



### 3. John in the Spirit - Revelation 1:9-12.

In this first chapter of Revelation, John describes to us how Jesus appeared to him while he was in exile on the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea.

Patmos was a Roman penal colony, an island approximately 4 miles by 8 miles, rocky and fairly harsh and inhospitable at that time. John was there because he was a Believer. He was also a Church Leader and well known to the seven churches in Turkey to whom Jesus would speak directly (**Revelation 2:1-3:22**).

The Roman Authorities saw the Believers as subversive in that they would not conform to the cult of Emperor Worship (every citizen was ordered to revere the current Emperor as a god) but insisted on worshipping Jesus. John identifies with the readers of this Book of Revelation, both those to whom he wrote directly, and indirectly to us. One day we will meet!, **Revelation 1:9**. John sees himself as the brother of all Believers because that is what the Word of God says he is. And of course so are we, **Romans 8:28-30**.

But he is a brother and a companion in three things,

- suffering,
- the kingdom, and
- patient endurance.

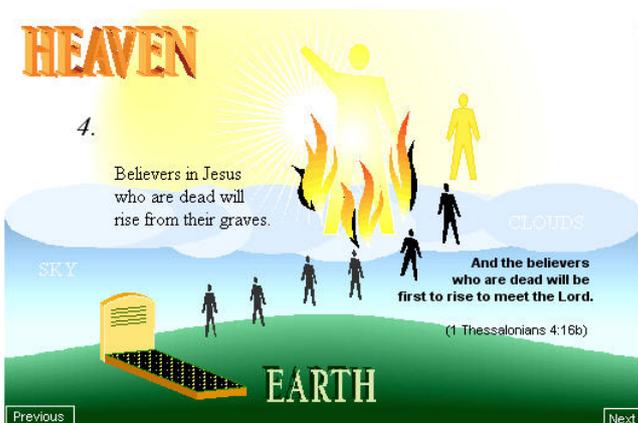
These three are in fact themes that recur throughout not only the Book of Revelation, but in our own Christian lives. We do not really see the first in the Western world, with its apathetic attitude to a relationship with Jesus, but we should be aware of such things in other countries and that such things do happen where you and I live. The more that you and I share the Gospel with our neighbours and in our peer groups, the more we are likely to find opposition. Of course, we should not go looking for such things to happen but as we stand firm for what we know to be the Truth, Jesus Himself, we can expect Satan to be displeased. In Turkey, not very many miles from the location of the churches to whom this letter is addressed, three Believers were held, tortured and murdered for being just that – Believers.

A Muslim, a Hindu or a Buddhist who becomes a Christian will definitely be rejected by their families, in some cases treated as if they do not exist or have died (funerals are often held for them), and in some cases, they are pursued and killed by members of their own families. There **IS** a difference. Christians do **NOT** serve the same god as other religions! So we need to recognise and not be easily disturbed by all the talk of allah, Buddha, Krishna or any other god (and there are thousands upon thousands of them) being the same as Jehovah Who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and before Whom, one day, **EVERY** knee will bow, **Romans 14:11**.

It has often been said that 'for evil to prevail all that is necessary is that good men do nothing'. Perhaps that should be changed to the following; 'all that is necessary for evil to prevail is that Christians do nothing'. After all, if it were not for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our world, Satan would run riot. It is because of the Presence of God that Satan's designs on the planet and its inhabitants have been thwarted. People will only run to the gods of this world which are no gods at all, while they are seeking thrills and popularity, pleasure and riches. When they recognise the emptiness of what they seek, they then begin to look in the right place.

'But if from there you will seek (inquire for and require as necessity) the Lord your God, you will find Him if you [truly] seek Him with all your heart [and mind] and soul and life'.

**Deuteronomy 4:29 Amp**



However, we must attend to what the Lord teaches us through the Bible. If we maintain our faith and do not compromise, we can expect to suffer to some degree or another, in increasing measure as the Church Age in which we now live draws to a close, yes even in the civilised Western Nations, but more of that later! What is the Church Age? It is the time that began at the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2**) through to the present day and beyond until the

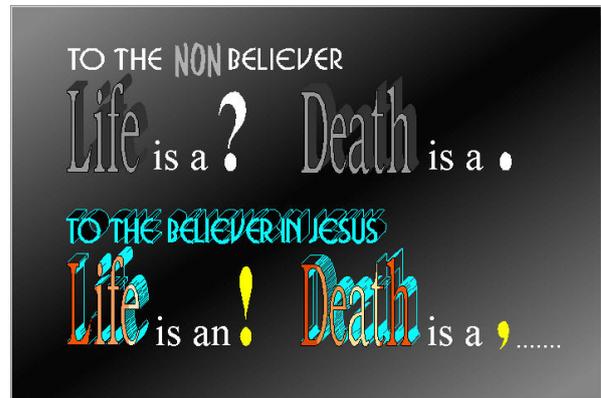
Return of the Lord Jesus when He gathers all the Believers to Him described in Paul's first letter to the Believers at Thessalonica, **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.



All Believers are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are part of a vast family of people, a Holy Nation, a people belonging to God, and as brothers and sisters we have a responsibility to one another to love and care for each other. We belong to a Kingdom that is everlasting, **Colossians 1:13-14**

When we leave this earth it is not in terminal death, for our spirits (the real us) will live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven in which we live in part now on Earth. Death is a welcome transition, the one that we have longed for, and the start of our lives in the eternal Presence of God, **Romans 8:18-25**

However, nobody said that the Christian Life would be easy. On the contrary, our human nature constantly wants to retreat to the things with which it is comfortable – the life it was used to living prior to our becoming Christians – and it doesn't become any easier over time, **Ephesians 6:12 KJV**. Sometimes it seems that the longer we have been a Christian and the more we know and understand about Christianity, the harder it becomes. That is where perseverance comes in! **James 5:2-4**. But perseverance is very hard to practice. It is in trials that we can prove our love for, and belief in God. Perseverance comes from the testing of our faith. Often God will not answer our prayers until the very last minute, but please we can't afford to give up – ever. **God is faithful**. But remember that while we are awaiting our answer, God is moving in other people's lives to help them be the answer to our problem. Our answer to prayer may also be the opportunity for others to come to Him. Paul said this to the elders of the Church at Ephesus as he spoke to them for the last time, 'In everything I have pointed out to you [by example] that, by working diligently in this manner, we ought to assist the weak, being mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said,



"It is more blessed (makes one happier and more to be envied) to give than to receive."  
**Acts 20:35**.

John was on the island of Patmos, a penal colony on a bare outcrop of rocky island in the Aegean. He was there because of his stand as a Christian and because of the testimony of Jesus. John was an overcomer. What does that mean? It meant that he overcame the activities of the enemy, Satan. He was not afraid of Satan, neither was he afraid of what Satan could do to him. His imprisonment was yet another opportunity for John to be close to his Lord Jesus.

When Satan was cast out of Heaven to the earth, he knew that his time was short, and so he went about trying to deceive the very elect of God, the Believers. But for those who trust God, Satan's activities should be ineffective. John had to endure imprisonment on Patmos, but what was that compared to (as we shall see) a personal revelation from Jesus? James, the brother of John, was beheaded (**Acts 12:2**), but what was that compared to being in the Presence of God? Peter was crucified, but what was that compared to being re-united with his Lord? **Revelation 12:7-12**. John had been subjected to persecution as he preached the Word of God amongst the seven churches in Asia, to whom he was again about to write because of the commissioning of Jesus.

It is time for us to take our stand for Jesus. If we are going to reach the world or even our town, village or suburb for Jesus, we must be prepared to say what we believe without embarrassment or apology, without fear or shame. Let's face the fact that Jesus went all the way to Calvary and beyond to the grave and to resurrected life for us, so how should we respond to the world that unjustly nailed Him to the Cross? By

loving them enough to tell them the truth directly, and clearly, so that there can be no misunderstanding. Also being willing to deny our reputation and own life, sacrificing time and energy, **Mark 8:34-38**.

John received this vision on the Lord's Day. This day would have been the first day of the week. It was the day on which the Believers celebrated the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ by meeting together. As they had been taught, they took Bread and shared the cup of wine in remembrance of Jesus and all that He had done for them. He will one day share it with us again, but not until we are together in Heaven with Him, **Mark 14:24-25**.

John was in the Spirit. This is not a dream that John had. It was a vision like that given to Peter (**Acts 10:10**). It means that he was in a state of heightened spiritual awareness by the Holy Spirit, probably after a time of worship. He could both see and hear what was happening, so God could ensure that he would write down all that he saw.

The voice of God is likened to a trumpet blast in other places in the Bible. In **Exodus 20:18**, and in Revelation itself, (**Revelation 4:1**). God's voice has authority and will be heard above every other thing. Even in the still small voice of Elijah's experience, God's voice was unmistakable. We need to understand that God wants a relationship with us, and He will use whatever it takes to capture our attention. We need to hear the voice of God in our lives, in the everyday events and choices we make. If our lives do not depend on it today, then there will come a day when we will depend on being able to hear His voice. In any case, Jesus promises that we shall hear and know His voice, **John 10:1-5 MT**. Do we recognise the voice of Jesus? If we belong to Him, we should, and if we don't then perhaps we need to pay a little bit more attention to His Word and what He says in it! John recognised God's voice. There was no doubt about it. It carried with it an instruction that was unmistakable.

'Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches, ....' **Revelation 1:11**.

God wanted to speak to His people who were in the Churches mentioned; Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Also because He caused this letter of Revelation to them to be preserved and included in the Bible, He also made it clear that He wanted to share His words with us who are alive today. So reading this letter and understanding what is meant in it is as important to us today as it was to those Believers over 1900 years ago. Are we ready to receive what God has to say to us? Some of it may not be pleasant; some of it may be challenging, but if we hear what the Spirit is saying to us, then all of it will be productive in our lives.

This is God's Word to you and to me. It is a very special revelation of things to come that we need to know and understand. It will help us to live our lives in a Godly and Holy way and to be an example through good times and bad to people who are not yet Believers and to those who have become lax in their relationship with their Lord. Are we prepared to listen to His voice? The voice of the world wants to drown out the voice of God. The world in general, hates God and has no understanding of what He has done, nor has it any desire to find out. But individually and little by little over the centuries, the Gospel has begun to take effect. It started at Pentecost, and by the end of the first Century, most of the known world had heard it. By the end of the Church Age, the entire population of the Earth will have heard it, and will have made their individual choices, so what God has to say to us here and now is so important.

The Voice had a beckoning authority about it, and came from behind John. He turned around to see who was speaking to him. God often speaks to us from behind to guide us and to ensure we do what is right:

'Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." <sup>22</sup> Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, "Away with you!"' **Isaiah 30:21-22**

In this case, God was speaking to John from amongst seven golden lampstands in His capacity as the Great High Priest. We shall examine this a little more. The seven lampstands speak of each of the seven Churches to whom this letter is addressed. A Church consists of all the Believers in a locality; it has absolutely nothing to do with a denomination – such things did not exist then and are a man-made division based upon a person's own preference for their way of worship. When God addressed these Churches, He addressed them as the 'ek-klesia' (Greek meaning 'the called out ones').

To be a member of a Church (whether that is the Church in Ephesus, Laodicea, Fleet, London, Perth or any other locality), you **MUST** be a Believer (a 'called out one'). You must have

- 1.** confessed your sinfulness to God (to confess means to agree with God that you are a sinful person),
- 2.** have repented (made a conscious choice with the help of the Holy Spirit to turn away from your sins and to begin living rightly and honestly before God) and
- 3.** to have asked Jesus to be the Lord of your life.

Any religious activity including doing more good things than bad in your life does not mean that you are a Christian – it merely shows good worldly intentions! So this letter was written to Christians.

Each Church is represented by a Lampstand in the Presence of God. The purpose of a Lampstand is to hold a candle that emits light. You and I are called by Jesus to reflect His light as He lives amongst us. We are called the Light of the World by none other than Jesus Himself. Our light as a fellowship of Believers stands in the Presence of Jesus. As we shall see later on, it is possible for the Lampstand to be removed from His Presence.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. **Matthew 5:14-16**

### 3. John in the Spirit - Revelation 1:9-12. - Challenge Questions

Please try to answer all the questions as this will help you to participate more fully in the Group Discussions. Also, you might be able to help others who are finding it difficult to answer the questions. Do not be concerned about getting answers 'wrong'. Everyone will learn something from these sessions (whether they own up to it or not!). You should be wise about sharing some of the answers to personal questions although writing the answers down may help you.

1. **Read the Notes and the Bible Verses** referred to in them. Highlight the points that 'speak' to you and be willing to share with your group

#### **Read Revelation 1:12-20**

2. Who was walking amongst the Lampstands?
3. This son of man looked like a High Priest. What was the role of the High Priest in the Old Testament?
4. Why did that carry through to the New Testament and who is our High Priest?
5. Describe in your own words the person John saw.
6. Explain what you understand by a double-edged sword in Biblical terms. Why does God use this picture in explaining the Armour to be used by a Christian in **Ephesians Chapter 6:10-20**.

