



What is «I Have Seen»?

A painting is music you can see, and music is a painting you can hear. – Miles Davis

I Have Seen is a concept album—an audio-visual epic and an ode to the folly and hope of mankind.

It is a word- and sound-painting with both gripping and intense tales and such dramatic music that you or an audience will not be left untouched.

This piece of art is a collaboration of the English poet/lyricist **Neville Potter** (famous for his work with *Chick Corea* and *Return to Forever*) and **Michael Strand**, a Norwegian composer, singer, and guitarist.

Neville's 23-verse poem inspired Michael to create a compelling composition. His dramatic sound-painting supports and elaborates upon the pictorial scenes in these poetic, powerful lyrics, and so text and music meet in a perfect marriage.

Listening to this composition, you might feel the need to put it into some kind of box.

For lack of a better description, one could possibly call its musical diversity "*symphonic rock*" or "*art rock*".

Others might say – after having read the first verse and then listened to the overture, that this is "*program music*":

An immortal soul witnesses the dawn of the universe and its expansion. Eventually human life comes to Earth – this and much more is expressed with music.

Likewise, all of the other verses are sound-painted.

Anyway, you will set out on a journey in a colourful, vivid, and exciting audio-landscape.

Open your mind.

Open your ears.

Close your eyes – and see.

I Have Seen – The Project

Back in 1985, after having written several songs with Neville Potter's lyrics, he sent me the poem «*I Have Seen*». Composing the music and melodies to this 17-verses version took me a full-term pregnancy to complete.

I recorded the demo on a 4-track cassette deck, composed and arranged on a Roland MC-500 sequencer using two Roland synthesizers—a JX-8P and a Super Jupiter (MKS-80)—a Roland TR-707 drum machine, and recorded guitars, sound effects and vocals.



During the composing process my wife Ingvil, an accomplished songwriter and singer in her own rights, was my muse and counsellor. We discussed the lyrics, she gave me her vision, then I dressed the melodies in musical garment and placed them in a "soundscape" which inspiration bestowed upon me.

Much could be said about the circumstances surrounding the attempts to get this masterpiece out into the world, on record or stage, but I won't bore you with too many tedious details.

Life for me was never linear, but more like a meandering river. To bring this work of art to its current state took in fact many more years than I had planned and expected.

As *John Lennon* and *Allen Saunders* before him quoted so aptly, “*Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans*”.

There was a whole lotta life happening that demanded much work and full attention, and for a long time I had to channel my creative energy in other directions than music.

There were many years when I didn't even have my keyboards and studio equipment anymore. At times I felt like *Franz Kafka* described it in *Letters to Milena*:

“It outraged and wearied me to see how the common, everyday life devoured all the exuberance and high spirits I had brought with me.”

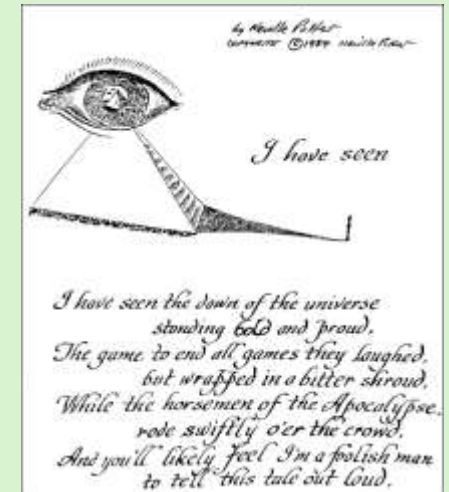
Nevertheless, my creation «*I Have Seen*» stayed always with me, and in the early 90s I expanded it to 19 verses.

Then came another long interruption.

First some years ago I was able to return to composing in earnest, but even then, I only continued when my life situation and finances allowed it.

The final version of «*I Have Seen*» is now complete with an overture, 23 verses and two instrumental passages, and lately I created the artwork for its 12 parts.

I wish you a great time reading the lyrics, looking at the digital art, and listening to the music.

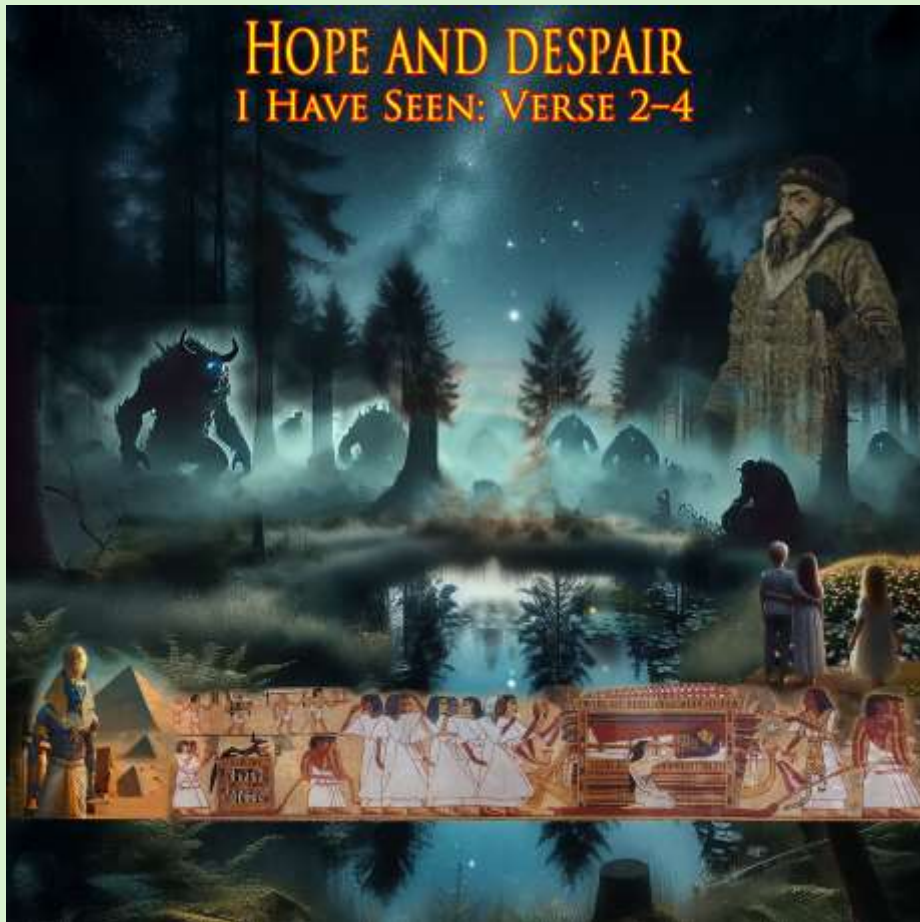




1. **Dawnings** (Overture and verse 1) 6:39

1. I have seen the dawn of the universe,
standing, bold and proud.
The game to end all games, they laughed,
then wrapped it in a bitter shroud.
While the horsemen of the Apocalypse
rode swiftly o'er the crowd,
and you'll likely feel I'm a foolish man
to tell this tale out loud.

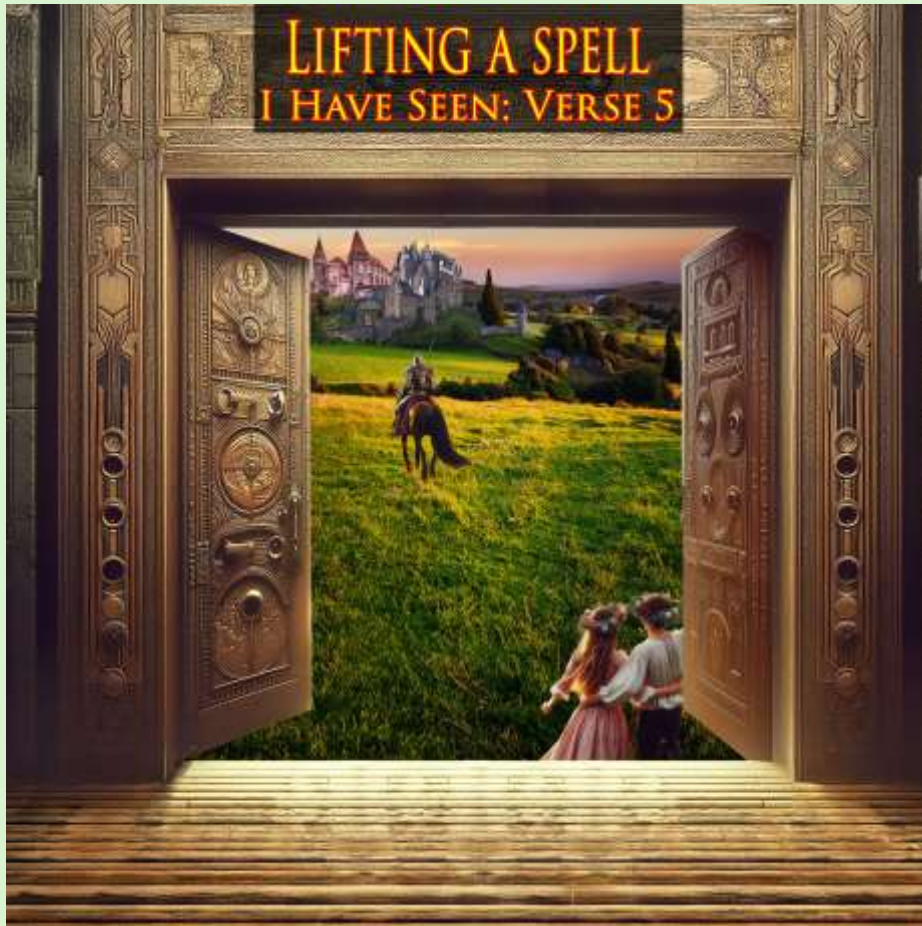
Verse 1 enters after about 3 1/2 minutes into the overture, when life had existed on Earth for a very long time. The first part illustrates the first two lines of the poem. The music after the spoken verse 1 illustrates futures to come, using several themes from later verses.



2. Hope and Despair (Verses 2–4)

4:08

2. I've seen the eyes of a soul in pain,
distraught by the wrath of fools;
entrapped by aesthetic promises;
laced with the stings of the cruel,
wondering why he left his home
to taste their bitter gruel.
Hoping that someday, somehow,
he'd overcome the tyrants' deadly rule.
3. I've seen the glow of a bright new star
reflect in a stagnant pool;
dimmed by the mindless bigotry
dressed in the words of a fool.
So adamant in her view on life
that no one stemmed her fuel.
Hoping that through trust and love
could come to shine a better world renewed.
4. I've seen the building of the pyramids,
to hide the treasure rare.
Entombment of the living flesh
to serve the pharaoh's lair.
Visitations in the night,
creating a great despair.
A million violations of a caring being
and no one seemed to care,
and no one seemed to care.



3. Lifting a Spell (Verse 5)

2:01

5. I've seen a knight scale battlements
no mortal man could climb,
to rescue from that cruel black prince,
a princess pure and kind;
and seen him smote an evil spell,
that through their hearts had been entwined.
To live to share an honoured life
in which themselves they'd find.

PREMONITION

I HAVE SEEN: TRANSITION VERSE 5-6



4. Premonition (Transition verse 5 to 6)

2:55

“*Premonition*” is an instrumental interlude.

In the outro of verse 5 the music paints a soundscape of a summer festivity in the country-side, celebrating the reunion of the knight who has rescued his beloved princess, and their continuing happy life together.

However, towards the end of this outro the mood changes from major to minor key, and a musical phrase is hinting to a theme of the stormy seas to come.

A sinister bassoon melody starts this instrumental interlude. When the guitars enter, “*Premonition*” elaborates the transition by paraphrasing the vocal melody of verse 10, and using themes, lyrics and music of verses 6 to 8. Here conquistadors embark on ships to conquer unknown lands, and seafaring legends will be told about sailors and their wooden ships.

This instrumental segment works very well as a single element by itself, and functions certainly as a meaningful transition.



5. What Was It For? (Verses 6–9)

6:12

6. I've seen conquistadors embark
to conquer unknown lands.
I've seen them sell their souls for gold
abandoning all pious stands
defenceless in their faithless faith.
So, retribution now demands
that all be made to pay a price
for wasted hope and bloodstained hands.
7. I've seen the hurricane awake
on a golden balmy day;
to punish all but stoutest barks
who deep within its jaws did stray,
with black-green walls of sea and spume
like devil's armies on display.
But there were always fearless men
who'd never yield to dark dismay.
8. I've seen the tempest's anger pound,
upon a hull of oak.
I've heard its timbers creek and moan,
as the violent sea inflicts its stroke.
And many ships have failed to see
the welcome dawn unfold its cloak.
They only live as legends now,
but of them a thousand tales are spoke.
9. I've seen a thousand armies bold
a marching off to war:
Byzantine, Persian, Mongol hordes.
And each one felt he knew the score,
but all who won and all who lost,
are marching bold no more.
And silence stalks the battlefields,
wondering what it all was for.



6. **Battlefield Elegy** (Transition verse 9 to 10) 4:09

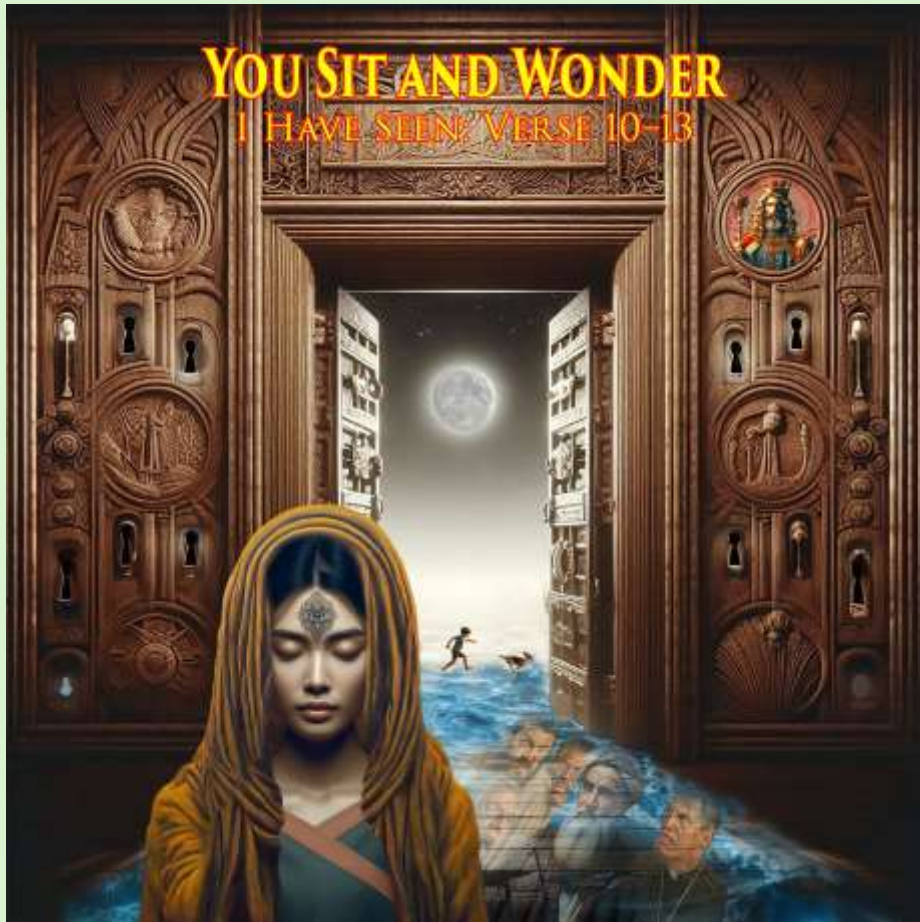
Taken into consideration that there is constantly war some place or another on our beautiful planet, “*Battlefield Elegy*” could just as well be named “*Elegy for Our Times*” or “*these times*”.

These could be any time – mine, your’s, our grand parents’, our children’s ...

Anyway, war is a big atrocity, aberration, and abomination.

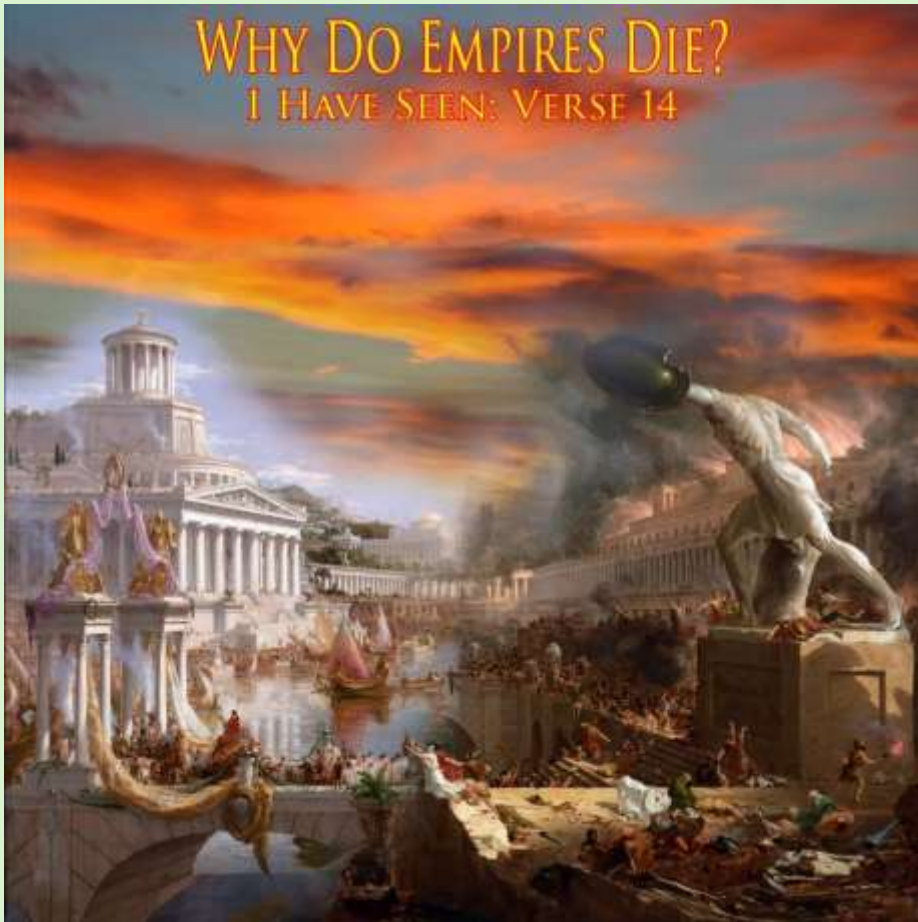
To quote Mahatma Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War*:

“What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy?”



7. You Sit and Wonder (Verses 10–13) 4:57

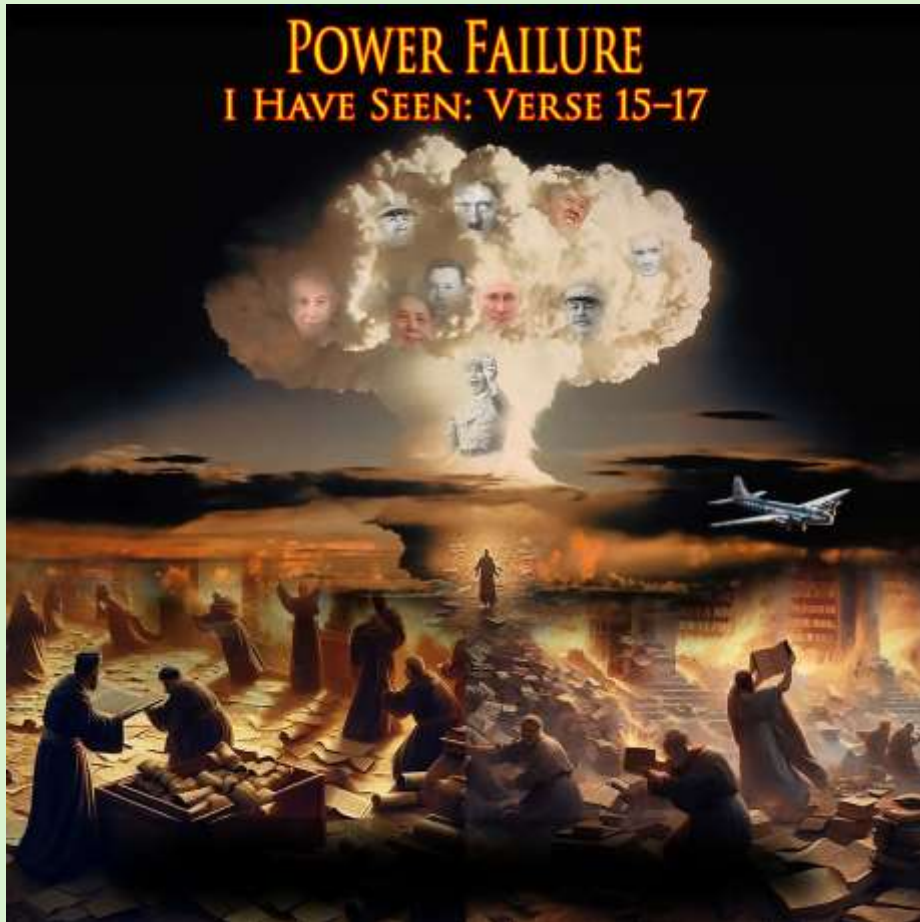
10. I saw a young boy lose his dog
and fight to hide his tears.
I saw him search and search the land,
till darkness swamped his fears.
With blooded feet he walked the land,
his purpose strong and clear:
to find a friend, who for him
was something more than dear,
was more than dear.
11. I've watched a young girl shed the bonds
of a repressive company.
And overcoming fierce reproach
to her unquestioned right to be.
But there still lurks the wrath of those
who sight a pious blasphemy
when faced with loss of specious powers,
and fear of spirits being free.
12. I saw a gentle man shot down,
that made me feel unreal.
I cried for those whose pain is such
that they no more can feel.
In times of hate I searched for love,
in famine searched for meal.
And even though he died with naught,
I saw a man refuse to steal.
13. I saw a mighty river flood;
I watched it taunt the morning dew.
Upon a golden throne I sat,
holding orb and sceptre too.
I've given knighthoods, taken heads,
and watched as discontentment grew.
I faced the pain at Agincourt,
when stronger men they all but flew.



8. Why Do Empires Die? (Verse 14)

1:27

14. I've seen an empire built and lost,
while most men sat and wondered why.
Not one man stood to boldly ask,
why empires strongly built must die.
But it was clear when screams of terror,
filled the crimson sky,
that having more but serving less
brings mighty kings to cry.

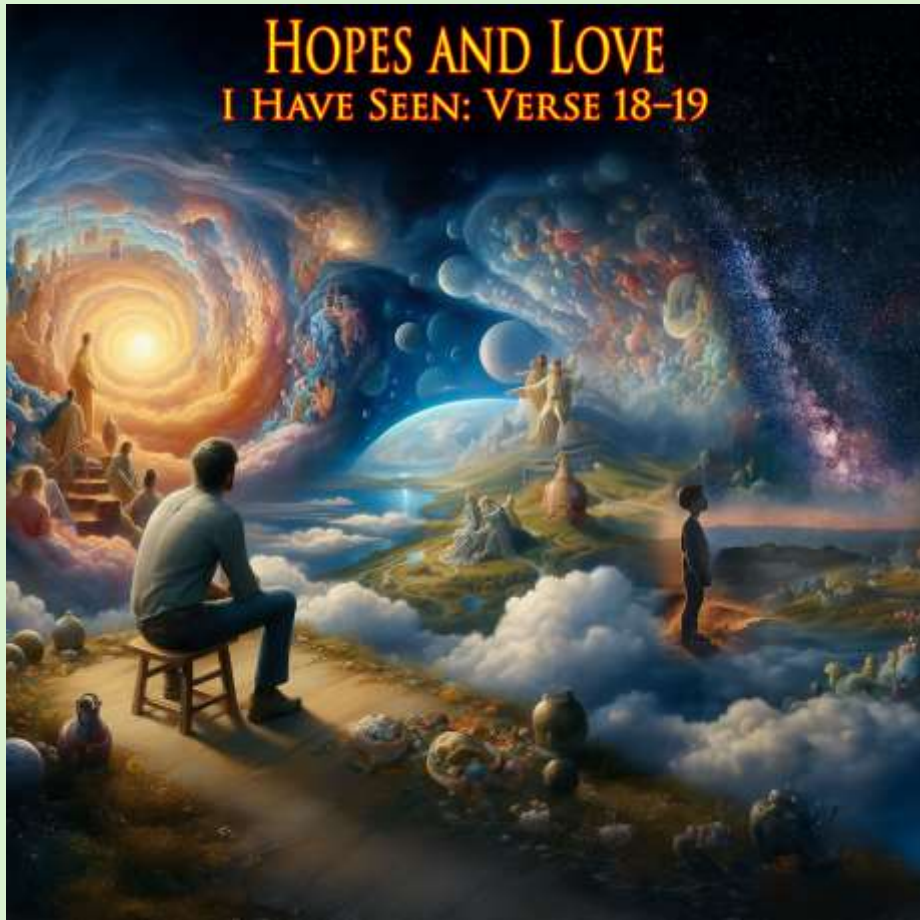


Power Failure (Verses 15–17) 5:17

15. I've seen false prophets take their toll
on men who seemed so strong.
Misled by leaders' frantic cries,
and so fanatically being wrong.
But there are those who won't accept
that fatalistic throng;
who won't succumb to fixed ideas,
as puppets fed a battle song.
16. I've seen the books of wisdom burned
by men who claimed to know
what minds should see,
what minds should read,
what seeds a man should sow.
I've yearned for knowledge as for love.
'T was always such a blow
to feel suppression's mindless bonds,
while wanting so to fully grow.
17. I've seen once more the mushroom clouds
that sent a shiver through my spine,
and breathed for those who breathed the dust
that permeated such a crime;
and screamed for those who could not scream,
through throats that burned like lime;
and wept for those who could not weep.
They never had the time.

* Verse 15: Taking into consideration what happened in the USA and Washington in January 2021, and what has happened since January 20, 2025, this painting by Neville Potter is a good illustration for verse 15. (Its original title is "Vietnam".)

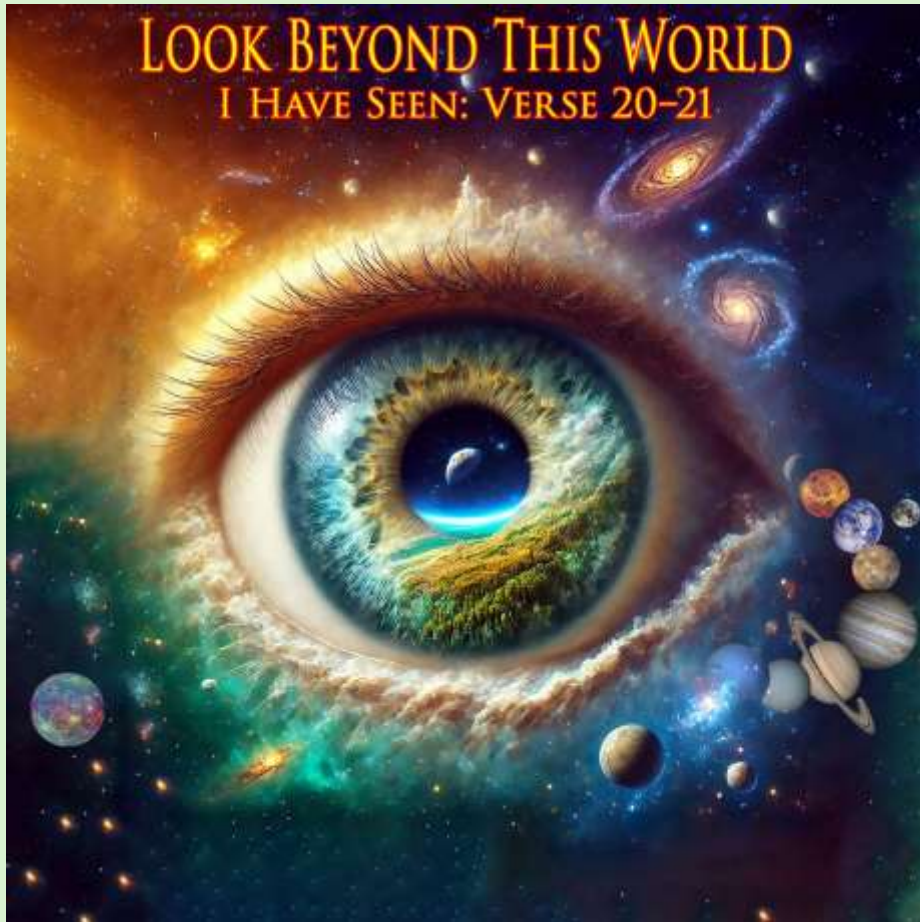




10. Hopes and Love (Verses 18&19)

2:43

18. I've seen a man who dreamed a dream
that all mankind could share,
who taught that truth and love could win,
where lies and hate had built a snare.
Then seen him left by those he helped
who somehow seemed to dare,
to throw his dreams back in his face,
and leave him hanging bare,
and leave him hanging there.
19. I've seen the hope of a wistful child,
exuberant with joy,
and felt the warmth of a love so pure,
that no man could alloy.
I saw him drink the morning sun,
that quadrillion-year-old boy,
and gazed upon the Milky Way,
as if it were his favourite toy.



11. Look Beyond This World (Verses 20&21) 3:16

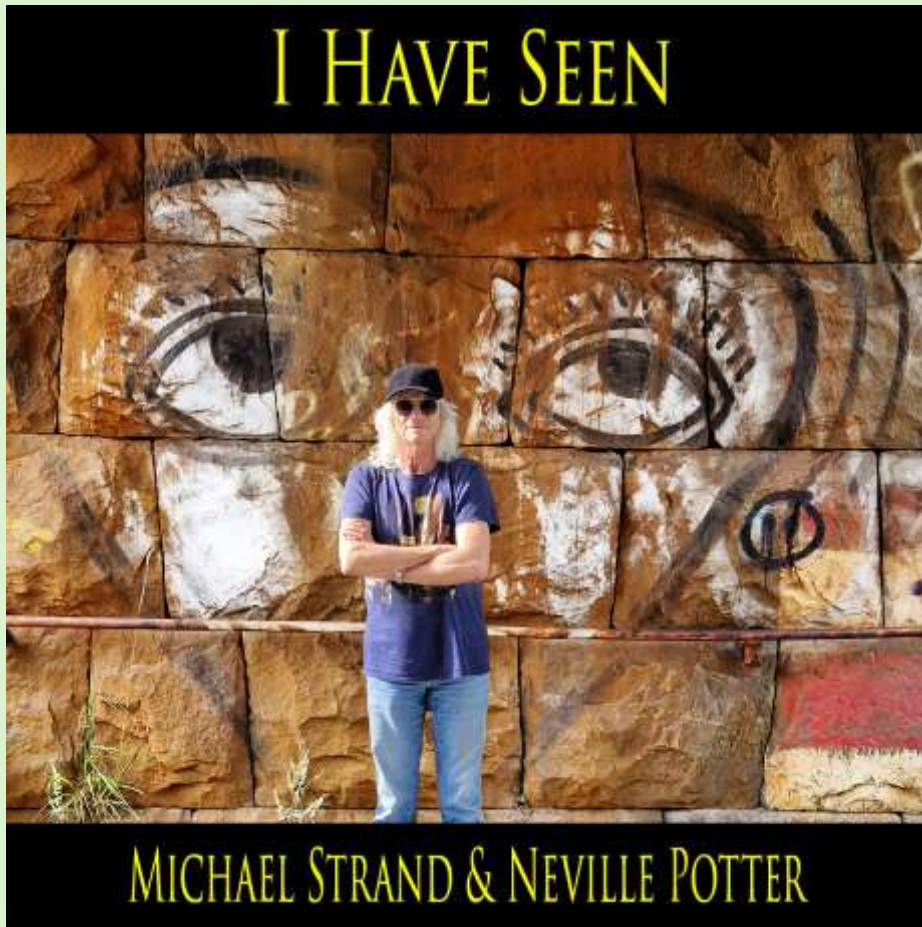
20. I watched a galaxy unfold
felt wonder as it grew.
I've seen the universal hope
in a newborn's smiling eyes of blue.
But there are some who'd cloud those eyes
and visions of the few,
who dare to look beyond this world
for other worlds to view.
21. I've seen this solar system's mass
from every point of view,
from Venus, Pluto, Saturn, Mars
and even asteroids I knew.
But Earth impacts and Earth detracts,
the visions of the few,
who dare to look beyond this world,
for other worlds to view.



12. Search and Find (Verses 22&23) 3:36

22. I've seen a wild rose bring to life,
a wretched desert stark and burned,
for eons fraught with dust and drought,
a host of rainbows now returned.
A place where songs of hope are sung,
where once survival's voice was spurned.
The dawning of a brand-new world
where life's true lessons can be learned.
23. And now I've seen the key to life
unfold before my eager eyes.
The mysteries of the universe, revealed,
emblazoned across our skies.
And all we have to do is want to see
and wish to shed the lies.
To find a better way to live,
to set the goals, reach for the skies.
||: Let's find a better way to live
let's set the goals and reach the prize. :||





Produced and arranged by **Michael Strand**

Vocals and narrator recorded by **Peter Michelsen** at The Norwegian Sound Studio, Mjøndalen, Norway

Drums recorded by **Tom Brechtlein** in his home studio

Bass (verses 2–4, 11, 12) recorded by **Stanley Clarke**

All guitars, soundscapes and other instruments recorded at home by **Michael Strand**

Mixed and mastered by **Peter Michelsen** at The Norwegian Sound Studio, Mjøndalen, Norway

Additional remix and adjustments by **Michael Strand**

Special thanks to Anders Gjønnes, Tom Brechtlein, Stanley Clarke, Peter Michelsen, Brynjulf Blix, Sidsel Bogen.

Design & artwork: **Michael Strand**

www.strand-arts.com/i-have-seen/index-en.html

My love and endless thanks go to my wife **Ingvil Strand**, whose love, help, encouragement and inspiration are central to my life and work.

