

# Apokalypsis – It all begins with a vision of Jesus!

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Text: Revelation 1:9-20

Theme: The Book of Revelation, End times, prophecy, Apocalyptic Literature

- Apokalypsis – is the Greek word for Revelation. You find it there in 1:1 – **“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place...”**
- We are using as a key verse and outline - **Rev. 1:19 – “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later” = Key Verse**
  1. “What you have seen” – Vision of Jesus – Chapter 1
  2. “What is now” – Letters to the 7 Church’s – Chapters 2-3 (A series to come)
  3. “What will take place later” – Chapters 4-22
- Last week we introduced this series, took a look at some of the elements of Apocalyptic Literature and then found great confidence in the description of Jesus given in the first 8 verses. If you missed the first message you can download it from our webpage. Today ...the description of Jesus continues. Let’s read what happens next....
- Revelation 1:9–20 (NIV84) - Read by Sarah and Jubilee Nickell

<sup>9</sup> I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup> On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

<sup>12</sup> I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and among the lampstands was someone “like a son of man,” dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup> His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. <sup>15</sup> His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. <sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup> I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

<sup>19</sup> “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. <sup>20</sup> The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

## The Need to See Jesus

- John and his churches – needed to see Jesus! Why? <sup>9</sup> **I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus,**
- John and the churches were suffering because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus! *The Greek here is literally* - “fellow partaker in the tribulation.” **How many Christians today are suffering for these today around our world!** So note the words here. Suffering. Kingdom. Patient endurance. All three are inseparable in following Jesus both then and now: ***the tribulation, kingdom and endurance.***<sup>1</sup> Revelation is a word to hurting, dying, frightened believers!<sup>2</sup>
- Just so you know John knew what he was talking about. **Exile** – Sir William Ramsay, noted historian of the New Testament period, says exile was “preceded by scourging, marked by perpetual fetters, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on the bare ground in a dark prison, and work under the lash of military overseers”. Non verified Church traditions hold that John was first taken to Rome (under Emperor Domitian) and tortured in boiling oil that did not harm him, resulting in his exile. John was on Patmos less than two years, released after the death of Domitian (A.D. 96). John died at an old age in Ephesus around A.D. 100.
- We suffer because we stand for something. We suffer because we still believe in truth. We suffer because those that follow Jesus will be persecuted. Jesus promised it!
- A little more on the churches. Their need to see Jesus. By the time John wrote to these churches, Christians were probably facing intense persecution under Emperor Domitian (a.d. 81–96). He extended the practice of emperor worship to demand that all citizens in the empire refer to him as “Lord and God.” He also used political, economic, and social measures to suppress what he perceived to be resistance, including the [Christians]. It

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<sup>1</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 552). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Utey, R. J. (2001). *Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation* (Vol. Volume 12, p. 24). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

was probably during this period that believers in Rome began to seek refuge in the catacombs, deep underground tunnels intended as burial chambers for the dead. Internally, many of the churches struggled with poverty, heresy, and dissension.<sup>3</sup>

- How awesome would it have been for these believers to receive and read this Book!

## Jesus Among Us

- And so Jesus comes – vs. 12ff . John sees 7 golden lampstands which are explained in verse 20 – they are the 7 churches John was to send the vision to. In the midst of these 7 lampstands there stood “someone like a son of man”. This title for Messiah was first used in Daniel 7:13. Now this name for Christ shouldn’t be new to us at all. Jesus referred to himself as the “son of man”. It captures both the human and divine natures of the Messiah. But if the title is not enough, look at John’s description:
  1. **...dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.** In OT imagery this is sounding very “High Priest” like (cf. Exod. 28:4; 29:5; Lev. 16:4 and Zech. 3:4) – that Jesus is our Great High Priest who once and for all mediated between the human race and a Holy God.
  2. **His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow.** This seems to be an allusion to the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9. This is an example of NT authors attributing titles and descriptions of YHWH to Jesus, emphasizing Jesus’ divinity.<sup>4</sup>
  3. **His eyes were like blazing fire.** This symbolizes Jesus’ penetrating and intimate knowledge of us. **Hebrews 4:13 -<sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.** There is nothing hidden from the gaze of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>
  4. **His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace.** It was used in Ezek. 1:7 for the cherubim’s feet and in Dan. 10:6 for the angelic messenger. Jesus is described in these

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<sup>3</sup> *Word in life study Bible*. (1996). (electronic ed., Re 1:20). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> Utey, R. J. (2001). *Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation* (Vol. Volume 12, p. 25). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

<sup>5</sup> Utey, R. J. (2001). *Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation* (Vol. Volume 12, p. 25). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

same terms (cf. 1:15; 2:15) to show His heavenly origin or majestic character. <sup>6</sup>

5. **...his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. This** was used of YHWH in Ezek. 1:24; 43:2, and of the angelic messenger in Dan. 10:6. Apparently it was a symbol of a heavenly person's authoritative voice (cf. 14:2; 19:6).<sup>7</sup>
  
6. **In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.** Seven stars are identified in verse 20 as the "angels" of the 7 churches. Many scholars extend the meaning of angels meaning "messengers of God" and interpret these stars as the pastors/leaders of the 7 churches. But look at what comes out of Jesus' mouth – the double edged sword. This refers to the short, tongue-shaped sword common in the period. This metaphor appears in the OT in Isa. 11:4; 49:2 and in the NT in 2 Thess. 2:8; Heb. 4:12; and Rev. 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21. **Hebrews 4:12 - <sup>12</sup>For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**
  
7. **His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.** Glory! I think of his transfiguration in the gospels.
  - So obviously this is Jesus! And if this description is not enough look at what He says to John in verse 18....
  - Well, how would you respond to such a vision of Jesus? Look where John ends up in response...

John ends up at the Feet of Jesus!

- <sup>17</sup> **When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup> I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.**

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<sup>6</sup> Utley, R. J. (2001). *Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation* (Vol. Volume 12, p. 25). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

<sup>7</sup> Utley, R. J. (2001). *Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation* (Vol. Volume 12, p. 25). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

- <sup>19</sup> **“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.**
- This is a defining moment for John in the midst of his suffering. The glory of Jesus! And he’s given something to do! Write! This is important! This is for others. Others need this vision of me John – get it out there.
- And where is Jesus in this vision? Right among the churches! In the midst of them! We need to apply this truth. Our need to see and know where he is? whatever happens!
- How does your perspective of one another change knowing He is among us? Knowing that beside, behind, in front of your brother or sister is Jesus?
- This literally arrested me, grabbed me, jolted me, in the Love and Respect marriage conference when it was explained to me as a husband that behind my wife (your spouse) is Jesus. How does that change the way I speak to her and treat him? So some application here for you if you are married or single and perhaps dating someone. We even have two more mature engaged couples!!!
- What does he see among us? What does he hear us say?
- How does he see us treat each other?
- How does he measure our works? Our deeds?
- You can see how this vision of Jesus sets up the letters to the 7 churches that follow in chapters 2-3. From the vision, you wonder- what does Jesus have to say to these churches - and in the letters you find out. Again, those letters will form a future sermon series but don’t wait to find out – read them this week and reflect on them. They were written to real churches in real time but they certainly have powerful and prophetic application still for us today!
- In the mean time, how this vision of Jesus changes everything when we realize that Jesus walk among us. May this vision forever change us!