

# ***Preparing Our Hearts for the Return of Jesus***

## ***13- The Prophetic Warning from Jesus to the End Times Church***

### **I. REV 1: 1-10**

<sup>1</sup>*This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who faithfully reported everything he saw. This is his report of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

<sup>3</sup>*God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.*

<sup>4</sup>*This letter is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia.*

*Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne; <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ. He is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world.*

(What's the difference between Lazarus and Jesus? When Lazarus came out of the tomb he had the same body, When Jesus rose from the tomb, He had the resurrected body....the bible speaks to the dead rising first, we have to understand what the bible says and means around this mystery which is what Paul calls it in 1COR 15. When Jesus died, He still had His spiritual body, as do all those saints that have already passed away. But it wasn't until Jesus rose from the grave that He obtained His glorified body, When Jesus told Thomas to "handle Him or touch His wounds, Jesus told Him that His body was of flesh and bone....Jesus omitted the word Blood....could it be that our life source which is now our blood, which is why the shedding of blood has had such a significance in this worlds history, is omitted because it is the Glory of God that will run through our veins when we are resurrected as is with Jesus' resurrected body....,The cool mystery about the resurrected body is that it defies all the natural laws and travels through untold dimensions. A topic that even the most brilliant minds cannot seem to even figure out. One minute Jesus is on the road to Emmaus the next He is in Jerusalem. He walked through walls, His body could be camouflage.

Right, so He is the only Human being in the universe right now who has this body. But at the moment when He descends we will all be privileged to share in what He already has. And we must hold close in our heart a pillar of faith that Jesus is 100% Man, and He is 100% God. Jesus is called God our Savior, Emmanuel, God with Us, God our soon coming King, The One who created All things, Jesus is a part of the Godhead, and although we will have a body like His, Jesus will always be King, The King of kings)

***All glory to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us.***

(I believe in these last days the importance of Jesus shedding His blood is being minimized in the world. We follow Jesus because the method, the very careful method of Jesus coming into this world was done by God Himself, which is why He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, a miracle in contrast to biological science, and the Jesus died for us.)

<sup>6</sup>*He has made us a Kingdom of priests (Kings and Priests - NKJV) for God his Father. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen. <sup>7</sup>Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him— even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the world will mourn for him. Yes! Amen! <sup>8</sup>*"I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One."**

<sup>9</sup>*I, John, am your brother and your partner in suffering and in God's Kingdom and in the patient endurance to which Jesus calls us.*

(This is the pinnacle of faith and the primary message of Jesus and the apostles of the method in how we are to walk out our Love for Jesus, because the message is that we are to defeat the enemy in the same manner that Jesus defeated the enemy, and that is through suffering and death.

- Paul wrote in Philippians 1:29 that believers are granted the ability to not only believe in Christ but also to "suffer for his sake"
- Romans 5:3-4 explains that suffering leads to endurance, which builds character, and character, in turn, gives birth to hope.
- The apostles emphasized that sharing in Christ's sufferings allows believers to also share in His glory (Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 1:5)
- Paul saw his imprisonment as serving to advance the gospel, making others bolder to speak God's word (Philippians 1:12-14).
- The church at Smyrna was told by God, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10), showing suffering as a test of faithfulness
- Peter addressed persecuted Christians, advising them not to be surprised by trials but to rejoice in sharing Christ's sufferings. He distinguished between suffering for wrongdoing and suffering for righteousness and taught that suffering tests genuine faith. He encouraged believers to trust God while enduring.

Through our behavior in response to suffering a grace will be poured out unto the people around us. This is how I believe God will use our behavior to inject jealousy into the Jews and all people, Paul even says this was the very reason the prison guards were drawn to Jesus by his example when he was in prison. It is hard to serve God when things are easy, It is easy to serve God when we are in hardship. Many believers/pastors that see the luxury and convenience that the western world has, that we have here in the US are both worried for us and admire us because it's a slippery slope to serve God here, yet when we do it is of great testament to us.

I want to take time to encourage you, and for the hardships you might be facing, and those hardships that lie in our future.....God is faithful to you.

Paul says: <sup>13</sup>***The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. (1 Cor 10:13)***

When Paul writes this he does so from experience, he found the grace and joy to overcome the pain of being scourged and beaten in prison, God is faithful to offer grace in your moments of hardship. Whether it be financial issues or physical pain. He is always give you the ability to endure your trial with grace. You will be able to bear it!!

<sup>9</sup> ***I, John, am your brother and your partner in suffering and in God's Kingdom and in the patient endurance to which Jesus calls us. I was exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching the word of God and for my testimony about Jesus.*** <sup>10</sup>***It was the Lord's Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet blast.***

<sup>11</sup>***It said, "Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."***

## II. The Seven Churches

These seven churches are in today the nation of Turkey, its ancient name is Asia Minor. And these seven cities on the map form a big circle and the roads connected these cities to one another.

Paul was beheaded between 62-64 AD, and he birthed most of these 7 cities church. So when John received this revelation, the influence of Paul was lost. John received this revelation on Patmos around the year 93 AD, but the thirty or so years after Paul's death, John moved in and lived in Ephesus. Ephesus was the 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in the world at the time, next to Rome, Alexandria and Antioch.

Now before Paul's death, Paul appointed Timothy to lead Ephesus. We do not know how long Timothy was there but we do know that John lived in Ephesus until his death in Ephesus (minus the time he spent in Patmos, imprisoned)

Around the year 93 AD, the emperor Domitian (who was one of the most wicked emperors Rome ever had) the emperor commanded John to burn incense to a pagan god. When John refused, Domitian sentenced John to death by boiling him in a vat of oil. So John is lowered into this vat of boiling oil, and he comes out of it praising God, Not a burn on his body.

This freaked out Domitian, so he exiles John to Patmos. Patmos is a rocky island of the coast of Turkey/Greece area in the Mediterranean Sea. Patmos in that time was the exile prison where the worst of the worst were sent, and political prisoners were sent. Political prisoners had more freedom than the scum bags. Which is why John didn't go alone, he was in his 90s and he spent 18 months on Patmos. When Domitian dies, the New Emperor Nerva gives John a pardon and gives him asylum. In that 18 months of being on Patmos is when the Revelation of Jesus was given to him.

It was almost as if God planned a 18 month sabbatical to John not to be bothered by everyday church business to write this book.

So because of John's 30 years in Asia minor after Paul's death, John has massive respect from these churches. Scholars believe John died around the age of 100 so he had some years after Patmos to get this letter out.

So just imagine this scenario. All the other apostles died about 30 years prior to this moment, he is the last living apostle and it's been 30 years since the last one died. John is revered and has authority that is incomprehensible.

John send these messages to these 7 churches.

There are 3 major theories why we have these letters in the bible.

- The First theory is called the **Historical Theory** and it states that what was written applied to them and them alone. And we can draw inspiration from them.

Personally, I am not a fan of this view for many reasons, but the most logical is that you cannot find in the bible a message that only applied to one people group for one particular time and it ends and dies with them. Most of the biblical messages have a cascading effect like a cascading waterfall

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> one is called the **Prophetic or Dispensational Theory** and it says that these 7 churches represent the Big C – Church throughout the last 2,000 years.

For example:

- Ephesus represents the Apostolic age to about 170 AD
- Smyrna represents the age of persecution which is 170 AD to 312
- Pergamum represents the age of False doctrine which is 312-606 (the time when Constantine legalized Christianity and the church became very worldly)
- Thyatira represents the age of darkness 606-1520
- Sardis represents the age of Reformation
- Philadelphia represents the age of missions 1715-1906
- Laodicea represents the age of Apostasy 1906 to present

There are a lot of issues with this view, and many "pre-trib rapture" theology prescribes to this thinking.

- The Third is the **Universal or Timeless View** and it basically states that the church/us the people over the last 2,000 years can fit into any of these at any point throughout your life.

I personally agree with this, as I have always believed these messages speak to the heart of humanity. And if the word is living, then these letters very vividly speaks to sinful conditions in the human heart that transcend time.

The word of God is not bound to time periods, it is relevant today as it was 2,000 years ago.

I believe that when we read these letters not only does it reveal shortcoming in our heart, but it also highlights the shortcomings of others. And as we journey to become like the 2 churches that were not rebuked, we can then minister to the heart conditions of those that carry the markers of the 5 churches that were rebuked.

### III. Rev 1: 12-20

<sup>12</sup>*When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. <sup>13</sup>And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest.*

<sup>14</sup>*His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. <sup>15</sup>His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. <sup>16</sup>He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance.*

- I want to take a breath and capture this moment....1 Jn 3:2-3 says <sup>2</sup>*Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. 3And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.*

Now listen to Jesus' words in Mt 13:43 <sup>43</sup>*Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

Daniel echoes the same words... <sup>3</sup>*Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever. (Dan 12:3)*

It can be considered pretentious if we talk the talk of being like Jesus if Jesus Himself didn't say it. But Jesus and the prophets all echo the same idea, the same heart that we have something to look forward too as if it was a guarantee of receiving something we do not have yet.

It is the epitome of the already not yet

<sup>17</sup>*When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup>I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.*

<sup>19</sup> *"Write down what you have seen—both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen.*

<sup>20</sup>*This is the meaning of the mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand and the seven gold lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

**In conclusion,** Jesus stands in the midst of the lampstands, V. 20 clearly states that the lampstand is the church. The church is made up of a body of lovesick brides and not lone wolves.

<sup>25</sup>*And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (Heb 10:25)*

The writer of Hebrew prophesies that in the days nearing the return of Jesus church attendance will dwindle. We have to gather no matter what the momentary costs are.

The angel of the churches speaks to the leaders (Pastors, elders, bishops) of the church. Angel in Greek means messenger and there are times in the bible it speaks to actual angels and other times to people. When Jesus says I hold them in my right hand speaks to Jesus' authority. So Jesus is sending a message to leaders to then send the message to the church body.

This also speaks that Jesus doesn't bypass the authority that He has set up. When Jesus sets up authority in church He will abide by that authority because He himself delegates that authority and He will not act in division within Himself.