U	P	I	L	O	M	E	X	T	PATMOS
S	O	R	M	T	J	F	T	X	P	G	I	VISION
I	P	A	S	E	R	V	A	N	T	K	O	LAMPSTANDS
N	L	E	O	X	R	X	Q	K	P	O	N	AUTHORITY
G	T	H	P	R	O	P	H	E	C	Y	K	
K	B	N	Q	W	I	T	N	E	S	S	F	