

Revelation



4. Revelation 1:12-20 – The Vision of Jesus.

Each Church is represented by a Lampstand in the Presence of God. But what is the Biblical picture of a Church? The word in English has both a secular and a religious meaning. In secular terms it means those who adhere to a group which holds a different view of doctrine or discipline from another (e.g. in politics, 'a broad church' – those holding the middle ground but overlapping to the left or to the right). However in its religious sense it holds two meanings – 1. a building used for religious meetings, and 2. a group of Christians. Confining ourselves to the second of these, the word can refer to every Christian in the world as a group, or alternatively to any smaller group of Christians. This is clearly accurate as

it was intended, however religious groups which have nothing to do with Christianity have also used this word 'Church' to describe themselves, so we can read 'the Mormon church', or 'the Scientology church'.

But if we wish to be precise about the Biblical meaning of the word 'Church', we must go back to the root of the word in the language in which the word was first used in its context. Here we find that the word is 'ek-klesia' – in Greek lettering of course!) which means those who are called out, or 'the called-out ones'. It refers to the Christian Believers exclusively.

To be part of the Church in its true sense, the following four things must have occurred in our life.

1. We must have recognised that we are a sinful person, and are therefore separated from God, Who is holy
2. We must have confessed that fact to God (to confess means to agree with)
3. We must have repented of our sin (repent means to turn 180° away from it)
4. We must have asked Jesus Christ to take control of our life, recognising that we cannot.

If we describe ourselves as Christian or are even a member of a Church, but have not done these things for ourselves, then we are living a counterfeit life, in other words a lie. For you or me to say that we are say that we are a Christian because we were baptised as an infant, or because we are on the electoral roll of a parish, or because we were brought up in a Christian home, or even because we have done more good things than bad, we are merely fooling ourselves, but not God.

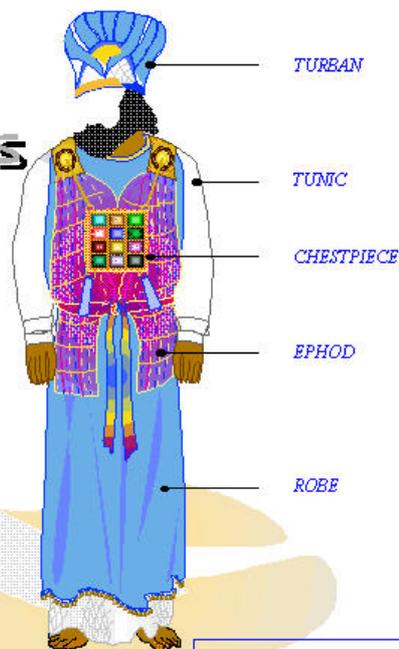
The Bible teaches that ONLY those Believers in a locality are the **Church of Jesus Christ** in that area.

In the middle of these lampstands walked a Person in the form of a man - (someone like a Son of man). This Person was dressed significantly in the Robe of a High Priest. The High Priest wore a full-length Robe with a golden waistband:

Exodus 28:2-8

High priests' garments

The high priest wore white linen underpants, and a long white linen tunic. These were covered by a slightly shorter blue robe fringed with bells and pomegranates. Over these he wore a brightly embroidered cloak called the ephod. Hanging from the ephod was a gold purse inlaid with 12 jewels, one for each tribe of Israel.



The priests' garments. (Exodus 28: 1-39)
(Exodus 39: 1-41)

See also: The Priests' garments

For Believers, Jesus is our High Priest. He has the authority to walk amongst the lampstands of the Churches. He has the right and authority to speak to us, but He does so in love and gentleness, guiding us and helping us as we live out our Christian lives on the Earth, as Ambassadors of God and as His representatives here.

Hebrews 4:14-16.

We have access directly to God because of all Jesus did at the Cross opening up the way for us to enter. We act as mediators between God and the unsaved people representing God to them.

It is none other than Jesus Who walks among the Lampstands watching over His Church zealously and jealously. He approves or disapproves of a Church's actions. If He disapproves, He will let us know, gently, lovingly, but firmly calling for our repentance.

This appears to be a more 'remote' Jesus considering the recent closeness of John when he had put his head on the Master's chest (**John 13:33**); then afterwards seeing a naked Jesus on the Cross, John now recognised that there was a mystery about this situation. We all have times when we think we know Jesus so intimately and then something happens that highlights to us that we hardly know Him at all. There is an eternal depth to Him that we will constantly be drawn to investigate as we want to get to know Him better. All His emotions seem rigidly restrained which were necessary as the triumphant judge of the whole world. He cannot be moved by pity or passion and must be impartial.

Jesus' hair is white like wool as He walks amongst the Lampstands. It is representative of Godly wisdom and His wonderful purity where sin has no attraction to Him now, **John 14:30**.

His eyes are like blazing fire, which speaks to us of the all-seeing, all-knowing God. He knows what we will do before we do it. He was the One present as we were created in our mother's womb, **Psalms 139:13-16**. He authorised our every part and breathed the Spirit of God into us at our new birth. He is the One Who loves us and watches over us as a father watches over his son. He protects us and cares for us, providing the correct environment in which we can grow to be mighty women of God. He knows everything about our lives like the Samaritan woman, **John 4:29**; our thoughts, **Matthew 12:25**. He can see the whole world at one glance and nothing is hidden from His sight. Think about that, no more pseudo Christianity behind closed doors!!

Everything about Jesus is vibrant, even His feet glow as though bronze in a furnace. He appeared to John, and radiated His authority as the Executive Creator of the Universe, and its Sustainer, walking amongst the most important part of His Creation, His Church, His Bride, ensuring Her perfection amidst extreme circumstances. He spoke continuously (the sound of His Voice was like rushing waters), guiding, encouraging, softly, never harshly, but what he said is intended to be heard by us as well! This is also a reminder of what God said to the serpent in the Garden of Eden showing that Jesus will crush his head, **Genesis 3:15**.

In His right hand He held seven stars, **Revelation 1:16**. These represent the seven messengers or angels to the Churches under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Sevenfold signifies completeness, perfection, godliness and wherever it appears in the Bible in reference to God, this number 'seven' speaks of the same thing.

Notice that, coming out of Jesus' mouth was a sharp double-edged sword. The meaning of this sword implies a Thracian sword which was long and probing. It represents the Word of God. This sword also refers to the Sword of the Spirit which is in the weaponry of the Believer. It is the Christian's only offensive weapon, and is the Word of God, **Ephesians 6:14-18**

Jesus' face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance, **Revelation 1:16**. Under the Old Covenant, a person could not see God. Man's frailty could not stand the holiness of God. Death would be the result of seeing God. Moses with whom God was pleased and whom He knew by name asked to see God's glory. God's response was this: "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim My name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ²⁰ But," He said, "you cannot see My face, for no one may see Me and live." **Exodus 33:19-20**

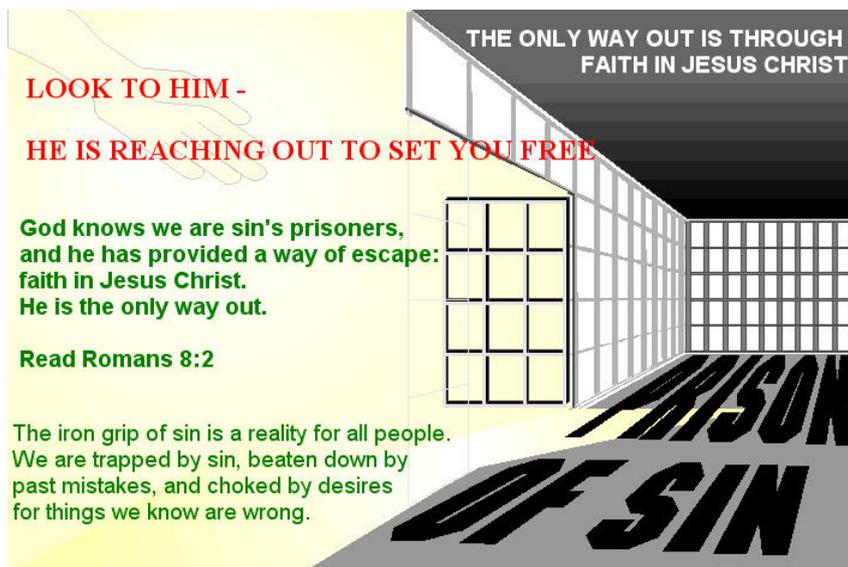
God appeared to Isaiah who was a priest serving in the Temple and his reaction was "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." **Isaiah 6:1-7**

Our inability to stand as sinful human beings before the Presence of the Holy God was never God's final plan. In both of the above cases, God intervened in protection, but now, under the New Covenant, God has permitted us direct access to Him, because He has taken away our sin and nailed it to the Cross of Jesus.

At the time Jesus was alive, a man could be convicted of a crime and sent to prison or imprisoned awaiting execution for more violent crimes. A list of his crimes was written on parchment and nailed to the outside of

the cell. The crimes could only be paid for by restitution of any funds or some other agreed figure, or by someone taking the place of the convicted person. It was extremely rare for people to be set free in any of these ways, but when they were, the parchment would be rolled up and a nail driven through it. Across the face of the parchment would be written 'Paid in full' at which point the person would be released. Of course, that is a picture of what Jesus has done for us in dying on the Cross, **Colossians 2:13-15**

When John saw Jesus, he fell at His feet in respect and awe. What else would we do in the presence of the Living God? Jesus put His right hand on John – the right hand of authority and said to him: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ 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." **Revelation 1:17-18**



Jesus was dead. Without His substitutionary death where He paid the price for us, our sins would not have been forgiven. We would still be imprisoned by Satan just because of our sinful nature and there would be no hope for us. But Jesus' resurrection meant more than just Him going to Heaven, it meant that the keys of death and hell were ripped from Satan, and the control of both of these things are in the hands of Jesus. We are free to follow Jesus and to be released from our prison of sin. The door is open, but it is up to us to choose whether we want to be released!

What John was instructed to write had implications not only for the time when John was alive, but also has implications

for the future up to the end of the Church Age – now and beyond. We need to know this and to be prepared for what the future holds. God does not want us to be ignorant but to be prepared so that we can be part of the times of the end of the Age.

This instruction parallels one given in the Old Testament to Habakkuk, who had asked God a singularly pointed question. (See the Question in Habakkuk 1:12-17). God's answer to Habakkuk began like this:

¹ What's God going to say to my questions? I'm braced for the worst. I'll climb to the lookout tower and scan the horizon. I'll wait to see what God says, how he'll answer my complaint. ²⁻³ And then God answered: "Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run. This vision-message is a witness pointing to what's coming. It aches for the coming—it can hardly wait! And it doesn't lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait. It's on its way. It will come right on time." **Habakkuk 2:1-3 MSG**

Keep your focus on this amazing picture of Jesus as the triumphant King as He walks so confidently through our Churches today holding the keys of death and hell, knowing the amazing future for which He has paid in full.

The next two Chapters are written to the seven Churches individually, but the remaining 19 Chapters refer to the time we are living in now and into the future. Let's be excited about what we will discover!

So where do we as a Church stand before God? Are we listening for His comment as we ask Jesus to show us personally? We are the Church.

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4. Revelation 1:12-20 – The Vision of Jesus – Challenge Questions

Read the Notes and the Bible Verses referred to in them.

1. Highlight the points that 'speak' to you. Be prepared to share in your group.

2. What is your picture of the Church? Do you agree with the notes?

3. Do you think being a member of a Church is important? What would you say to someone who said 'I don't need to go to Church, I am a Christian at home.'?

Read Revelation 2:1-7

4. What do the seven stars represent?

5. What is the Ephesian Church recommended for? **Revelation 2:2-3**

6. From your study of the Book of Acts, can you give some examples of those who claimed to be Apostles but were not?

7. Can you give some history about the Ephesian Church? **Acts 19 and 20**

8. How would you be able to identify someone or something that would lead you astray in your Christian Life? Can you give an example?

9. What is spoken against the Ephesian Church?

10. What was the Church to do about this problem? If they refused what would be the result?

11. Who were the Nicolaitans? What did they believe? Why does Jesus hate the practices of the Nicolaitans? Why does that have application in today's society?

12. Write a description of the love you had for the Lord Jesus when you first became a Christian. Is this love any different **now** from the day you became a Christian?

13. Think of three things that would be helpful to a new Christian in order to assist them grow more easily.

14. Why do you think it is important for us to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Churches in our country today? What do you think He is saying to our Church?