

## ***The Church of the Servant King***

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### **Prophecy Series**

(Proph21B\_Revelation\_chp1B)

### **The Vision of the Son of Man (1:9-20)**

In this passage of Scripture, John explains a vision of the glorified Jesus Christ given to him by God. This passage consists of three sections: 1) the circumstances of his commission to write (vv. 9-11); 2) a detailed description of the source of that commission (vv. 12-16); and 3) a more in-depth description of the commission and the One Who gave it (vv. 17-20).

#### *The Instruction and Commission to Write (1:9-11)*

**9** I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. **10** I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet, **11** saying, **“Write in a book what you see, and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”**<sup>1</sup> (Rev 1:9-11)

In verse 9, John describes himself as a “brother” and a partaker in three things common to his readership. *First*, he is a partaker with them in the religious persecution that they too were experiencing as a result of their faith in Jesus. When John uses the term “tribulation” here, he is not referring to the period of time known as the Tribulation, but general tribulation experienced by believers (e.g. Matt 20:22-23; Jn 16:33; Acts 12:2; 14:22; Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12; 3:12). *Second*, they shared in the future kingdom of Jesus Christ (cf. Rev 20; Lu 12:32; 22:29; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; Jas 2:5). *Third*, they were exercising perseverance as they remained steadfast in the midst of affliction.

**4** And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Rev 20:4)

**6** Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Rev 20:6)

**29** **“And do not seek what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and do not keep worrying. **30** “For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. **31** “But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. **32** “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. **33** “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. **34** “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Lu 12:29-34)**

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1977).

24 And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest. 25 And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ 26 “But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. 27 “For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table*, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves. 28 “And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; 29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Lu 22:29)

10 You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; 11 just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, 12 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (1 Thess 2:10-12)

5 *This is* a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. (2 Thess 1:5)

11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim 2:11-13)

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (Jas 2:5)

Note that believers of every age or dispensation will participate in the Messianic Kingdom of God on earth. We draw this conclusion by comparing such passages as we’ve just read with other passages of Scripture – an exercise in which we will engage in a future study. At this point in our study, it is probably helpful that we pause and review the various phases of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection as well as the 2<sup>nd</sup> resurrection that are noted in Scripture. An understanding of the various phases of the resurrection is a part of the panoramic backdrop for understanding much of the book of Revelation.

John was on Patmos as a result of his witness, not primarily to receive this revelation from God (cf. 6:9). According to the writings of several early church fathers (i.e., Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Victorinus), the Romans sent John as a prisoner from Ephesus, where he pastored, to the island of Patmos in A.D. 95. There he worked in the mines (quarries). Patmos stood in the Aegean Sea just southwest of Ephesus. It was 10 miles long and six miles wide at its widest (northern) end, and it served as a penal colony for political prisoners of Rome. John remained there until shortly after the Emperor Domitian died in A.D. 96. Domitian’s successor, Nerva, allowed John to return to Ephesus.

The Holy Spirit appears to have caught John up and projected him in his spirit to a future time in a vision. There is precedent in Scripture for this (cf. Rev 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; Ezek. 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5).

The “Lord’s Day” could be a reference to Sunday; however, there is no other place in Scripture where we see Sunday referred to as such. Nevertheless, by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D., Sunday was often referred to as the Lord’s Day, thus reflecting a trend that could have begun with John’s reference to it as such. It is also possible that John was referencing the familiar “day of the Lord,” a prophetic phrase found often in Scripture to refer to events preceding

and attending the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ (e.g. Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; 34:8; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:7-8, 14, 18; 2:3; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; 1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10).

John hears Jesus' voice as loud as a trumpet and Jesus identifies Himself. This is the first of twelve times that John is commanded to write (v. 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). John describes himself as being "in the spirit," a phrase which can also be translated "in my spirit." John is simply indicating that he was translated in a non-bodily manner to that future period that is the subject of the bulk of the Revelation.

However, first, Jesus has something to say to the churches in Asia Minor, a region containing the church at Ephesus where John had ministered. Each of these local churches was an autonomous fellowship. The order in which they are mentioned forms a geographical half-moon-like circle beginning at Ephesus on the coast, proceeding north to Smyrna and Pergamum, then swinging east and south to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Why did God select these churches to be the recipients of this letter? We don't know for sure. At a minimum, these congregations were representative congregations where the letter could circulate rapidly and they were probably familiar with John's ministry in Ephesus.

#### *John Describes The Source of His Commission (1:12-16)*

12 And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 13 and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle. 14 And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; 15 and His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters. 16 And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. (Rev 1:12-16)

This description of Jesus is awesome in a fearsome sort of way – not "awesome" in the sense used frequently today to refer to just about anything. John describes several things that he saw.

- "Seven golden lampstands" – probably seven individual (vs. one stand with seven candle holders as was common in the Temple) lampstands that represented the seven local churches.
- "One like the son of man" – a reference to the Messiah/Christ Jesus (cf. Dan 7:13-14).
- "Clothed in a robe reaching to the feet and girded across His breast with a golden girdle" – a reference to priestly attire denoting the High Priest function of Jesus (Heb 4:14); however, the fact that the girdle or sash was about His chest vs. waist is a contrast between judicial function (i.e. magisterial function) vs. service function (e.g. Levitical priests).
- "His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow" – a reference to His purity and corresponds to a description of the 'Ancient of Days' in Daniel 7:9 which is a reference to God the Father. Jesus and God the Father share the same holiness.
- "His eyes were like a flame of fire" - an allusion to His piercing judgment and omniscient understanding (cf. Rev 2:18, 19:12; Dan. 10:6; Mark 3:5, 34; 10:21, 23; 11:11; Lu 22:61)
- "His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace" – Continues the concept of judgment. The bronze altar in the temple was related to sacrifice for sin and divine judgment on it.
- "His voice *was* like the sound of many waters" – emphasizes the authority with which He spoke and is an allusion to the refreshing nature of Truth to those who believe (cf. Jn 7:38).

- “His right hand He held seven stars” - His right hand, the symbol of official honor and sovereign control, He held seven stars protectively (cf. 9:1; 12:3; Job 38:7; John 10:28), the angels or messengers of the seven churches (v. 20; cf. 2:1; 3:1).
- “Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword” – His word will judge His enemies (Isa. 11:4; Eph. 6:17; 2 Thess. 2:8; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:13-15). This sword was tongue-shaped.
- “His face was like the sun shining in its strength” – a picture of holiness and righteousness similar to what John had seen on the Mount of Transfiguration.

*More Detail of the Commission and the One Who Gave It (1:17-20)*

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 “Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things. 20 “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. (Rev 1:17-20)

These verses are fairly self-explanatory. What a contrast though between this description of Jesus and the description Paul provides of Jesus during His earthly ministry (Phil 2:6-8).

6 Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:6-10)

Hades is a reference to the abode of the dead and can be seen as a reference to both torments (the abode of unbelievers awaiting judgment) and Abraham’s bosom (the abode of believers awaiting resurrection).

Sometimes all the dead seem to be in Hades (Acts 2:27), but elsewhere believers are in paradise (Lk. 16:9, 23ff.), or with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8), or under the altar (Rev. 7:9). Hence Hades is sometimes just the abode of the wicked (Lk. 16:23; Rev. 20:13-14).<sup>2</sup>

The thing I love about this description of Jesus is the fact that John is looking at the man upon whose chest he rested as a young man – the youngest of the Apostles evidently. This appearance of Jesus is truly awesome and fearful to John who knew Jesus so well. When Jesus senses John’s fear, Jesus speaks words of comfort. As believers, we too will see this Jesus, but Jesus will speak words that will translate us into His eternal presence.

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<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985).