

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**

*“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants --- things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John...”*  
*(Revelation 1:1)*

The water gently lapped on the shore, but it was not a picture perfect beach and was far from a paradise. The island was barren and scarce of food. It was much too far for any man to swim in attempt of escape. Every so often a ship would come by and just enough food supplies would be dropped off to keep the hundreds of inhabitants alive. It was perhaps the cruelest prison devised by man. The island was called Patmos.

John, who was often called the beloved disciple because he was the one who lay against Jesus' chest during the famed last supper, had been banished here. He was a prisoner of the Roman Government for his faith in Christ. Most men dropped on this island were expected to die. They would either starve to death, venture into the water to be drowned or worse, attacked and eaten alive by sharks, or maybe killed by their own peers.

Though in extreme conditions, it was here that John saw the vision that we now call the Revelation. Despite his conditions John begins his book with nothing but positive thoughts. He addresses the prophecy in the form of a letter to seven congregations in Asia and it is not said to be from John, but from the Lord Jesus Christ. John quotes the Lord as saying, "*I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End . . . who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*" (Revelation 1:8).

The Apostle tells us that he was in the Spirit, or in other words, completely immersed and absorbed in worshipping the Lord, when he heard a voice from behind him. The voice identified itself as being none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. This first chapter indicates that we know that John didn't just pick the largest of the congregations in Asia who would be the recipients of this letter but that Jesus instructed him just who was to receive it (see verse 11).

From this we can know that this was a well thought out and purposeful revelation that Jesus was giving to John. It was a concise account of history, present and future. It is meant to be a revealing, an unveiling – of the very plan of God concerning man after his fall in Eden. The rest of the Bible gives us accounts of how God dealt with man over the centuries and millenniums as well as telling us about His provision for the forgiveness of sin by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The other letters found in the New Testament give us examples and instructions as to how we should live as we walk in grace.

But Revelation puts it all into perspective. As we have already stated, in the book we are given a concise history of the Church as well as a brief narrative of the history of the nation,

Israel. Then we are given the account of how they are treated during the time of the end. This, in a nutshell, is the Book of Revelation.

The appearance of Jesus Christ in Revelation is very significant. When we think of Jesus we most often think of a kind-faced, bearded man in his early thirties who looked like anyone else during His time. He was not a rich man but rather lived in poverty. He had no permanent home and frankly, if He was in the world today as He was then, we'd most likely label Him as a lazy, below standard homeless person. The Bible tells us that He associated Himself with those most people considered to be "sinners." They were people who seemed to have the most problems. They were drunkards, prostitutes, tax collectors and lepers. They were the base, common people of the day.

Jesus didn't portray Himself as a king. He laid no claim to a golden throne, a magnificent palace or multitudes of servants. He didn't command a vast army. He simply walked through the crowds of the mass of humanity, calling them to repentance and healing their sick. He wasn't afraid to go near the lepers as they covered their faces and cried through the streets, "Unclean! Unclean!" In fact, He commanded leprosy to be healed. He made the blind to see, the crippled to stand up straight and walk and yes, even raised the dead back to life.

He appeared to be like any ordinary man and it was proven by the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers as He was condemned to die the most horrid of all deaths – unrecognizably beaten, then nailed to a rough, wooden cross which was placed vertically in the ground leaving the one nailed to it to hang naked in front of all in public shame until he died. It was excruciatingly painful and unimaginably humiliating.

Because most who suffered such a death were considered to be criminals, very few experienced compassion from those who looked on. Jesus' case was no different. Though many of His devout followers were there, looking on in helpless horror, most of the people mocked and made fun of Him. They were cruel, relentless beasts who called themselves the civilized and elite of society.

We are told that Jesus gave His life. It may appear that it was taken from Him at first glance. But think of it; if He was who He claimed to be, if He was the Son of God, more - even the very God in the flesh, then at any given moment of His crucifixion He could have commanded the army of Heaven to instantly consume those who were executing Him. He who gave Samson his extraordinary strength could have ripped the nails from the cross and commanded His enemies to be swallowed up by the ground on which they stood. No one or nothing could have come against His complete and terrible power. And He was all these things. If we are a believer in Jesus Christ then we not only believe what we read in the Bible about Him but we have born the witness of the truth in our hearts. We know this to be true.

Jesus didn't come down from the cross. He willingly gave up His great power and allowed men to do these terrible things to Him. He suffered pain most will never know. He withstood temptation to overpower His captors in a way we will never comprehend. He laid down His life as the final, complete and whole sacrifice that would pay for the sin of every man, woman and child living and who would ever live.

But there was a time when Jesus didn't appear this way. It happened one day on what we have come to call the mount of Transfiguration. The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke record this event (See Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9 along with 2 Peter 1:17-18). Only three of Jesus' disciples were privileged with this awesome sight. The Bible tells us that Jesus went with Peter, James and John to the top of this mountain. There the Bible tells us that two ancients from the past appeared, namely Moses and Elijah. Moses, the one considered to be the Great Law Giver (though God really gave the law), and Elijah, the great prophet. Jesus met and spoke with these two on top of that mountain, while the privileged disciples looked on in amazement. Then Jesus was transformed – transfigured, right before their eyes. In these accounts we are only told that His face became as bright as the sun and His robe became whiter than they could completely describe and was brilliant with the light coming from it.

The Bible doesn't come right out and say this so I will share it as what I believe. My suspicion is that during that moment on top of the mountain Jesus was revealed to these men in His true form. That form is more completely described in this first chapter of Revelation. In my opinion that is why John immediately knew that it was the Lord – He recognized Him from that day on top of the mountain.

When John turned around to see who was speaking to him He saw a figure standing in the middle of seven lamp stands which are identified at the end of this chapter by Jesus Himself as being representative of the seven churches. We can speculate all we want about this but, as I said earlier, in most cases where the scripture is representative of something else it is clearly identified just as in this case.

The One standing there was clothed in a garment that extended all the way down to his feet and had a golden belt around His waist. His hair was described by John as being white as wool or snow, His eyes like flames of fire, His feet like fine brass that had been refined in a furnace, and His voice seemed to be more than one. The best way John could describe it was like the sound of many waters as they lapped against the shore. He carried seven stars in His right hand (later in this chapter identified as the angels of the seven churches), and a sharp double-edged sword extended from His mouth. His appearance was as bright as the sun shining in its full strength.

Many have attempted to identify what each of these descriptions of Christ mean, some of which may be right and some of which may be wrong. I'm not going to attempt to do that here, though some are very obvious to anyone who has read and studied the Bible for very long. But I do want to say this: Jesus appeared to John in His complete majesty. John knew who He was, not only as His Lord and Savior, Jesus, but also as the all-powerful God who created the universe and everything in it. He was so stricken with awe that the Bible tells us that he fell to His feet like a dead man.

Then something else happened that completed His identity. The Bible tells us that He laid His right hand on John and told him not to be afraid. He clearly made known that He was the one who had lived, died but was now alive for eternity – for ever more. Now, instead of the meek and mild man we see in the Gospels, He plainly says that He has the keys that open and

control Hades (the place of the wicked dead) and death itself. This all powerful being instructed John to write down what he was about to see starting with personal statements to the seven congregations in Asia, but also included what would take place after this.

The thing of all this is, Jesus wanted us to know, through His disciple and now Apostle, John, just what was going to happen. We are told about the age of the Church, its victories and failures, and what the final outcome of all would be. He had John write concerning His second coming which He had promised as He left this world in Acts 1. He has given us a warning and not just in our own day and time, but during the early days of the Church. Jesus tells us what will happen so that we will know it when it begins. It is a revelation, not a hidden thing that is impossible to understand.

Somehow I think Jesus knew that there would be so many and varied explanations of this last book of scripture. I believe that He knew we would argue and squabble over its meaning. Even in His early days He knew exactly what was in the heart of man (John 2:25). He was willing to take that chance so that some would know and recognize what was happening when it began.

While I will be the first to tell you that I am only human and I am susceptible to mistakes like anyone else, I know that the time is near. Many believers sense the same. Perhaps you are one of them. It's like the breeze that begins to blow before the storm comes. We can see the leaves turning, and you can nearly feel the moisture in the air. We don't know the exact moment that the drops of rain will begin to fall but we know it is coming. At that precise moment we can choose to get ready for it, put up our things that we don't want to get wet or blown around, or we can ignore it, take our chances, and be caught up in the fear of the storm when it hits.

Like the coming storm we are given these signs and this warning by Jesus Christ Himself. We can choose to throw our hands in the air in disgust of all the many and varied interpretations, or we can grab the Bible for ourselves, read it, read the prophecies in the Old Testament and see the obvious fulfillments in the New and those not yet fulfilled, in the book of Revelation. When we know for ourselves what the Bible says (and I encourage you to not just take my word for it but to read it for yourself. Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart and listen to Him) then we have the tools we need to be prepared. We can board up the windows of our souls. We can make provision for what we know is coming. Or we can do like the foolish virgins in the parable and only take what we need for now and run out of oil.