

<sup>1</sup> The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, <sup>2</sup> who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

Revelation 1:1-2 (NKJV)

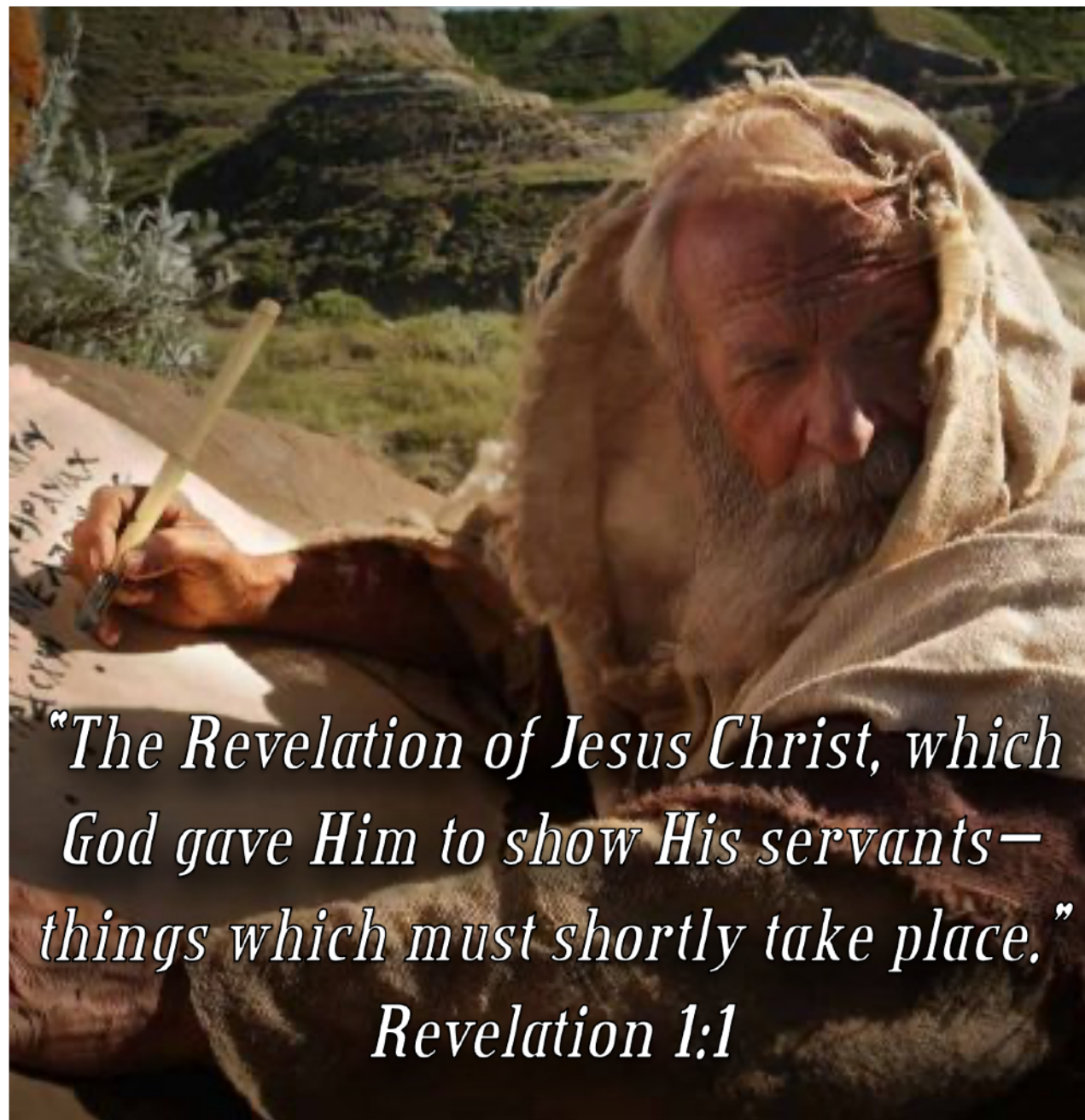
# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

How Do You Read This Book of Symbols?



# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## Introduction to John's Book of Revelation



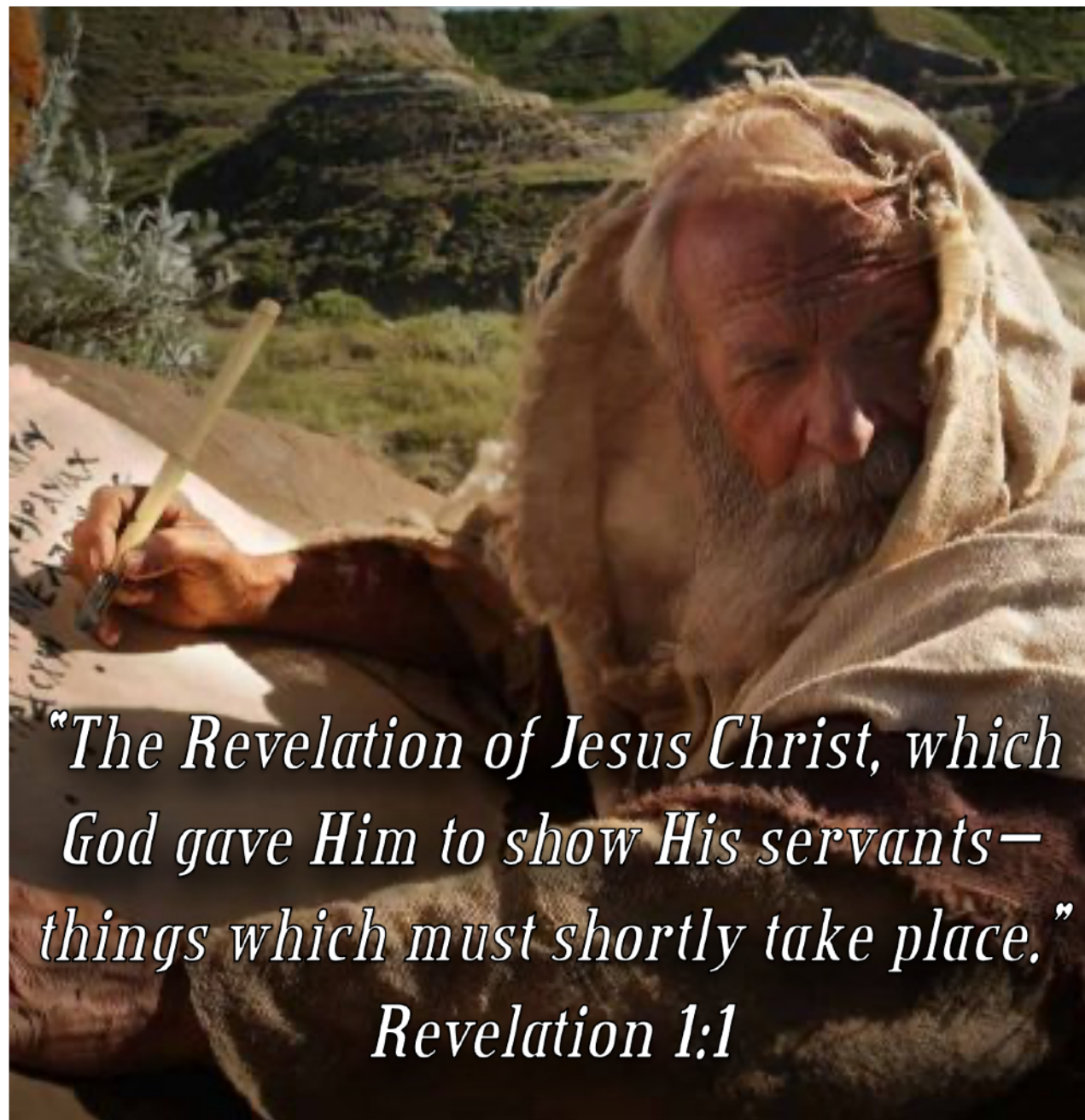
*"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which  
God gave Him to show His servants—  
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Revelation 1:1*

- WHY IS STUDYING REVELATION SO DIFFICULT?
- WHAT ARE SOME DANGERS WE NEED TO AVOID?
- WHAT CAN BE GAINED FROM STUDYING REVELATION?



# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## Introduction to John's Book of Revelation



*"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which  
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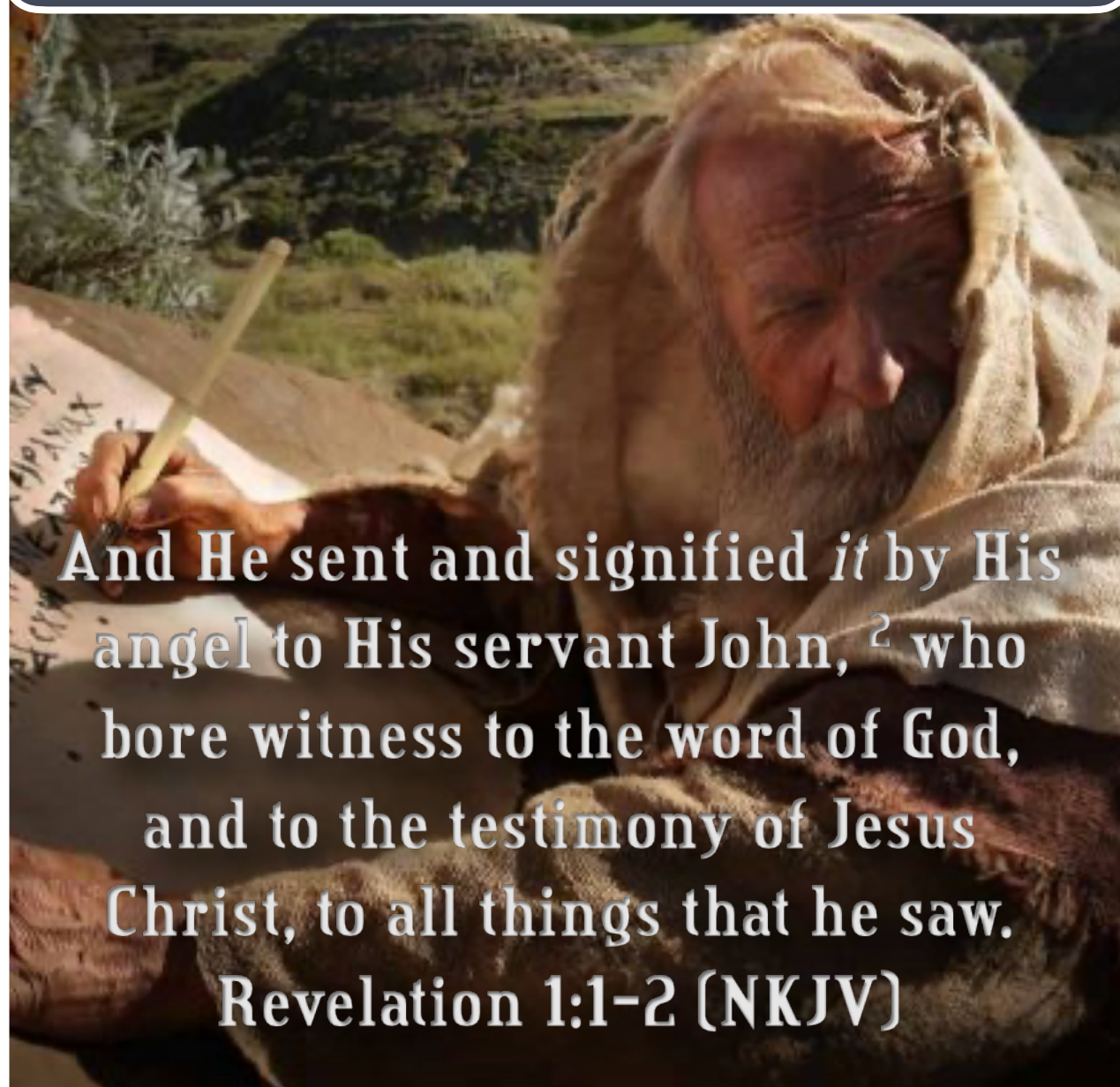
- Written by the apostle John (1:1,4,9; 22:8)
- Vision received by John while on the Isle of Patmos (1:9)
- Written to the 7 churches of Asia (1:4)
- Written during the time of severe Roman Persecution (95,96 AD)



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## VARIOUS APPROACHES



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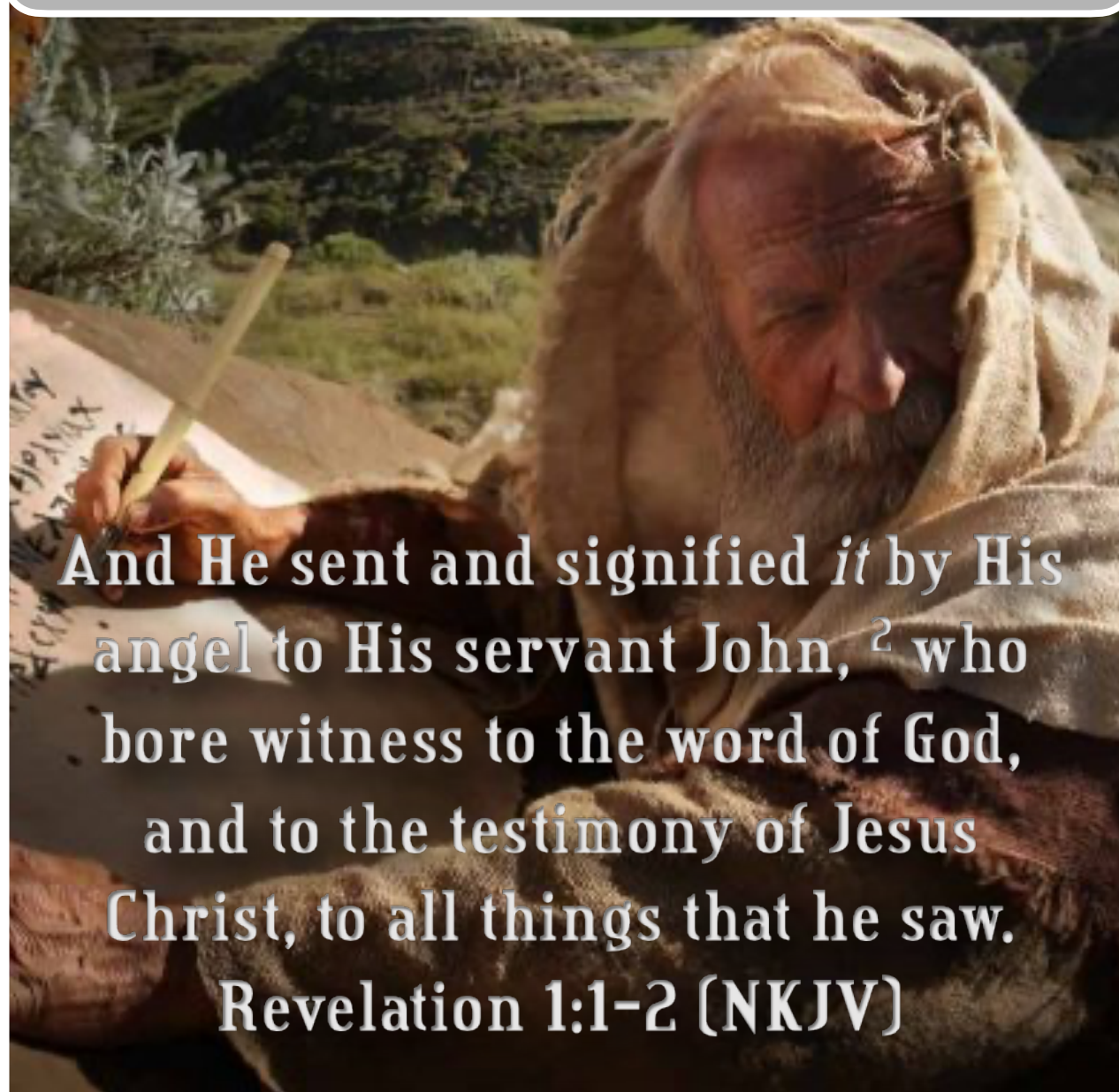
- **Futuristic**
- **Progressive History**
- **Philosophical History**
- **The Pre-AD 70 / Fall of Jerusalem**
- **The Historical Background Approach**



# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## How Do You Read This Book of Symbols?

### TYPE OF LITERATURE



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### APOCALYPTIC IN NATURE

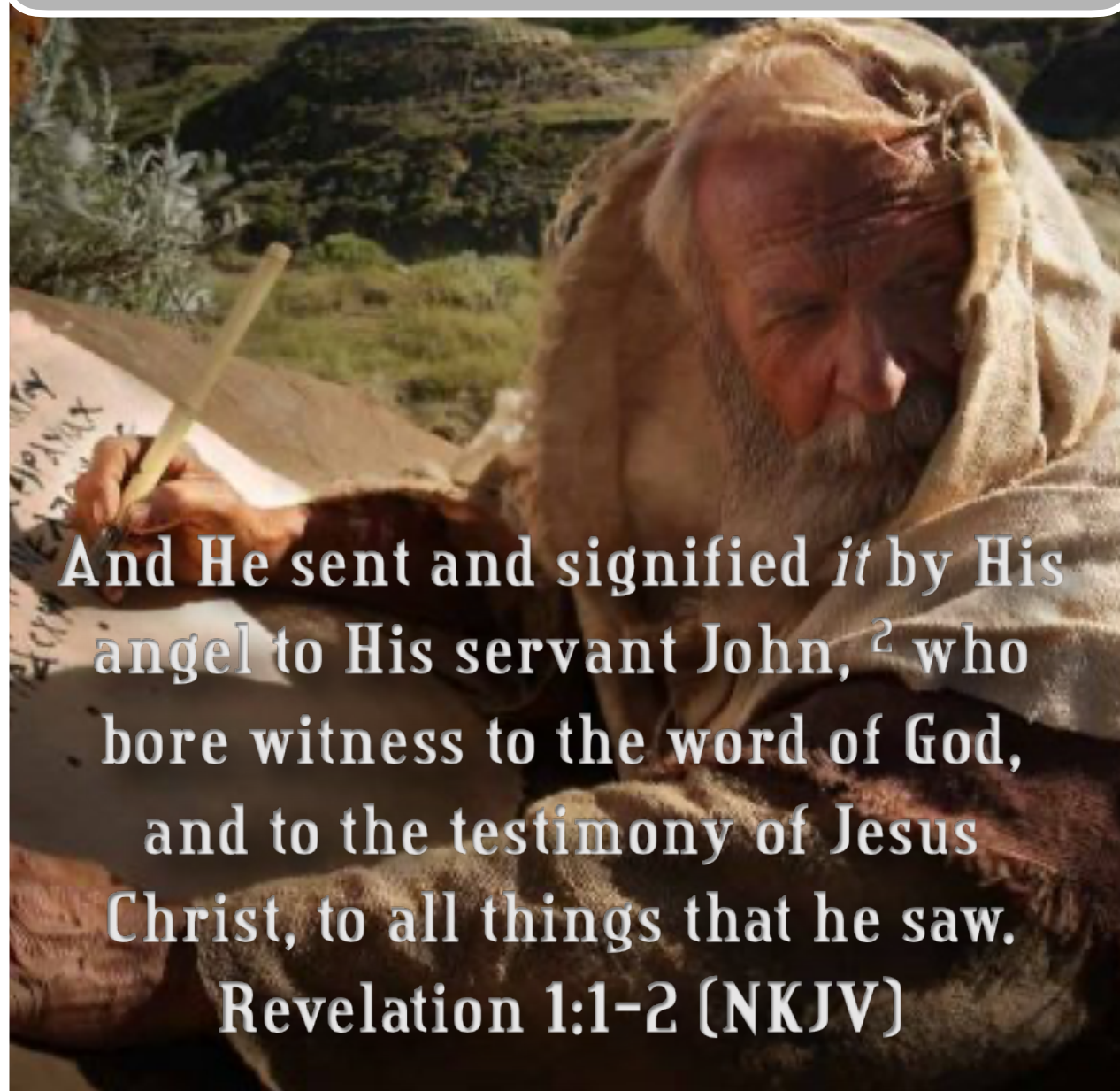
- ▶ An apocalypse (Ancient Greek: ἀποκάλυψις *apokálypsis*, from of/from: ἀπό and cover: κάλυψις, literally meaning "from cover") is a disclosure or revelation of great knowledge. In religious concepts an apocalypse usually discloses something very important that was hidden or provides a "vision of heavenly secrets that can make sense of earthly realities"



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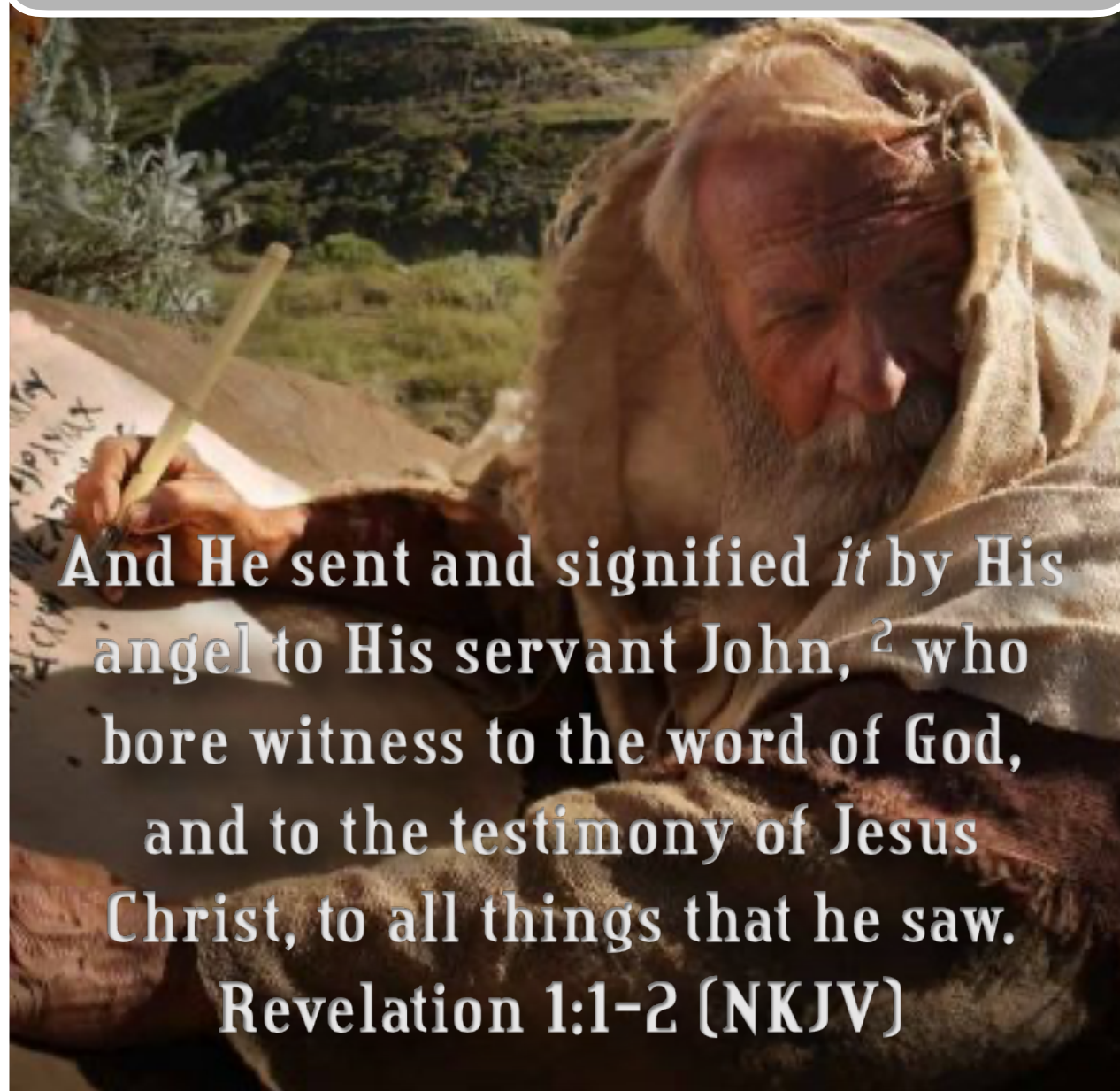
- ▶ Apocalyptic sections containing visions regarding Israel's future can be found in Isaiah (24-27), Zechariah (12-14), Ezekiel, Daniel, and Joel.
- ▶ Matthew 24 contains some Apocalyptic language, but Revelation is uniquely apocalyptic.
- ▶ For this reason it must be read in a special way and interpreted in the light of these unique and very special circumstances.



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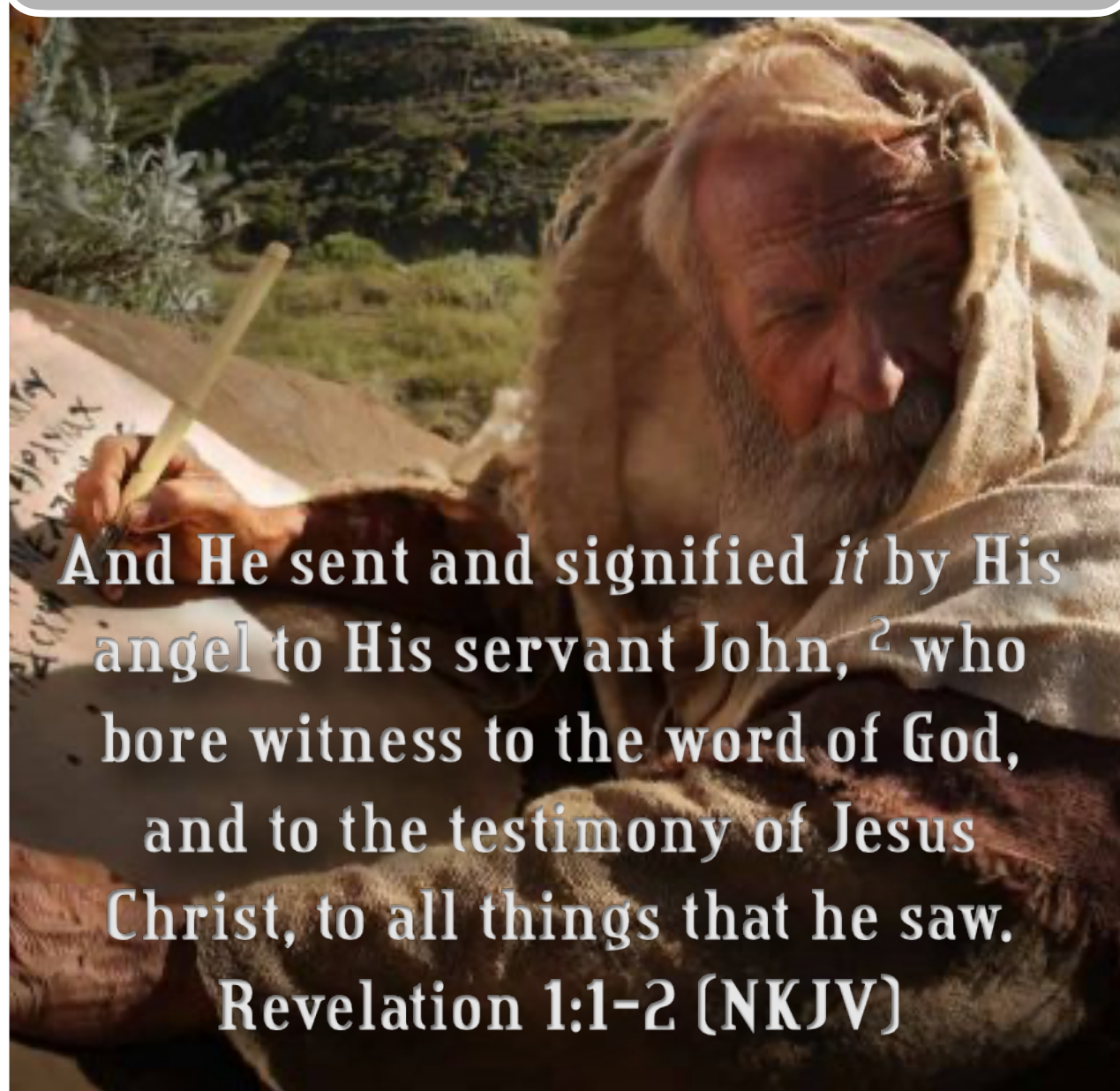
- ▶ John's Apocalypse employs highly symbolic and figurative imagery and not to be interpreted literally.
- ▶ The 7 stars are seven messengers;
- ▶ 7 lamp stands are churches (1:20);
- ▶ The dragon is the Devil (12:9);
- ▶ Bowls of incense are the prayers of the saints (5:8);
- ▶ 10 horns are ten kings (17:12);
- ▶ Great prostitute is a city that rules over the kings of the earth (17:18).



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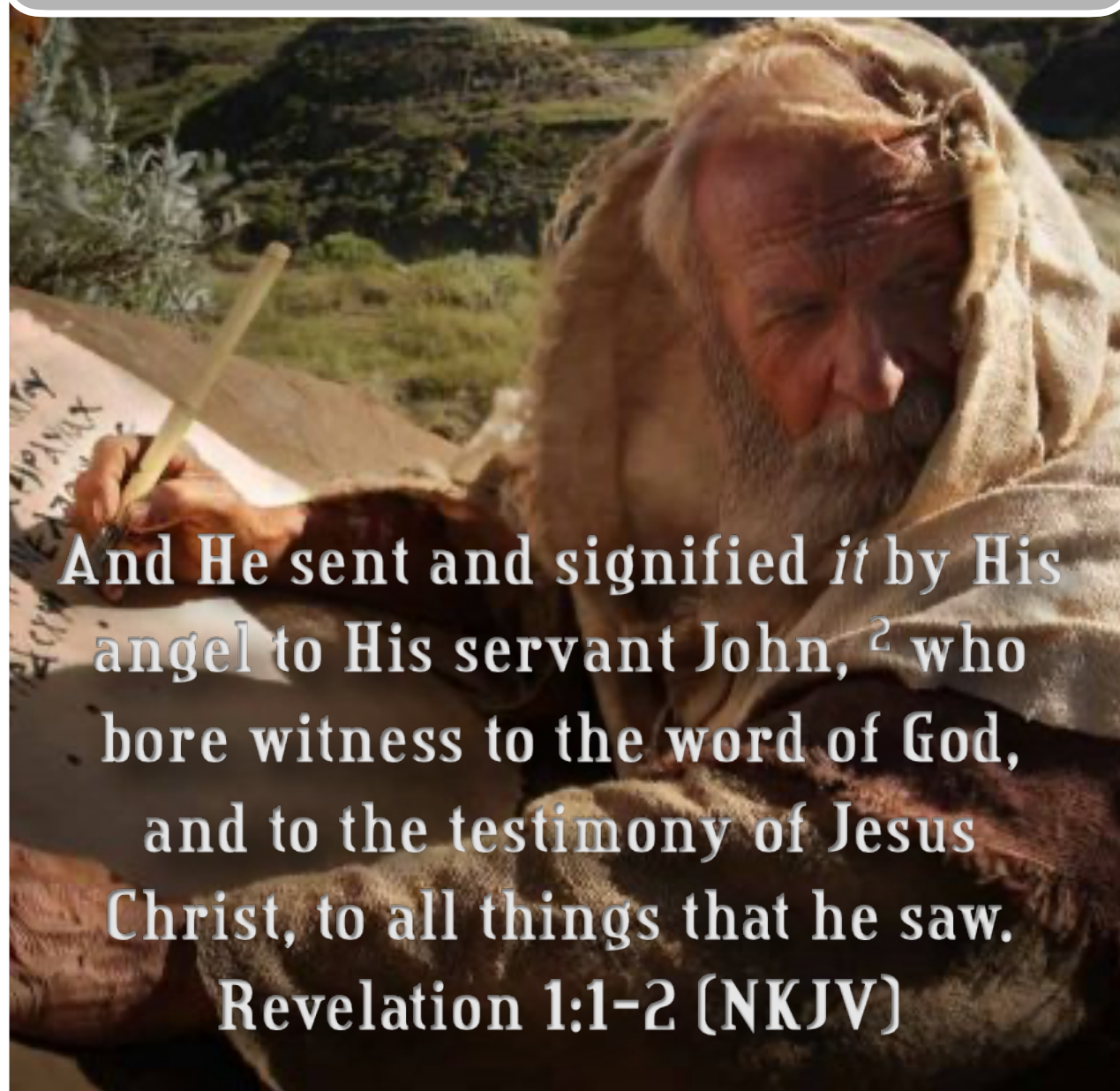
- ▶ A literal interpretation of the symbols in the “Revelation” will always result in wrong interpretations (Temple; Jerusalem; numbers [3.5; 7; 144,000; 1,000]; mark of the beast; etc.)
- ▶ The symbols are intended to be representational, not literal.
- ▶ We MUST take into consideration relevant OT backgrounds and historical information the first-century audience would know.



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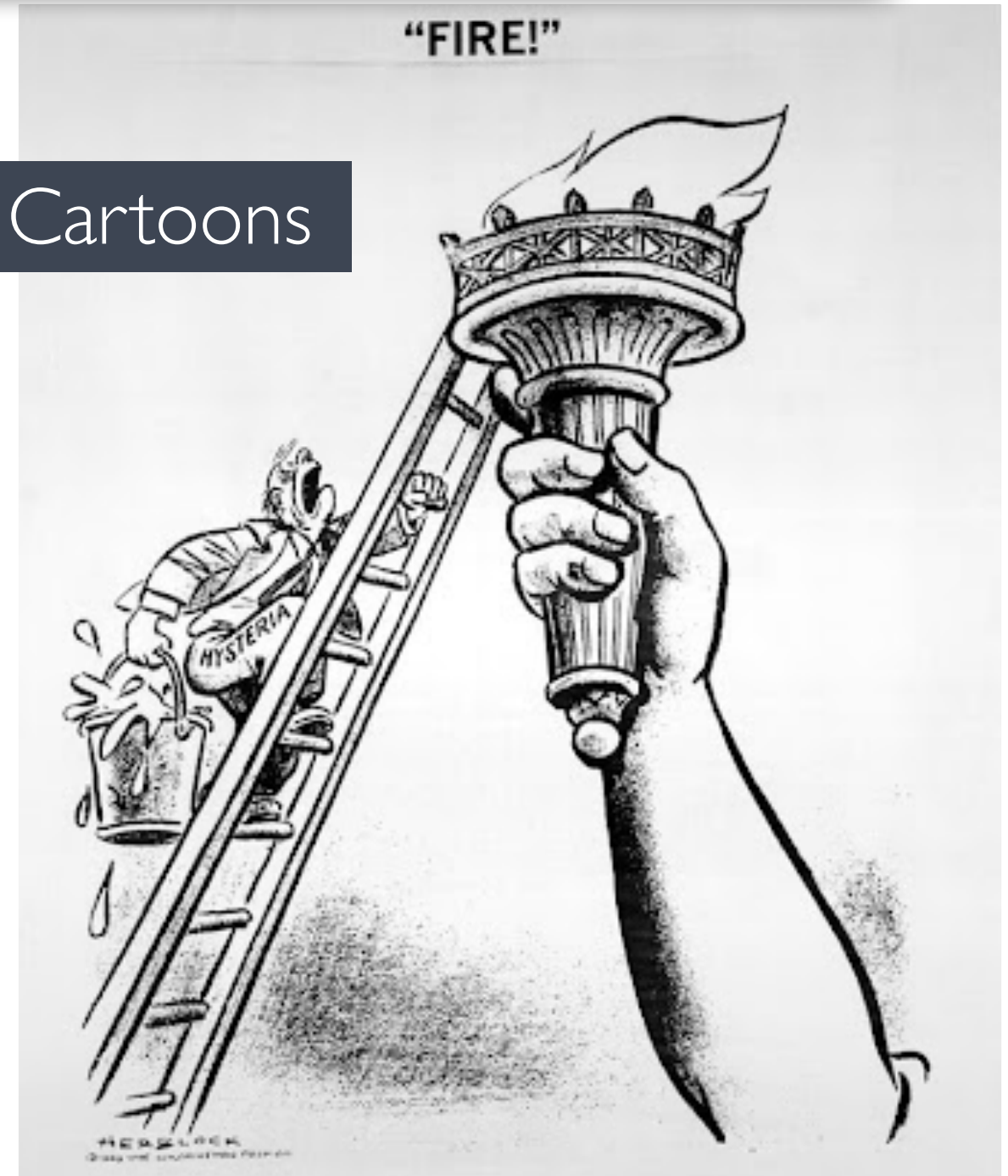
- ▶ It is visionary — The phrase “I saw” or “I looked” runs throughout the whole book as a primary motif (1:12; 4:1; 5:1, 6, 11; 6:1, 12; 7:1-2, 9).
- ▶ People who live, as we do, two thousand years later, must interject some historical and cultural understanding into the process or else we will fail to appreciate the original intent of such pictures.



# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## Introduction to John's Book of Revelation

### Cold War Cartoons

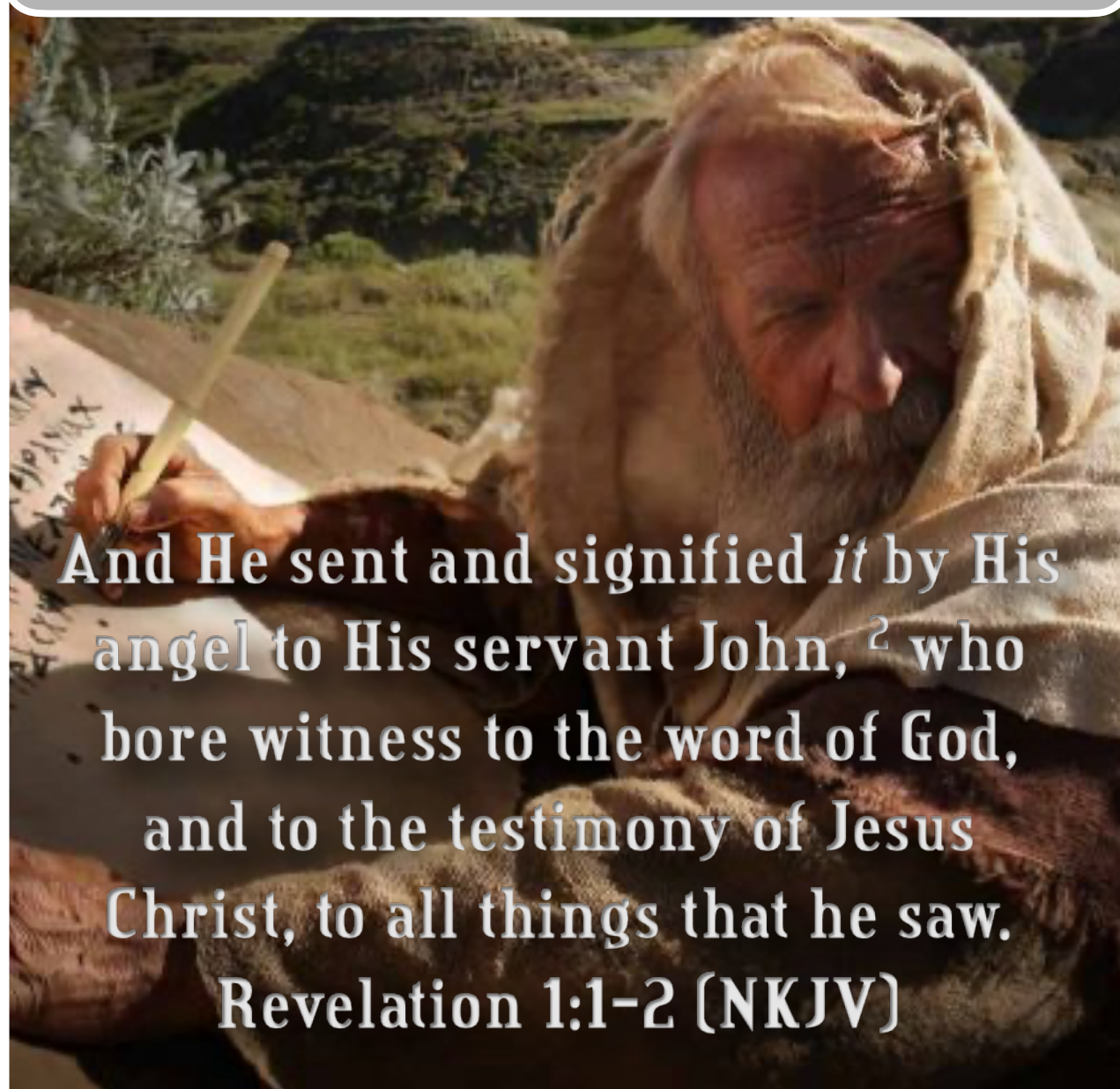




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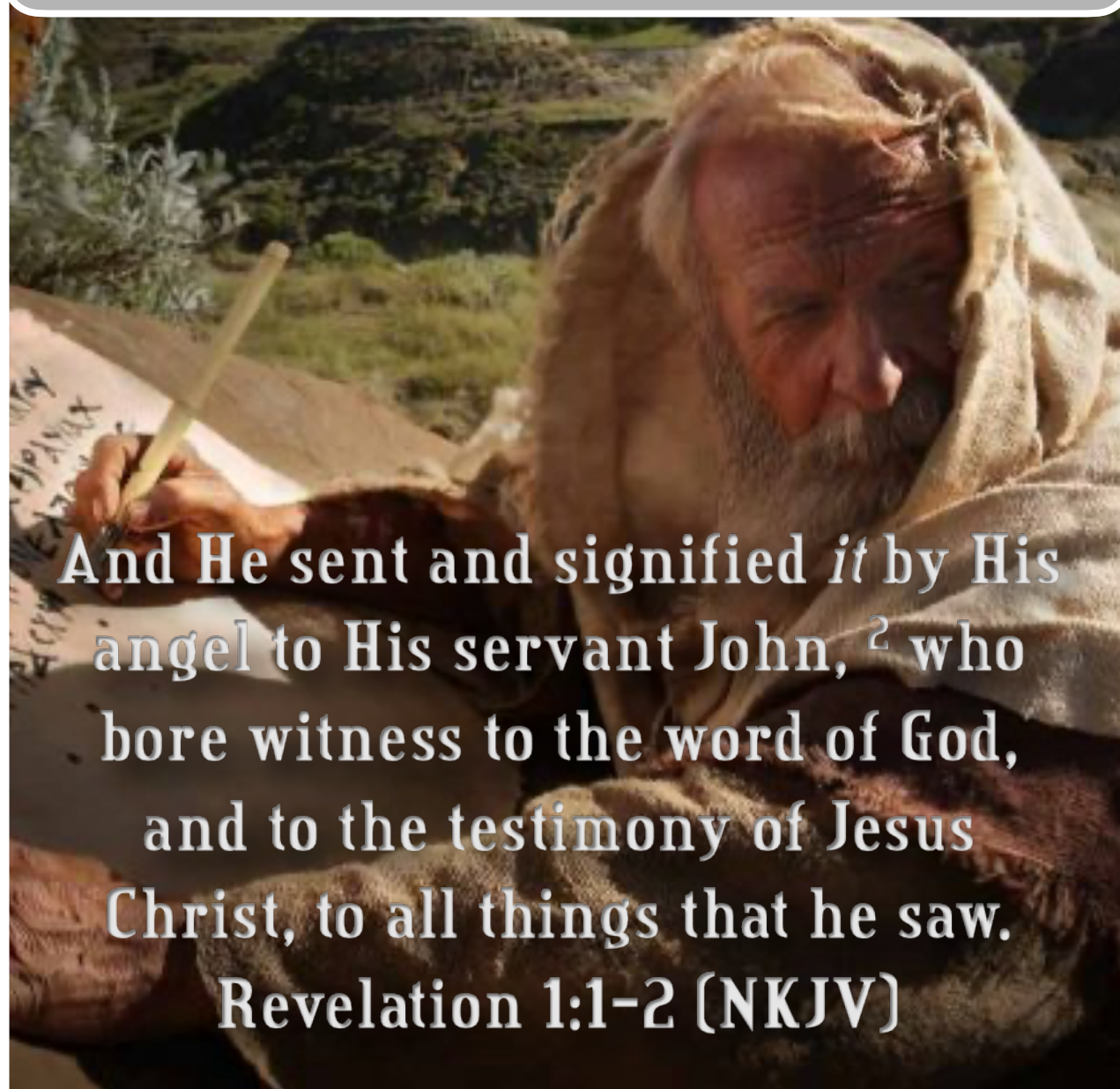
► We must make the extra effort necessary to put ourselves back into that historical moment in order to understand what was intended by them.



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### LIMITED PROPHETIC

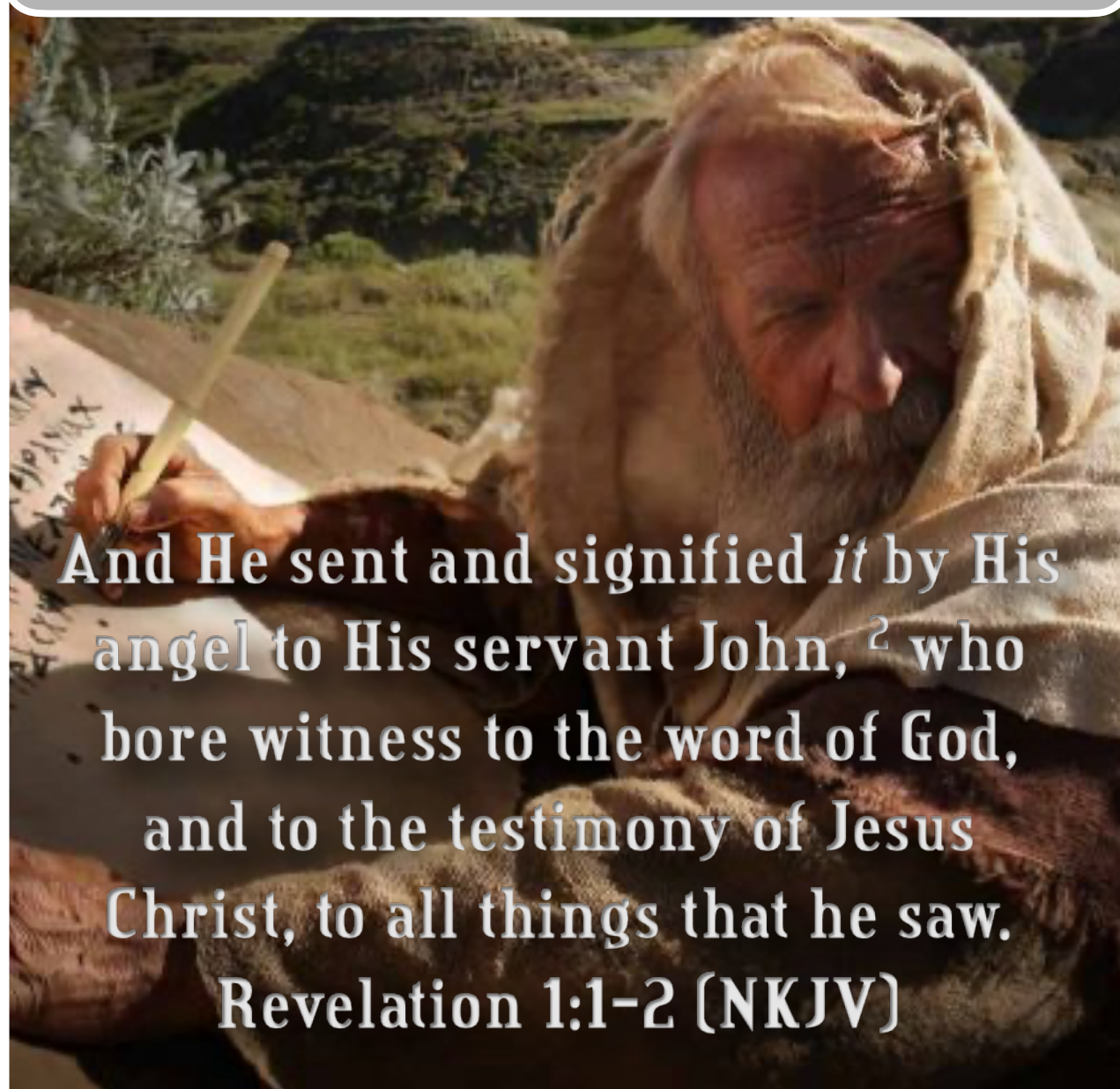
- ▶ Many fail to appreciate the need for understanding the historical context of John's visions.
- ▶ In 1:1 we see the purpose of his writing is to show them "things which must shortly come to pass."
- ▶ In v. 3 of the first chapter he concludes the verse by saying, "for the time is at hand"
- ▶ Likewise, in 22:6 the angel was to show him things "which must shortly come to pass."



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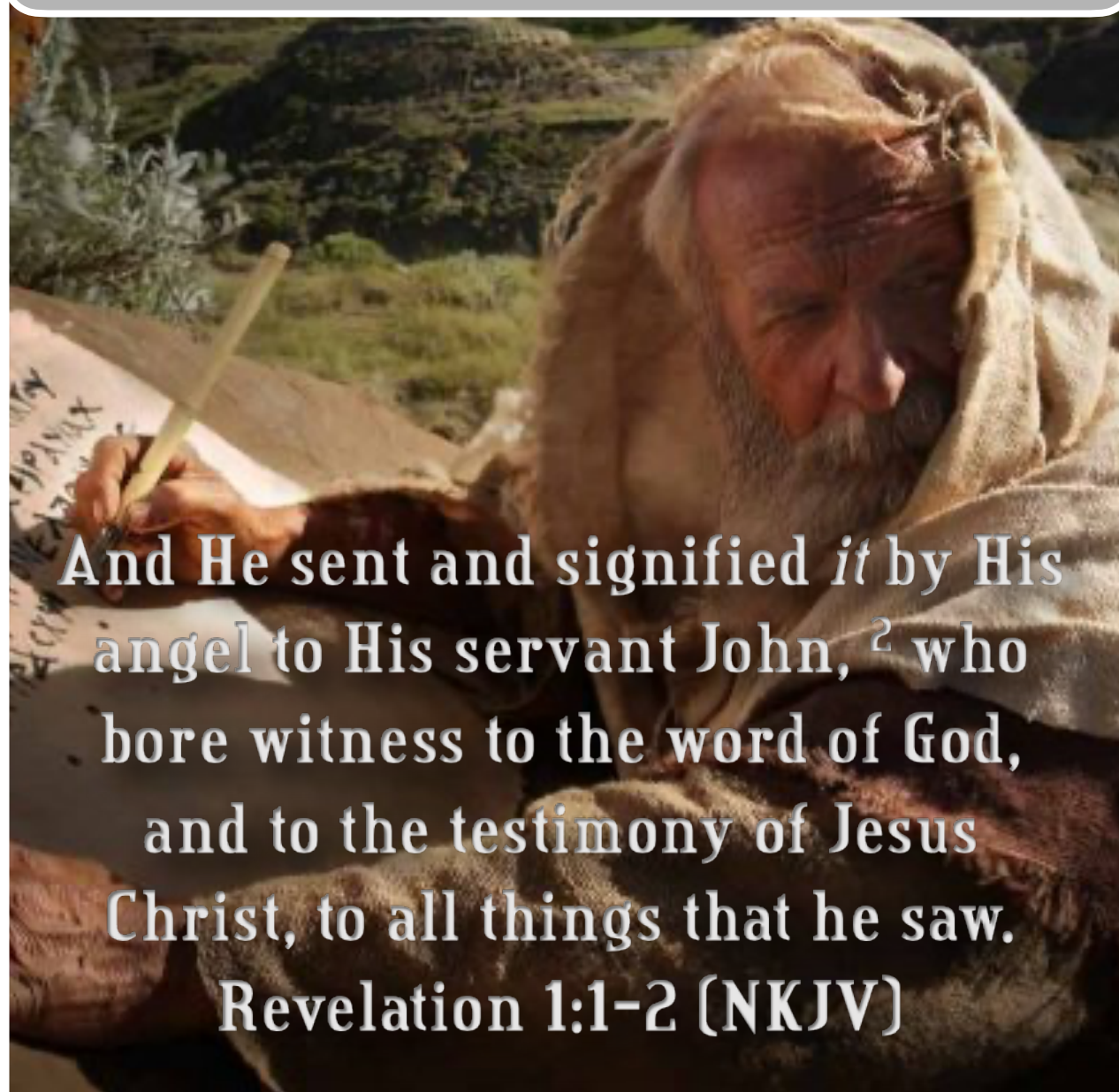
- ▶ In 22:10 John is told ““Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.”
- ▶ Compare this with what Daniel was told in Daniel 8:24 “seal up the vision, For *it refers* to many days *in the future.*” (vision concerning Antiochus), and again in Daniel 12:4,9 “shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end” — These things were fulfilled a few hundred years later.



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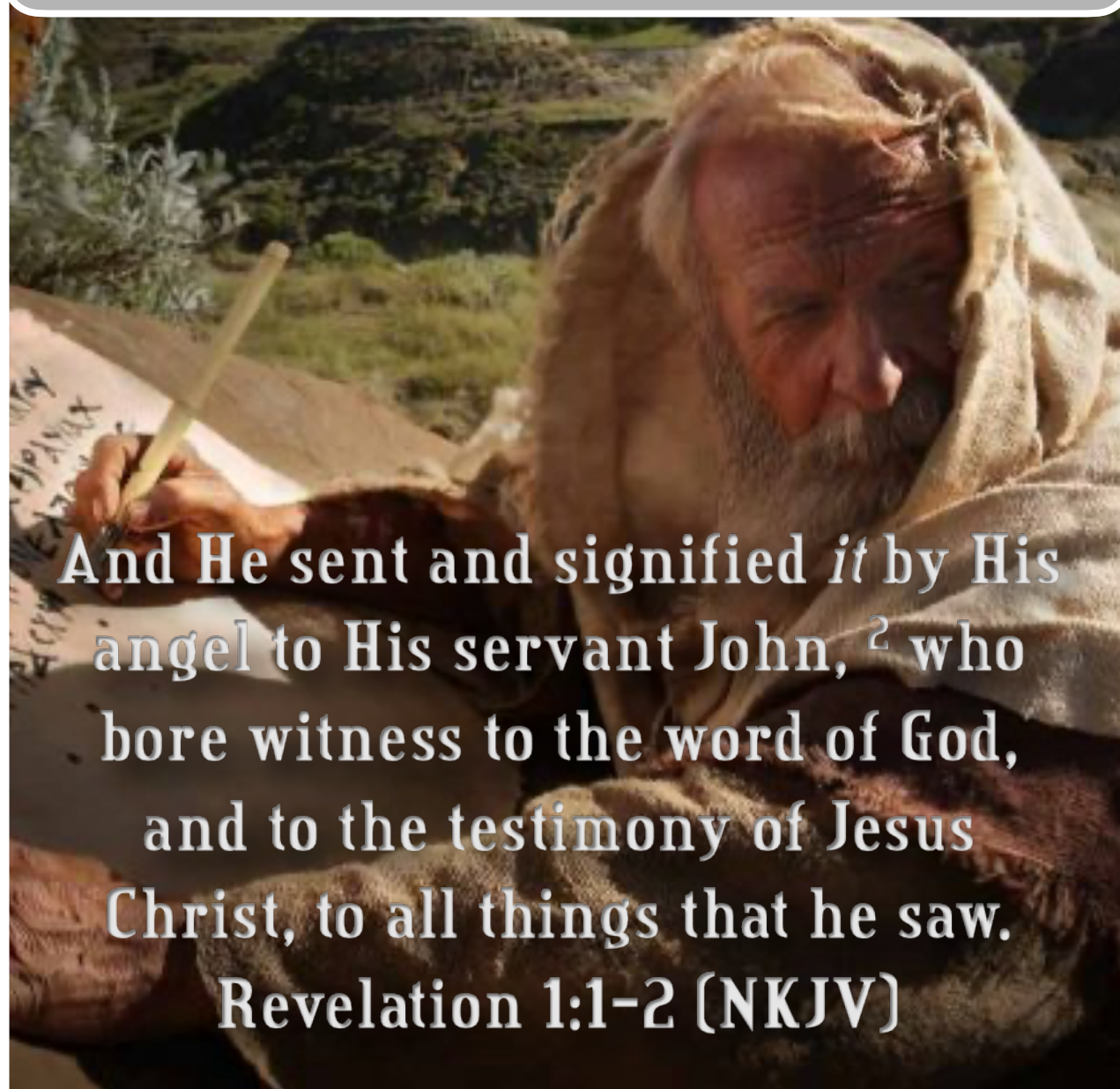
- ▶ If we ignore this clearly stated truth, we will miss out on one of the most important clues to understanding the book.
- ▶ The intention of this work is not to foretell the end of the world as such, for its main emphasis is not the distant future, but in those things that must “shortly come to pass.”



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### PRIMARILY SYMBOLIC

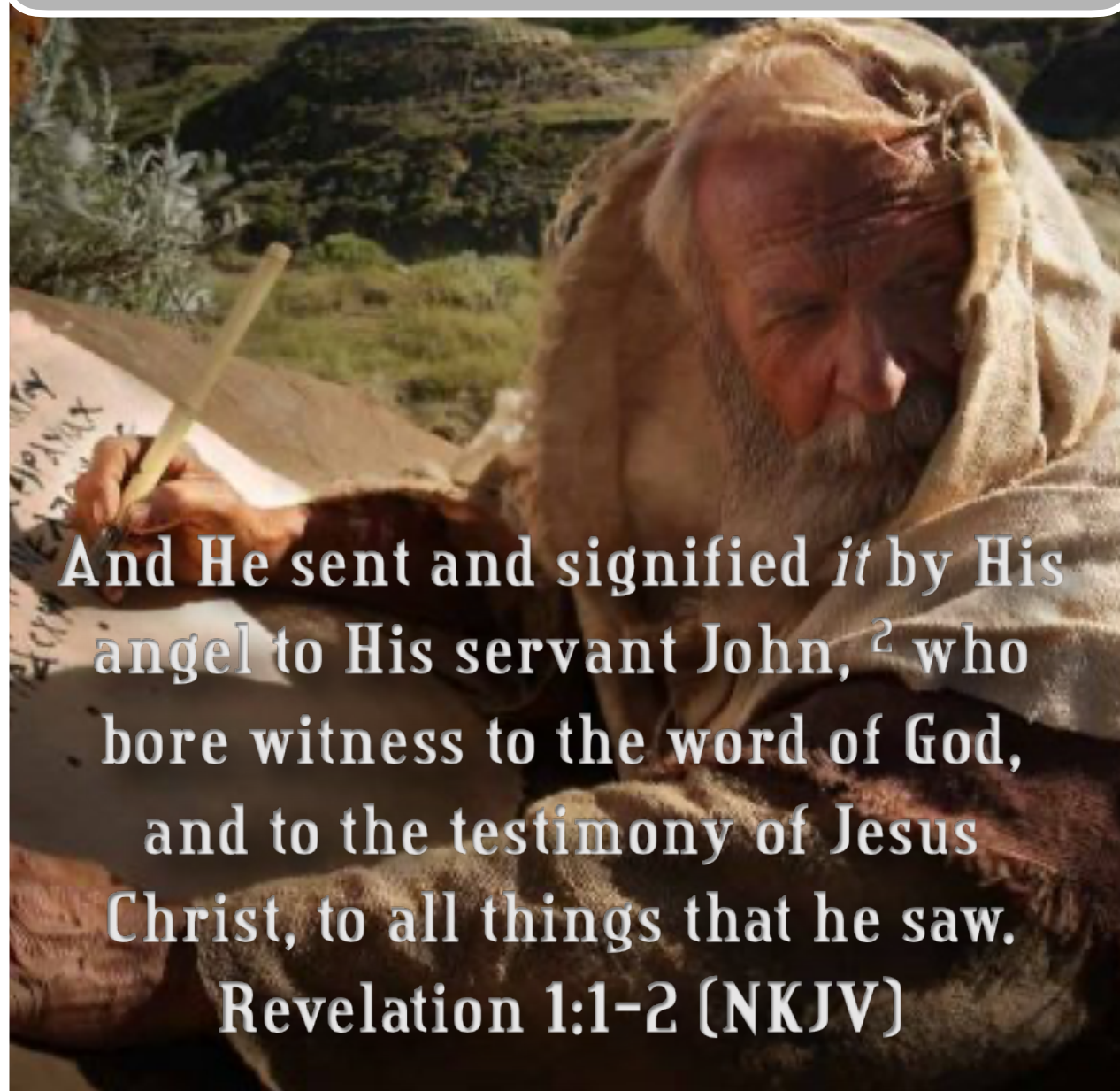
- ▶ The angel of the Lord “signified” it to his servant John (1:1). — *sēmainō* i.e., “a sign.”
- ▶ Revelation makes use of imagery and signification common to the apocalyptic literature of the Old Testament (Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah) and imitated in apocryphal materials penned between the two testaments.
- ▶ It is mostly metaphorical.



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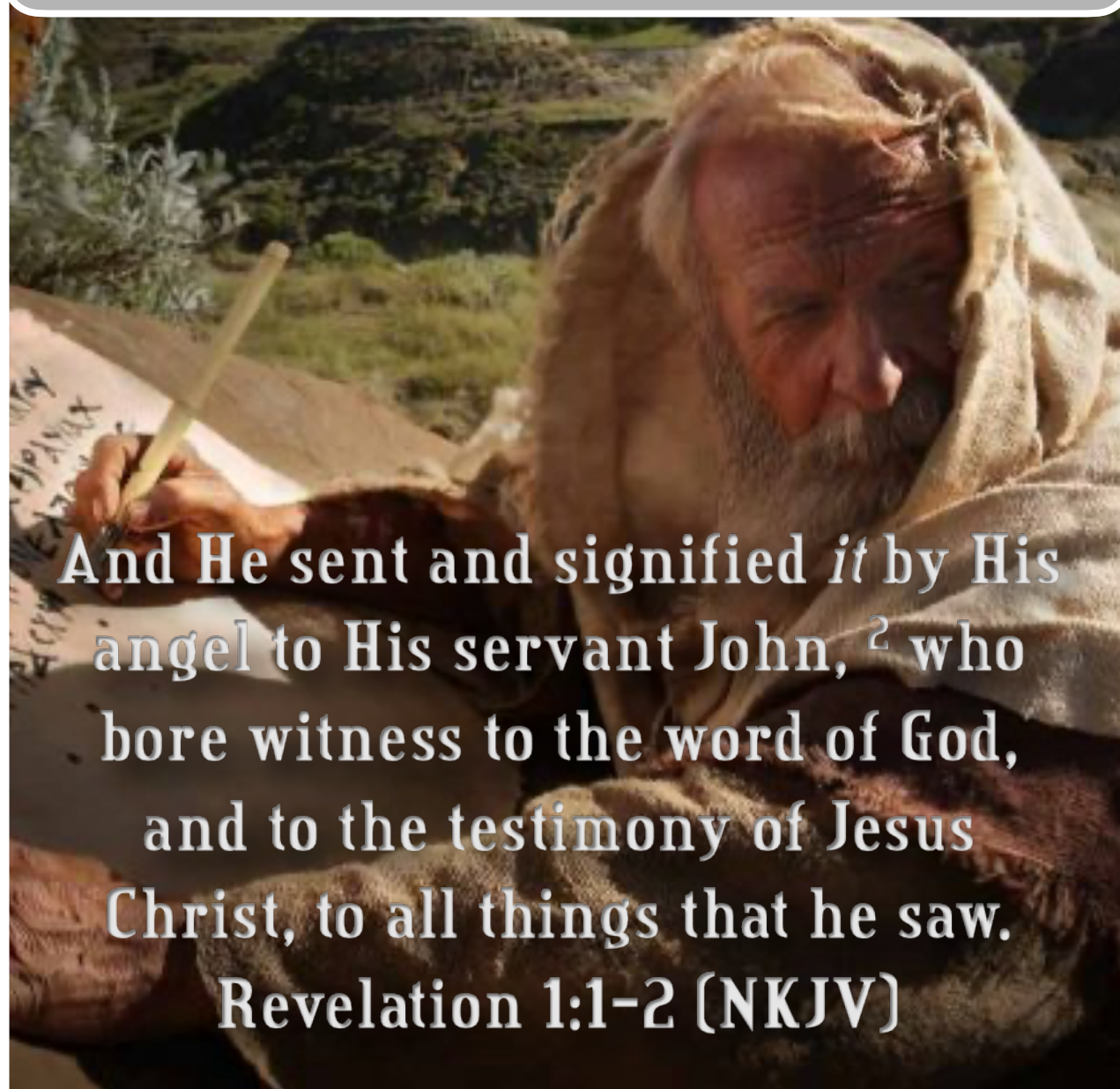
- ▶ It is obviously harder to analyze and comprehend material of this type than it is to read and understand simple narratives.
- ▶ Symbols always intend to communicate some idea other than the symbol itself.
- ▶ We must comprehend the language and images of the Old Testament prophets, and have some grasp of the historical period when John wrote.



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### VISIONS ARE SEQUENTIAL

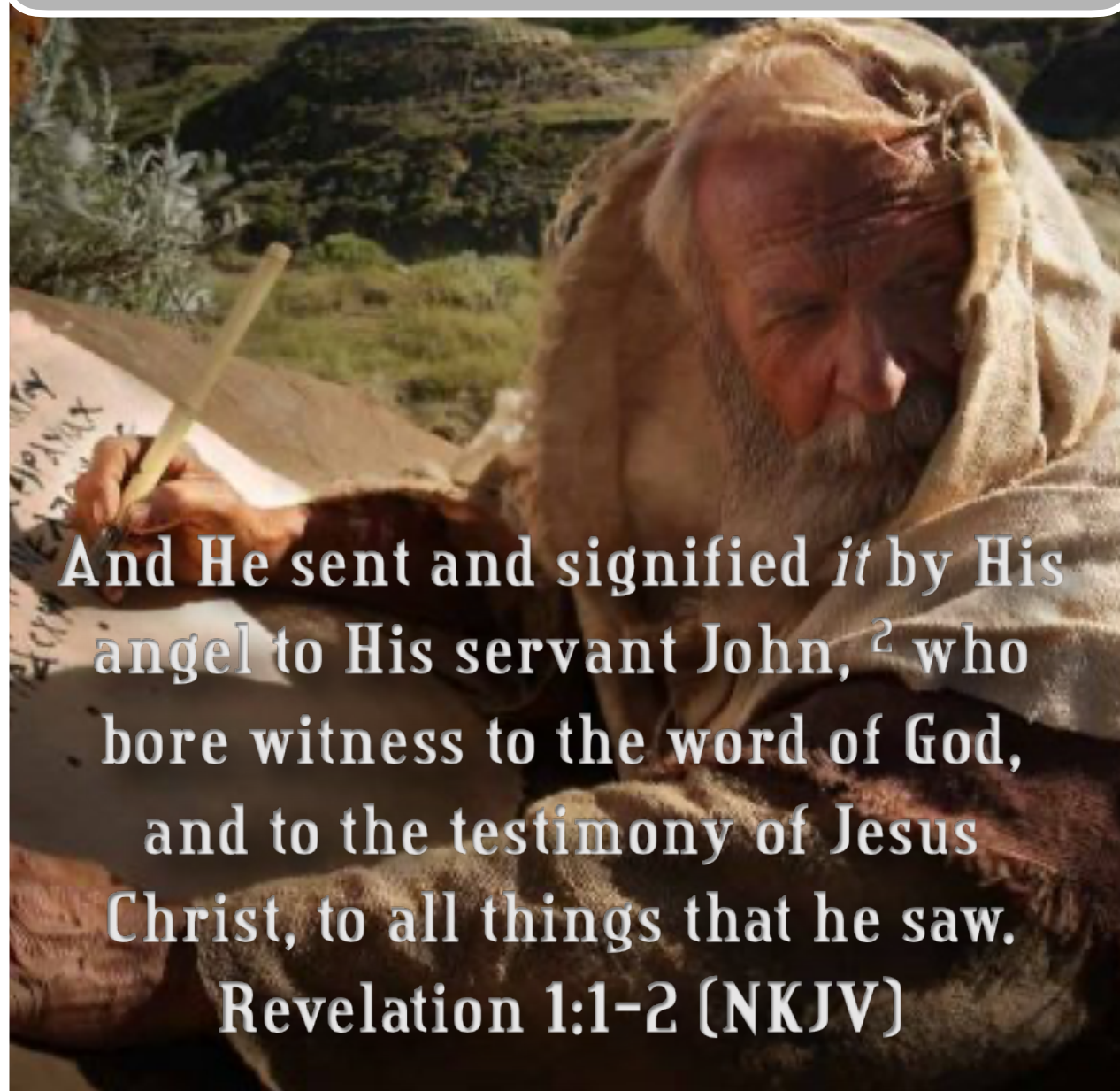
- ▶ Many of the earthly judgments described in the separate cycles are also repetitions of one another in dissimilar forms.
- ▶ This is not meaningless repetition but helpful in providing various perspectives of a certain event providing clearer understanding.
- ▶ For example, think of the many different ways the church is described - each one provides a different perspective.



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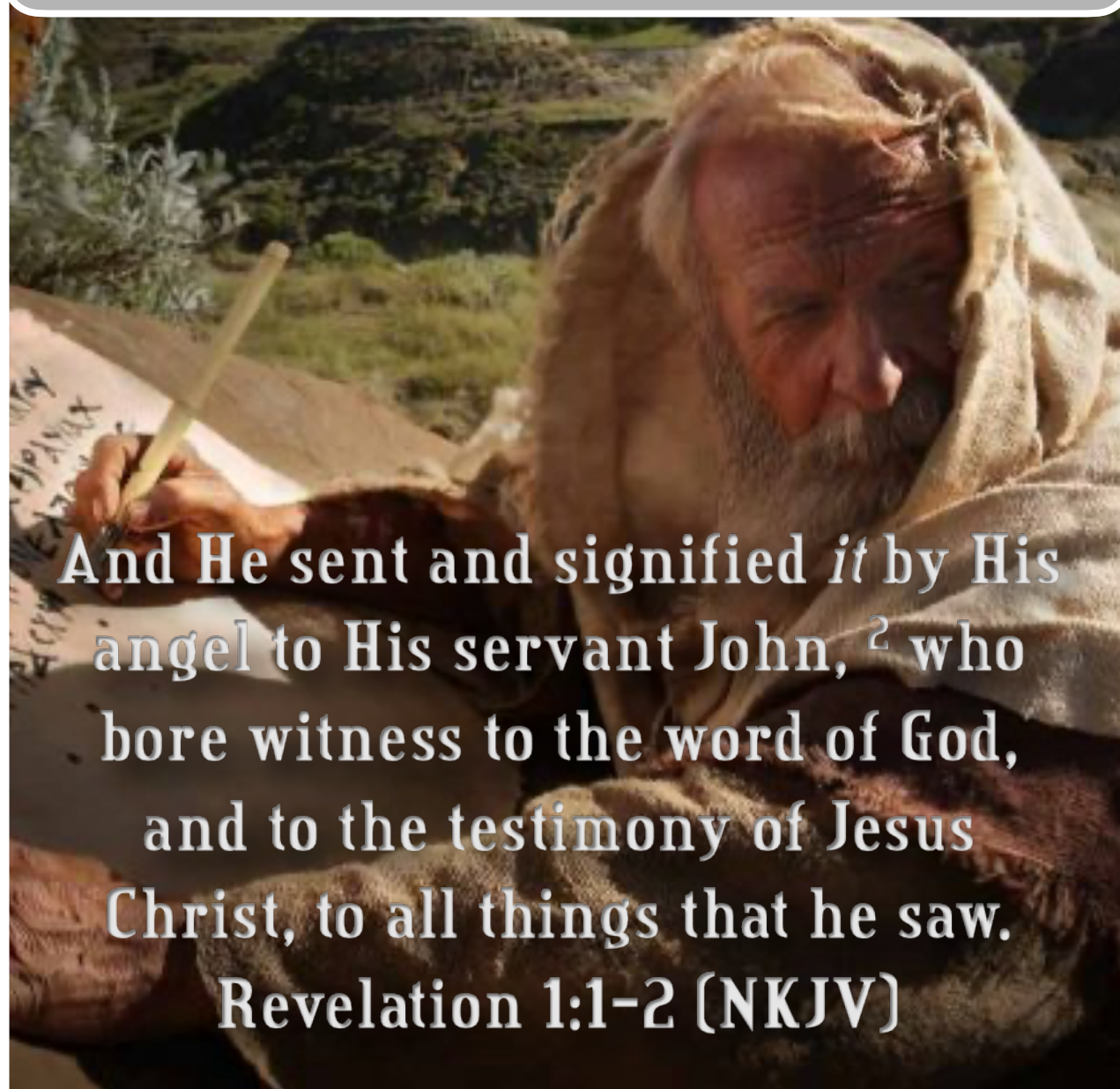
- ▶ Missing this point leads to interpretive chaos.
- ▶ Both those who take “The Futuristic Approach” of the book as well as those who see the “The Continuous History Approach” see a chronological progression of the visions.
- ▶ Thus widely diverse and fanciful applications have been made to each progressive vision.



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THE LITERATURE MAKES USE OF SPECIAL AND MEANINGFUL NUMBERS.

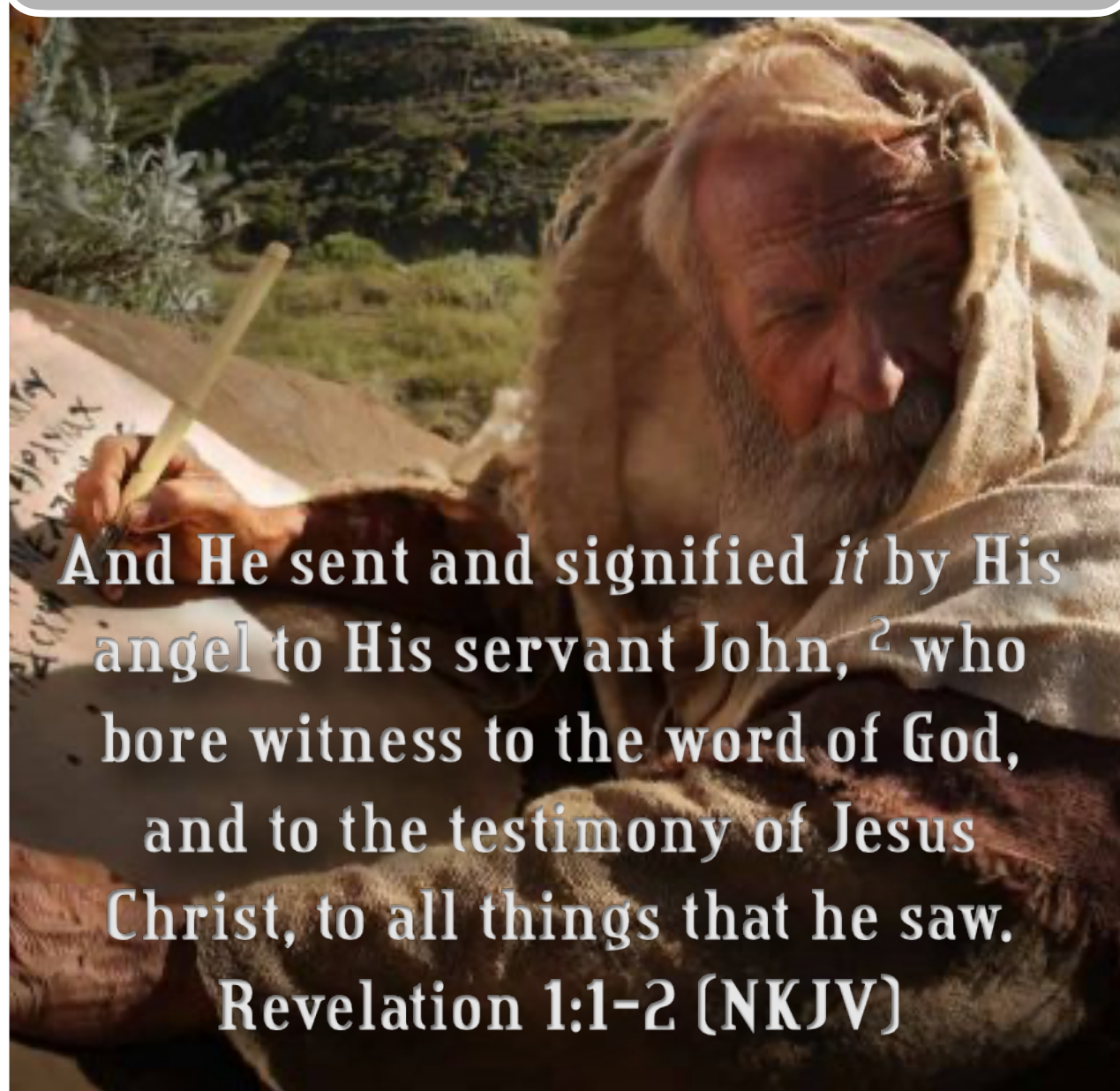
- ▶ Among ancient Oriental writers it was commonplace to set forth moral and spiritual truths under the symbolism of various numbers.
- ▶ A specific number would suggest a definite concept.
- ▶ Numbers thus became the symbols of ideas, and employing that particular number brought forth the idea that it represented.



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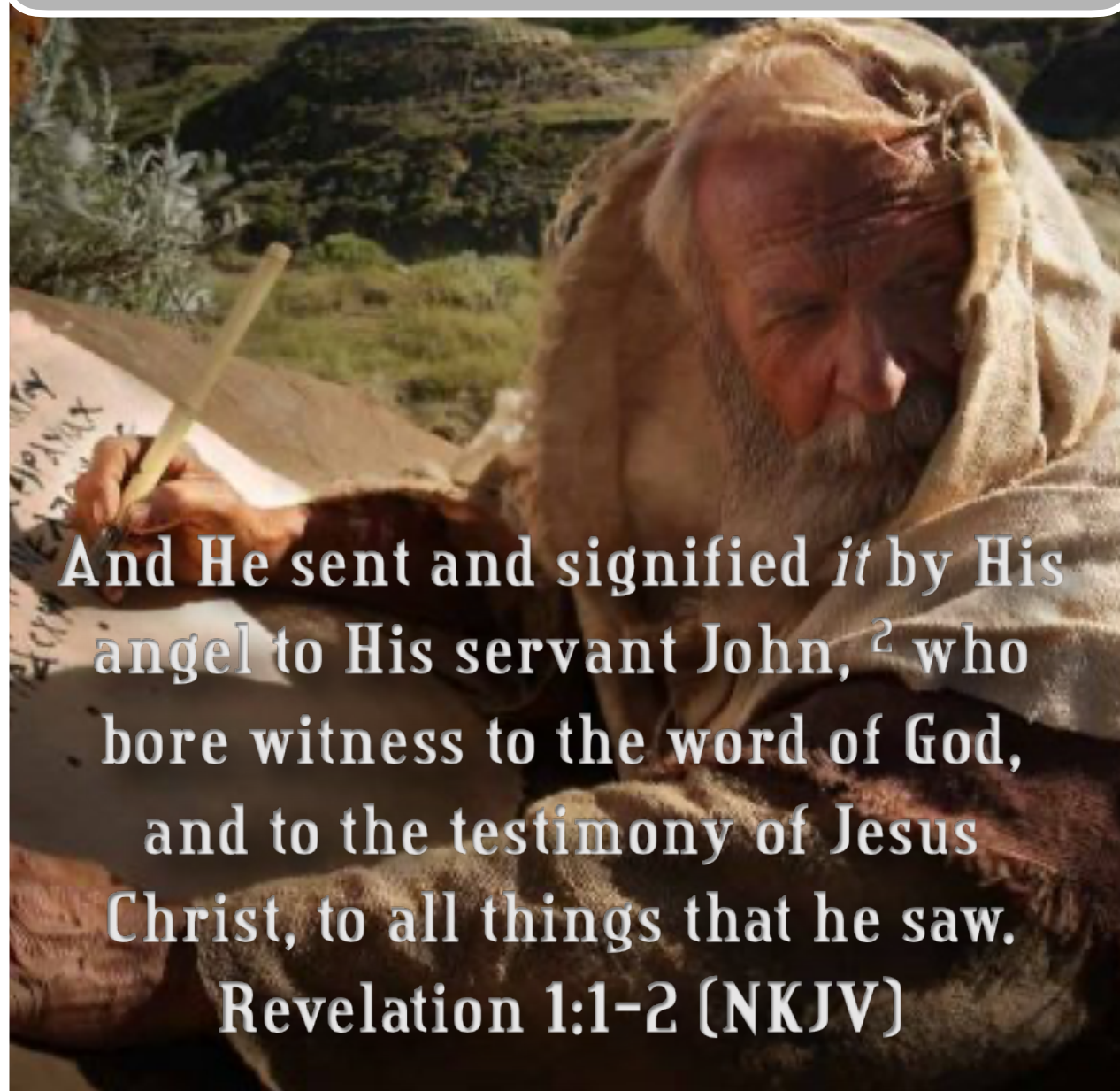
- ▶ Such numbers, obviously cannot be read with the same literal exactitude with which we employ and interpret mathematical formulae.
- ▶ The number 1 symbolizes unity; the number 3 symbolizes truth, deity, permanence; 7 = perfection, fullness; 10 = whole, perfect; 4 = cosmic (4 winds, corners), etc.



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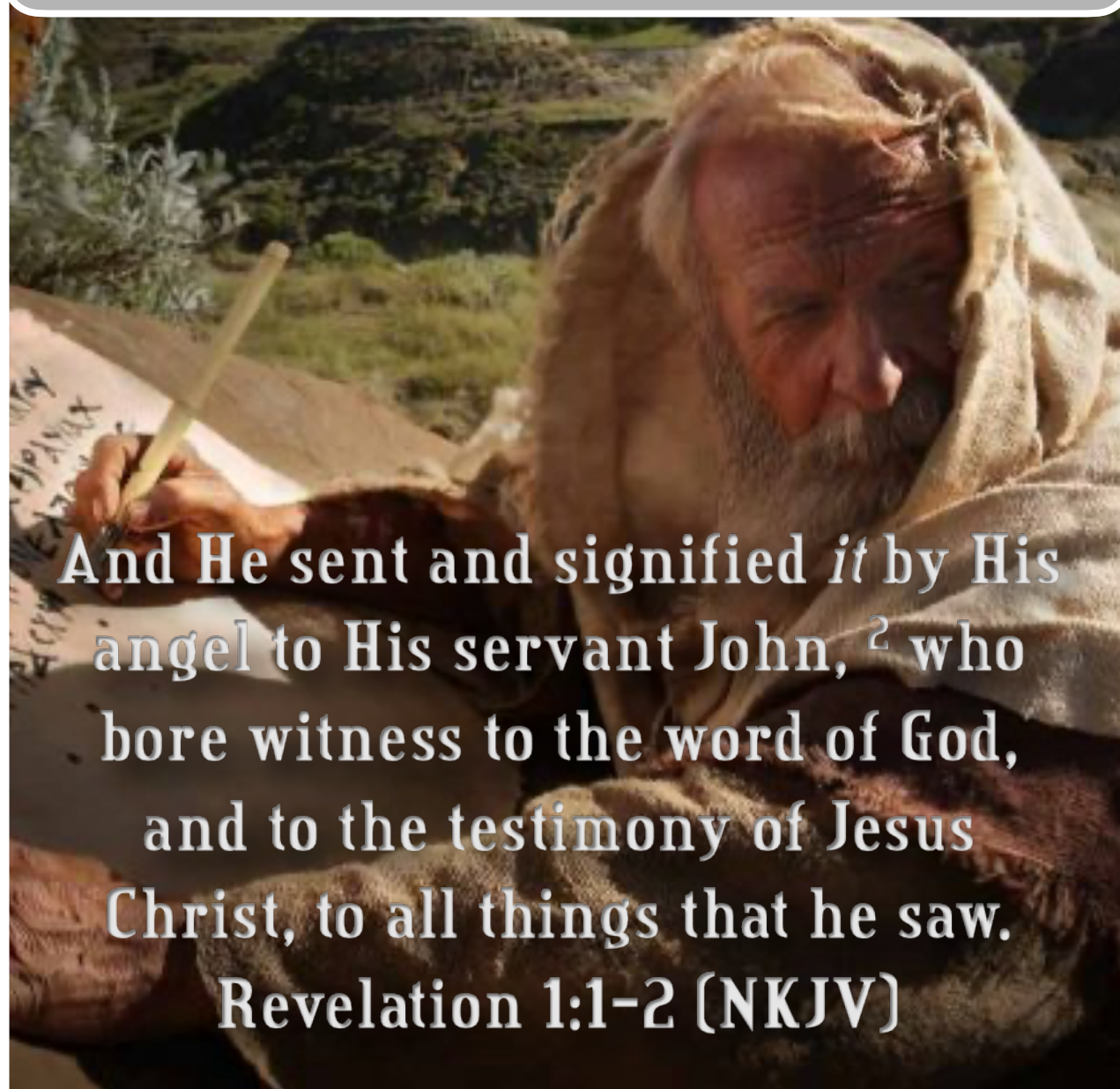
- ▶ Those who attempt to interpret the numbers literally will always miss the mark when it comes to understanding their actual intent and message.
- ▶ Trying to use the numbers to calculate dates, the exact span of time, sizes, numbers of people, and the names of people will err greatly in their assumed conclusions.



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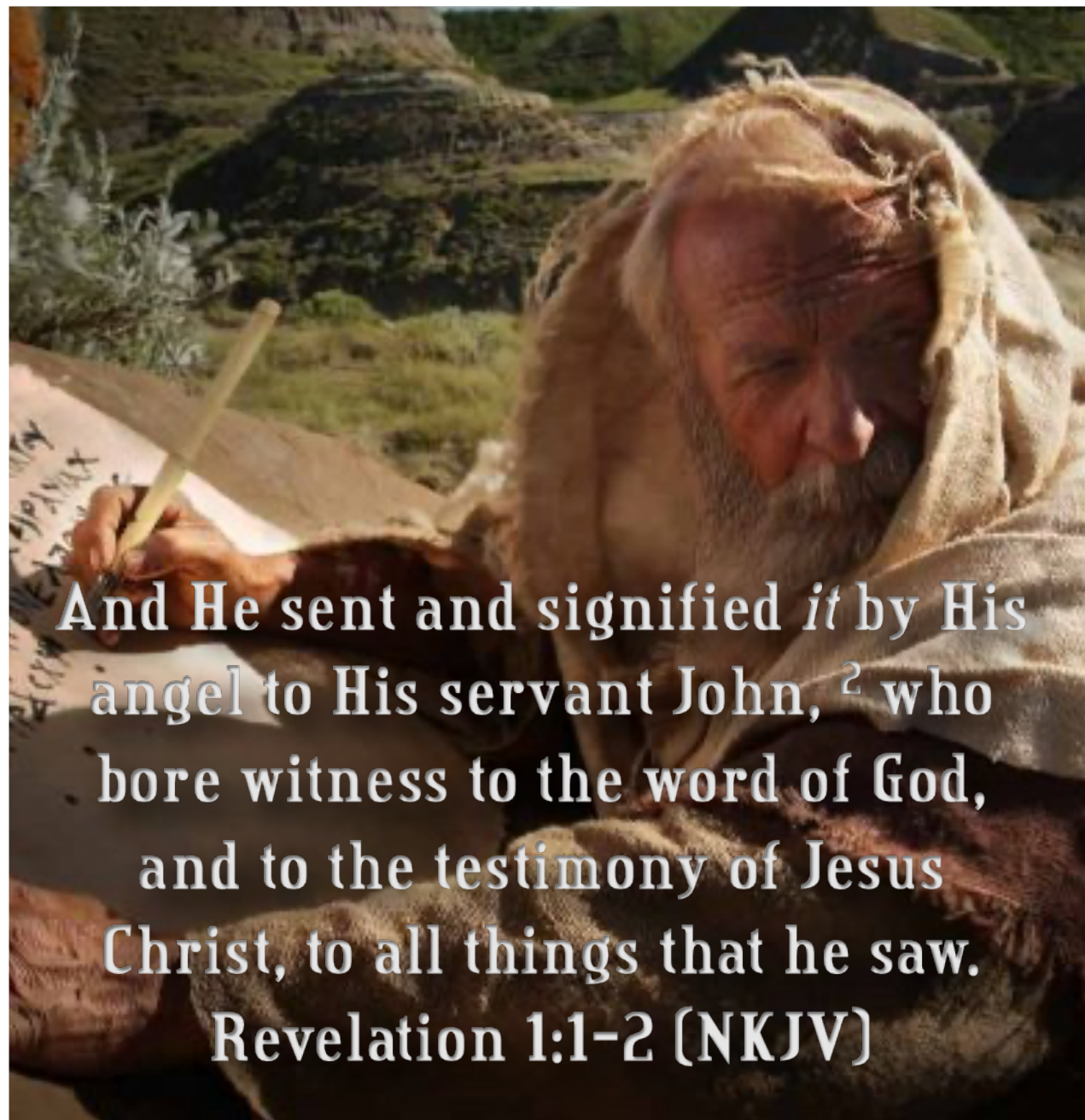
THE LITERATURE SPEAKS TO A PARTICULAR HISTORICAL SITUATION.

- ▶ John's Apocalypse was penned to address real people and their very real problems.
- ▶ John is writing to people who were suffering immensely at the hands of the Romans (cf. 13:11-18; 17:8-14).
- ▶ They were wanting to know "How LONG?" (Rev. 6:10)



# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## Introduction to John's Book of Revelation



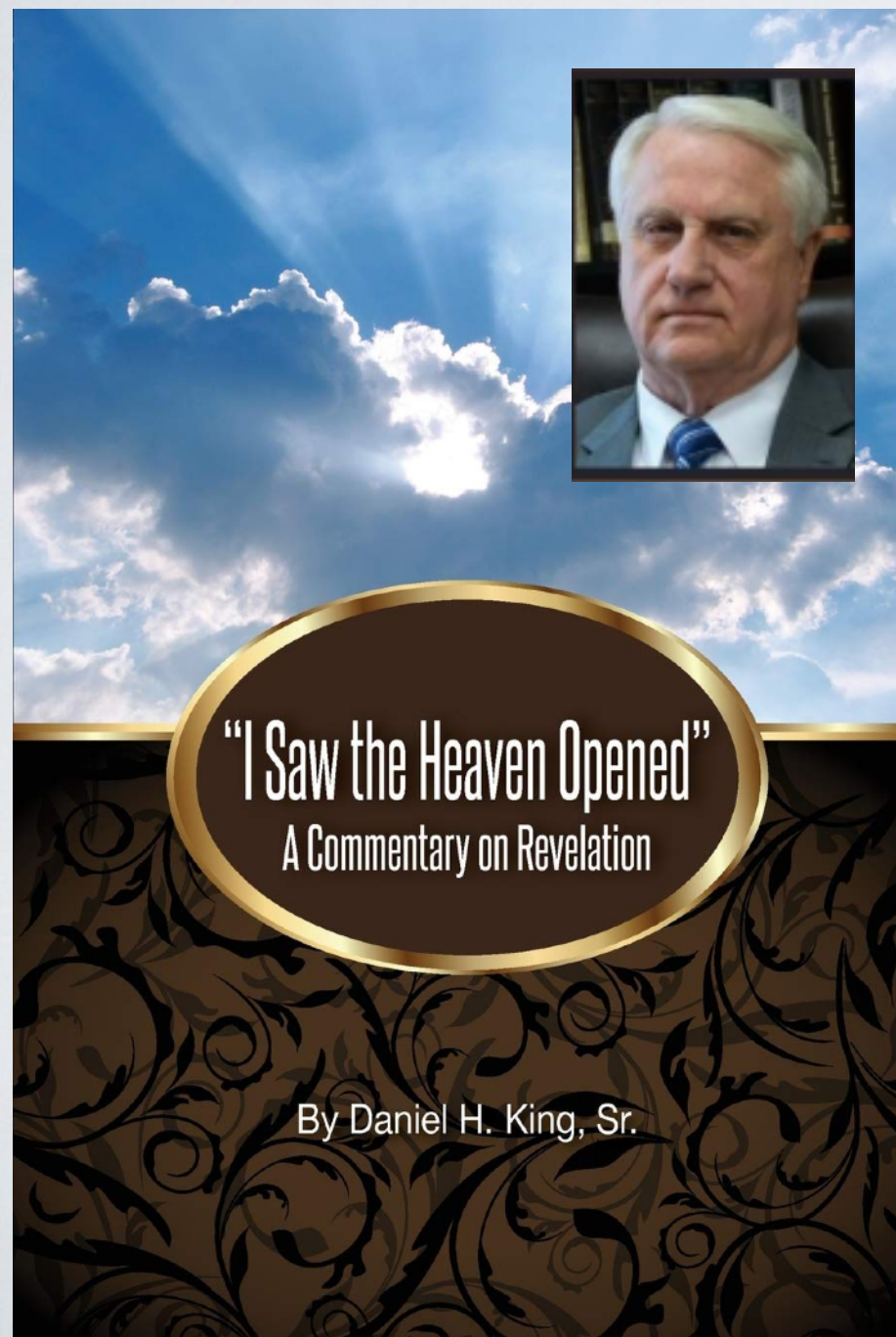
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- What is this Strange and Mysterious Book?
- ▶ The Type of Literature
- ▶ What Is Purpose of the Book?
- ▶ How Do You Read This Book of Symbols?
- ▶ What Does It All MEAN?



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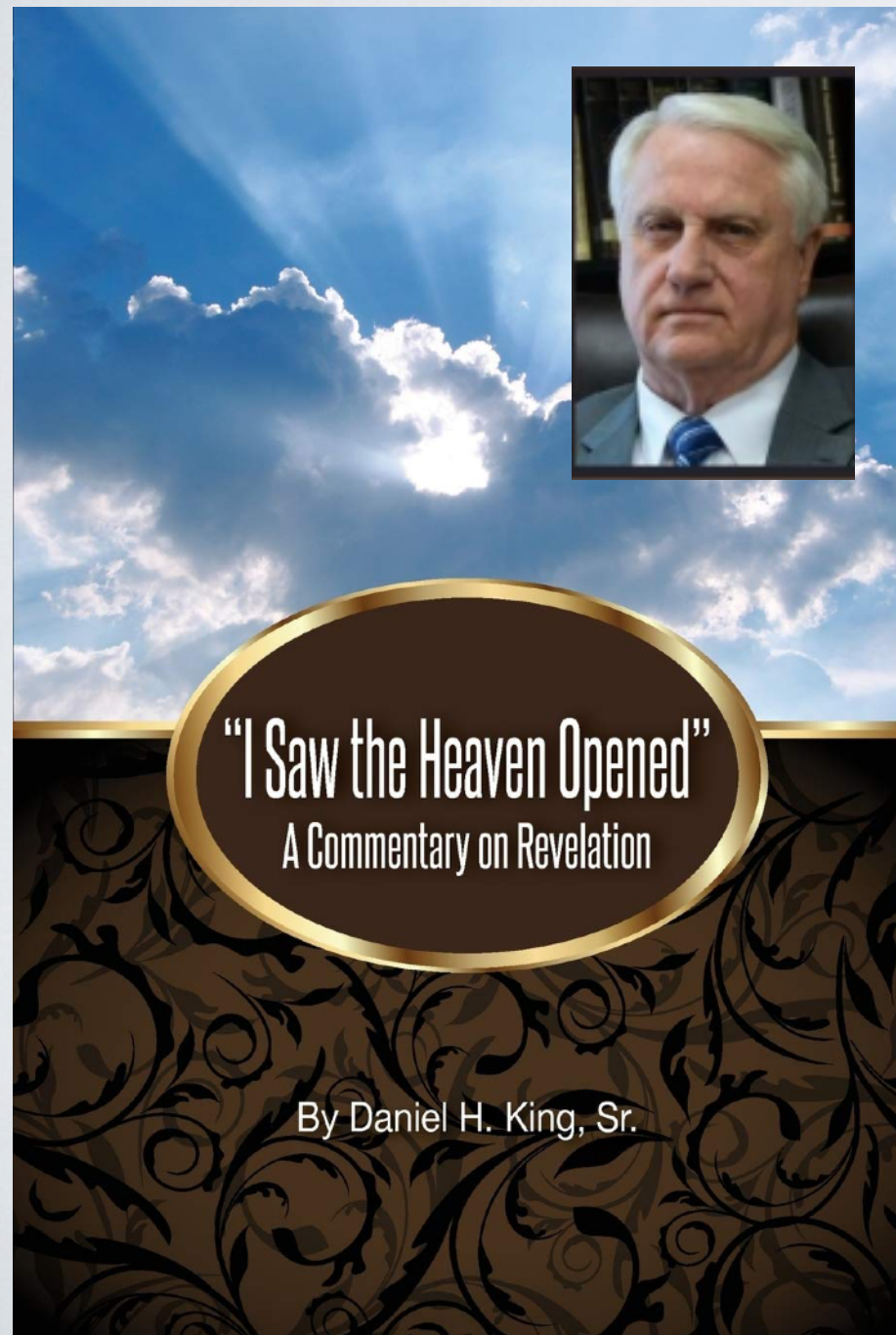


“Likewise, the Revelation is a message that is framed historically by the dark events of the late first century of the Common Era, but it is far more than merely that. It is a message from Jesus Christ to those churches telling them to hold out and not to lose their faith in the face of impending persecution at the hands of the Roman Imperial power that held such frightening leverage over them all. . . .”



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## Introduction to John's Book of Revelation



“... Hence, it delivers to Christians of every age the message that God will reward our faithfulness with eternal life and the marvels of the age to come, if only we will persevere and not deny our faith no matter what evils betide us.”







*"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which  
God gave Him to show His servants—  
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*Revelation 1:1*

## **Charts by Don McClain**

Preached January 30, 2022

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# THE BOOK OF REVELATION



## Daniel 2:31–35 (NKJV)

<sup>31</sup> “You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor *was* excellent, stood before you; and its form *was* awesome. <sup>32</sup> This image’s head *was* of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup> its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. <sup>34</sup> You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. <sup>35</sup> Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.