

The Book of Revelation

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JOHN'S VISION OF THE SON OF MAN

Revelation 1:9-20

John's Vision of the Son of Man (Rev. 1:9-20)

Verse 9 -

- Where was he ?

- "...on the island called Patmos..." John was banished to the island of Patmos, a small rocky island about sixty miles off the coast of Asia Minor in the Aegean Sea. It was a Roman penal settlement where prisoners who were considered dangerous to civil order were exiled.

- Why was he there?

- "...for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." (i.e. for the gospel's sake). He was suffering persecution for Jesus' sake.

- How does he refer to himself?

- "...your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience [or endurance or perseverance - 'to bear up under'] of Jesus Christ..."

- The word "*companion*" is from the root word "*koinonia*" meaning fellowship - to share in common. John shared something in common with the believers of Asia Minor. What did he share?

(a) Tribulation.

The saints in Asia Minor were beginning to suffer persecution because of their refusal to worship idols (and the emperor!), and their stand for the truth and the glory of Jesus Christ alone. Exiled to Patmos for the Word of God, John shared tribulation in common with these early believers.

(b) Kingdom

John shared something else with them as well. They were all partakers of the kingdom of light. They had fellowship in the kingdom that will never end - with Jesus Christ crowned as their glorious King!

(c) Patience

The word "patience" (*hupomone*) means perseverance; steadfast commitment; faithfulness; and endurance - to bear up under a weight. This word surfaces throughout the book. The purpose in writing to these persecuted Christians (for whom things were about to get worse) was to encourage his fellow kingdom citizens to persevere in the faith - in the face of opposition.

- What kind of tribulation were they facing?

- Persecution (See Rev. 2:9- 10). In the message to the church in Smyrna, which was a microcosm of the greater region, the believers were already suffering. They were experiencing poverty (financial loss - perhaps loss of employment) and they were blasphemed against (slandered), and it was going to get worse (i.e. verse 10). Over in Pergamos one saint had already been martyred - as his Lord! (Rev. 2:13 - same term as used of Jesus in 1:5.)

Jesus is revealing to His beloved sheep that more persecution was on the way. The pressure to conform to the world and hide their light was great and would increase. How does the Great Shepherd encourage His little flock to persevere with joy in the midst of this pressure? That is what this whole "revelation" is all about!

- Encouragement in tribulation -

This book is full of help and comfort and encouragement, not only for those early Christians, but for all the persecuted and struggling Christians throughout the age of the "last days" in their battle against the kingdoms of this world.

To the saints is given the assurance that:

- a) God sees their tears (Rev. 7:17, 21:14) and He will wipe them away.
- b) their prayers are heard and are making a difference (Rev. 8:3-4).
- c) their death is precious in His sight (Rev. 14:13).
- d) their final victory is assured (Rev. 15:2).
- e) their blood will be avenged (Rev. 19:21).
- f) their Christ lives and reigns forever and ever. He governs the world in the interest of His church. He is coming again to take His people to Himself in the marriage supper of the Lamb and to live with them forever in a rejuvenated universe! (Rev. 21:22)

Not only is He coming - where one day the Son of Man will burst into view with clouds in power and great glory - but also this book discloses the truth that He is already with us - with us in the Spirit - walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and Death.'" (Rev. 1:17-18) Indeed, we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us!

Do you see that Jesus encourages the weary saints of Asia Minor by giving them a heavenly perspective of their suffering. This is the apocalypse - the unveiling of the big picture that has been given to John. Revelation is a window into the invisible, yet real world. The unveiling shows us that things are not what they SEEM. The beast that comes out of the abyss SEEMS to be victorious. He makes war with the saints, overcomes them, and kills them. Those that dwell on the earth rejoice over the dead prophets of God, and they make merry and send gifts to one another. But the rejoicing is premature. In reality, it is the believer who triumphs! (Rev. 11:11-15) Such a vision instills courage and infuses strength into the hearts of foot soldiers in Christ's kingdom, does it not?

Verse 10 - 18

- **the Lord's Day**

This is the only occurrence of this phrase in the Scriptures. It may well be a reference to Sunday - called the Lord's day as a marker of the Lord's resurrection.

What about Sunday?

(1) The Seventh Day Adventist view - the holy day is Saturday - the Sabbath, which is part of God's "eternal law."

(2) The Puritan view - the holy day moved from Saturday to Sunday. They viewed Sunday as the "Christian Sabbath." They viewed all the Sabbath laws of the O.T. as still applicable for today - just moved to Sunday, from Saturday, in honor of the resurrection. Thus, in the Westminster Confession of faith, you would not do any of your normal "stuff" on Sunday - with the exception of acts of mercy or necessity.

(3) Lord's Day view - though Sunday is not the Sabbath, that is fulfilled, but it is the day on which we are supposed to worship, since that is the day Jesus rose from the dead.

(4) Every day is holy view - Every day is for worship. It is true that Jesus did rise on the first day of the week, and it is likely that it is what is referred to as the Lord's day to commemorate His resurrection, but that is not the same as a command to meet on that day. If it is commanded, then it would be a sin to disobey. No teaching passage tells us to meet on Sunday (i.e. Heb. 10:24-25).

In Muslim countries everything shuts down on Friday. In Israel, it is Saturday. In our country, based on Puritan traditions, Sunday was the shut down day. In early America, you could have gone to jail for breaking the Sunday Sabbath.

What is sin?

If we are going to move towards church discipline, it must be based on clear commands of Scripture.

Scriptures on holy days to consider (Gal. 4:8-11; Col. 2:13-17; Rom. 14).

To honor Jesus is to obey His word with the right motive and heart attitude. To press your preference is to dishonor Christ and His word and to exalt self.

- **in the Spirit**

Seems to relate to the Spirit giving a vision; in this context, a vision of Christ (see also Rev. 4:2; Acts 10:10,19; Ezek. 2:1-2). The prophetic revelation is to be written down (Rev. 2:11).

Jude tells us to pray "*in the Holy Spirit*" (Jude 20). In other words, pray in line with the mind of the Spirit (which is the Word of God) which is to exalt Christ - for this is the Spirit's purpose (John 16:13-14).

- **The description of the Son of Man**

1. The description of Jesus Christ, the son of man, seems to be similar to the description of the Ancient of Days which is found in the book of Daniel. This is the glory Jesus speaks of in John 17:5. The Son of Man is a Messianic title for Jesus Christ. *Daniel 7:9-10; 10:1-6; Mark 13:26*

2. The first thing that John sees is seven golden lampstands (v. 12), representing the seven churches (1:20b). This image has its background in Exodus 25:31-40, 37:17-24, and Num. 8:1-4. The image is further fleshed out in Zech. 4 (which has already been referred to in Rev. 1:4 with the mention of "*the seven Spirits.*") It is no mistake that the heavenly pattern has the lamps as "branches" designed to shine forth light; all extensions from a common "stem" (all molded from one piece) and fed from one oil source (i.e. representing the Spirit). What a picture of the unity of the local assemblies as branches of a single church - the body of Christ!

3. With a garment down to the feet and a golden band, Christ is portrayed as a king and priest. As a priest, He tends the lampstands. The Old Testament priest would trim the wicks, add oil, etc. Christ tends the "lamps" by commending, correcting, exhorting, and warning (i.e. ch. 2-3) to fit the "lamps" for service as lightbearers in a dark world.

What a glorious picture of the Son of Man – clothed with majesty and with awe and with terror! The Lord is a mighty warrior and He always wins! This is our Protector. We are in His hands! It is this holy Christ who purges His church and punishes the wicked – all who oppose Him in word or deed or heart. The Lord reminds John and his readers of the difference between the power of human rulers and their supposed greatness and glory (Dan. 2:36-45) and the true greatness and glory that comes from the very nature of the Son of God – His person and His work.

4. Compare John's response in v. 17 to that of Daniel in Daniel 8:18 and 10:8. Then take note of the tender expression of love and imparting of strength. This vision is not to terrify John, but to comfort him and the whole flock. "This is who I am, and so fear not for I am with thee, dear persecuted flock!" (See Isa. 41:8-13). It is Jesus Christ and not Satan who holds the keys of Hades and of Death.

Verse 19 – 20

- **The command to write**

John is given the command to record all the visions that the Lord will give him. These revelations will give the church comfort and perspective to handle all future events – for our God is in control.

The phrase "the things *which will* take place after this" contains the Greek term "*mello*" [I have matched the translation of mello in italics '*which will*'] It is a word that tends to refer to events that are soon to unfold or about to happen. (i.e. Rev. 1:19; 2:10; 3:2,10,16; 8:13; 10:4,7; 12:4,5 etc.) When we compare "shortly" in verse 1, and "for the time is near" in verse 3, along with "*mello*" in verse 19, the unanimous impression of the vocabulary is that of the closeness of these events to John and his readers.

- **Jesus is Lord of the church**

Jesus is intimately involved in each of these churches – in every part of their life. The messengers are His and the church is His. We are in His hand. We are not our own. Our role is to find out what Jesus wants, not act according to our preferences. In chapter 2 and 3, we are going to see that there is an accounting to be given. We need to take this to heart. We must give an account for the light shining from our lampstand (Matt. 5:14-16).