

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **“A GLIMPSE OF OUR GLORIFIED LORD” PART 3: Revelation 1:17-20**

#### INTRODUCTION:

#### *Have you ever wondered what became of the twelve disciples of Jesus?*

With the exception of Judas Iscariot who hung himself after betraying the Lord, church history records that the other disciples were faithful martyrs. The disciples were faithful witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and throughout the Mediterranean world and played key roles in the building and expansion of the early church. The disciples and other early church leaders clearly faced persecution and suffered for our Lord. For instance:

- Peter was crucified, head downward, during the persecution under Nero.
- Andrew died on a cross in Achaia.
- Bartholomew was flayed alive in Armenia.
- James, the elder son of Zebedee, was beheaded at Jerusalem.
- Thomas was run through the body with a lance in the east Indies.
- Philip was hanged against a pillar at Heropolis.
- Thaddeus was shot to death with arrows.
- Simon the Zealot died on a cross in Persia.

In addition to these disciples, we also learn that, James, the brother of the Lord, was thrown from a pinnacle of the Temple, and then beaten to death with a club. Only the apostle John, son of Zebedee would die of old age, but even so not without persecution.

As the book of Revelation begins to unfold, we see the apostle John facing intense persecution on the Island of Patmos. By the close of the first century, Christianity had become a hated and despised religious sect in the Roman Empire. Many viewed Christianity as a “depraved and extravagant superstition.”

*Politically*, the Romans viewed Christians as disloyal because they refused to acknowledge Caesar as the supreme authority. This disloyalty was confirmed in the eyes of the Roman officials by Christians’ refusal to offer the obligatory sacrifices of worship to the emperor.

*Religiously*, Christians were denounced as atheists because they rejected the Roman pantheon of gods and because they worshiped an invisible God. Christians were falsely accused of cannibalism, incest and other perversions.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

*Socially*, Christians, most of whom, were from the lower classes of society were despised by the Roman aristocracy because of their teaching that all people were equal in Christ. They were also despised for declining to participate in worldly amusements such as Roman festivals, the theater, and other pagan events.

*Economically*, the numerous priests, craftsmen, and merchants, who profited from idol worship, saw Christians as a threat.

Up until the reign of Domitian, there had not been an empire wide persecution of Christians. But the emperor Domitian hated Christians and instigated an official persecution of them. Little is known of the details of this persecution, but it extended to the province of Asia Minor, where the apostle John had been banished to the island of Patmos. It was during this time of imprisonment that John received this vision from the Lord and penned the book of Revelation.

Now, we have been moving through a long passage: Revelation 1:9-20. In this passage John describes a vision of Christ that he receives, while imprisoned on the Island of Patmos. John had a glimpse of the glorified Lord and communicates this vision to us so that we would be able to see Christ as He really is; so that we would have an accurate view of Christ and respond accordingly. As John communicates this vision of Christ to us, he highlights three aspects of this vision:

**First remember that, John Communicates the Circumstances of this vision. (Revelation 1:9-11) READ!**

Remember that in these verses, John relates three characteristics of his circumstances at the time he received this vision from Christ:

### ***1-He reveals his identity!***

In fact, he offers a two-fold identity of himself:

- First, John reveals that he has a fraternal identification with his readers. He is their brother in Christ.
- Second, John reveals that he has a fellow participation with his readers. He is a companion in suffering, salvation and steadfastness in Christ.

Who better to comfort and encourage believers during a time of intense persecution and suffering than a brother in Christ; than a companion in suffering? And certainly we see this as John:

### ***2-He relates his imprisonment!***

Remember that he is imprisoned on the Island of Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. John was a faithful witness for Christ, consistently proclaiming the Word of God. Because of his faithfulness; because of his witness for Christ, he was banished to imprisonment on the Island of Patmos.

**Valley Bible Church  
3347 West Avenue J  
Lancaster, California 93536  
[www.valleybible.net](http://www.valleybible.net)**

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### ***3-He relays his instructions!***

What was John instructed to do? He was told to write what he saw and send it to the seven churches of Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. So, John has communicated his circumstances when receiving this vision of Christ. But, that is not all that John highlighted:

**Second remember, that John Communicates the Content of this vision. (Revelation 1:12-16) READ!**

Remember that in these verses, John describes two elements of this vision:

### ***1-John first describes what he saw!***

He saw seven golden lamp stands that are later identified as the seven churches of Asia Minor. Remember that these seven lamp stands emphasize the function of these churches as lights in a dark world. This is an encouragement for us reminding us that as believers we are called to be a living testimony of Christ before the watching world.

### ***2-John also describes the one whom he saw!***

He saw the glorified Christ in the midst of His churches. Remember it is at this point that John goes into a detailed description of our glorified Lord. In fact he offers an eight-fold description of Christ:

- First, he describes Christ's clothing representing the Lord's role as our great high priest.
- Second, he describes Christ's head and hair as white like white wool or snow, which represents the eternal glory and holiness of the Lord.
- Third, he describes Christ's eyes like a flame of fire, which represents the Lord's omniscience; He is all-knowing.
- Fourth, he describes Christ's feet as burnished bronze, still glowing, which represents the Lord as a holy, pure and righteous judge.
- Fifth, he describes Christ's voice like the sound of many waters, which represents the Lord's power and might.
- Sixth, he describes Christ's hand as holding seven stars, which represents the Lord's control over the church.
- Seventh, he describes Christ's mouth out of which comes a two-edged sword representing the Lord's judicial authority and protection over the church.

## Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

- Lastly, he describes Christ’s face as shining like the sun in its strength, which represents the Lord as full of glory.

Wow! What an awesome description of our Lord! John has indicated that Christ is our great High Priest; full of knowledge, wisdom and glory; omniscient; righteous, holy and pure; all-powerful, offering complete control, authority and protection over His church! How did John react to this glimpse of our glorified Lord? That leads us to the third aspect of the vision:

### **Third, John Communicates the Consequences of this vision. (Revelation 1:17-20) READ!**

John immediately reacts to this glimpse of the glorified Christ. Notice his response in verse 17 upon seeing the glory of the Lord. John says, “*And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man.*”

- ***What is John’s reaction to Christ? WORSHIP!***

John had a healthy fear of the Lord. All he could do in response to the glory of the Lord was fall on his face like a dead man. In fact, this is the same response he had before the glorified Christ at the Mount of Transfiguration. Matthew says in **Matthew 17:6**, “*And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid.*” This is not an uncommon response to the glory of God. There are many people in the Scriptures, who respond in a similar manner when they have seen the glory of the Lord.

- In **Daniel 10:8-9**, Daniel says, “*So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.*” Daniel’s response to the glorified Lord was one of reverential fear as he humbled himself before the Lord in worship.
- In **Isaiah 6:5**, Isaiah responds to a vision of the Lord upon His throne by saying, “*Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*”
- Ezekiel also records at least 5 times in which his response was, “I fell on my face.” (cf. **Ezekiel 1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 43:3; 44:4**)
- In **Judges 13:20**, the response of the parents of Samson to the pre-incarnate Christ was that “*they fell on their faces to the ground.*”

Very clearly the Scripture records the natural response of those who have been privileged to see the Lord in His glory. What is that response? Worship! So what should our response be to this glimpse of the glorified Lord? WORSHIP! WORSHIP! WORSHIP!

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

When you ponder the excellencies of Christ? When you think upon the majesty of Christ? When you see the glory of Christ in the Scriptures? Do you have a healthy fear of the Lord? Are you driven to worship?

This was not the only consequence or result of this vision of the glorified Lord.

- *What is Christ's response to John? WORDS!*

### **1-Christ first offers John words of comfort.**

John records those words in **Revelation 1:17-18**, “*And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”*”

The glorified Christ seeks to offer comfort and assurance to John by saying, “Do not be afraid!” WHY? Why was John not to be afraid?

First, John was not to be afraid, because of Christ's Attributes!

In fact, as Christ communicates to John, He identifies two of His attributes that should bring comfort and assurance to John, and his readers, and to us as well.

- *Christ is Ever-lasting!*

Notice that Christ says, “*I am the first and the last.*” Surely John remembered the many “I am” statements of Christ as he recorded them in his gospel. This would bring comfort and assurance to John as he remembers that Christ is Lord! This identity of Christ as “the first and the last” is mentioned again in **Revelation 2:8** and **22:13**. It had been previously used of God in **Isaiah 44:6; 48:12**. It speaks of Christ's eternity. He always has been, He is and He always will be. He is both creator and consummator, the absolute Lord of all history and eternity. Surely, John was comforted upon hearing these words of Christ. He is eternal God! Because, Christ is eternal, we too can have assurance and comfort in Him.

- *He is Ever-existing!*

Christ refers to Himself in 18 as, “*the living One.*” The term, “*the living One*” is often used in the Old Testament to speak of God, however here in **Revelation 1:18** it refers to Christ as being the eternal, uncaused, self-existent One. Remember in **John 5:26**, Jesus said to His Jewish opponents, “*Just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.*” In fact Jesus referred to Himself as the way, the truth and the *life* in **John 14:6**. This term speaks of Christ's essential nature and contrasts Him to the dead or inanimate gods of the world. Christ the Son is the Self-existing God, thus John could take comfort in Him. Likewise, we can have comfort and assurance in our Lord Jesus Christ because He is the self-existing, eternal God of the universe. John was not to be afraid simply because of Christ's attributes.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Second, John was not to be afraid because of Christ's Actions!

There are two actions in particular that are highlighted:

- ***He has been Raised Alive!***

Christ says in verse 18, “*and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.*” This speaks of His resurrection! Christ rose from the dead! We serve a living savior not a dead prophet! Christ is alive! Because Christ has been raised to life, John could take comfort in Him. Thus we also can have comfort and assurance in Christ, because of what He has done. He has risen from the dead! And notice the permanence of this action! Notice the exclamation point that Christ provides. It is not just for a time, but it is *forevermore!* Christ has been raised alive and is alive forevermore! What comfort and assurance this must have brought John and his readers. What comfort and assurance this should bring us. Christ's words of comfort don't just include the resurrection, but He goes on to say that:

- ***He has Ruling Authority!***

Christ concludes verse 18 by saying, “*and I have the keys of death and of Hades.*” The terms *death* and *Hades* are essentially synonymous, with *death* being the condition and *Hades* the place. *Keys* denote access and authority. Jesus Christ has the authority to decide who dies and who lives. He controls life and death. He is victorious over death!

Paul describes how Christ's victory over sin and death is our victory over sin and death in **1 Corinthians 15:55-58**: “*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*” *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.*”

John, like all the redeemed, had nothing to fear, since Christ had already delivered him from death and Hades by His Own death. John, like all the redeemed had nothing to fear because through Christ, we have victory over sin and death. Jesus was all He claimed to be and both His character and work brought John comfort and assurance. Likewise, we too should be comforted by the knowledge that Jesus is God very God. We too should be comforted with the knowledge of His character and work. But, Jesus' response to John did not only involve words of comfort:

### **2-Christ second issues forth a word of command.**

He says in verse 19, “*Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things.*” As we have previously discussed, this is the command for John to write the content of the book of Revelation. Revelation 1:19 is the key structural verse to the entire book as it provides the best outline for the book of Revelation.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **The Outline of the Book of Revelation from Revelation 1:19**

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Subject Matter</b>	<b>Scriptural Statement from 1:19</b>
<b>1</b>	The vision of the Glorified Christ	<i>“The things which you have seen”</i>
<b>2-3</b>	The current situation within Christ’s Church	<i>“The things which are”</i>
<b>4-22</b>	Future End Time Events	<i>“The things, which will take place after these things.”</i>

As we conclude our passage today, we will have completed the first main section of the book of Revelation: “the things which you have seen.” Chapters 2-3 cover the current situation in the seven churches in Asia Minor; “The things which are.” And obviously the main thrust of the content of the book of Revelation in chapters 4-22 has to do with future things: including worship in heaven; the great tribulation; the second coming of Christ; the millennial reign of Christ; the Great White Throne Judgment; and the new heaven and new earth. Christ’s response to John does not just include words of comfort and a word of command. In fact He feels it necessary to make some clarifications.

### **3-Christ third provides a word of clarification:**

He says in verse 20, *“As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lamp-stands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamp-stands are the seven churches.”*

Evidently the majority of the vision was very clear to John, however the terminology of the seven stars and seven lamp-stands must have confused John and he needed some additional clarification. This is indicated by the term “*mystery*,” which speaks of something as secret or hidden. This vision although a literal vision of Christ, contained some symbolic images. While most of the vision was clear to John. Two items were especially confusing. Christ clarifies what these two items represent.

- First He clears up the mystery of the seven stars.

The seven stars as we have previously mentioned are the seven angels of the seven churches. Remember that these are not literal angels, but the term is best translated, “messengers.” Christ is emphasizing that these seven stars are the primary messengers of the seven churches in Asia Minor or in other words their pastors/teaching elders.

- Second He clears up the mystery of the seven lamp stands.

These are very clearly stated as representing the seven churches in Asia Minor. This clarification is necessary as Christ moves on in chapters 2 and 3 to command John to write to each of these churches individually regarding their spiritual situation.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### CONCLUSION:

Certainly John has provided us with an awesome picture of Christ as he describes the circumstances, content and consequences of this vision from Christ. But, what should our response be? How should we respond to this picture of our glorified Lord?

1-We should be moved to reflect on and ponder this description of our Lord that John has given us in Revelation 1!

2-We should be motivated to think about what our glorified Lord is really like!

3-We should see Christ as He really is: holy, righteous, all-knowing, all-powerful, completely sovereign, eternal, self-existent, and full of glory!

4-We should strive to imitate the character of Christ as best we can (Ephesians 5:1)!

5-We should take comfort and assurance in the character and work of our Lord!

6-We should be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of our Lord!

7-We should respond as John did in Revelation 1! We should be driven to Worship!

May God give us the grace to see Christ as He really is and respond appropriately!