

## In the Spirit on the Lord's Day – He is Risen!

Revelation 1:8-18

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC: Easter May 12, 2020

**He is risen!** The banners at our church says the Lord Jesus has risen, now reigns, and will return.

1 Cor 15 says '*Christ has **indeed been raised** from the dead... he must **reign** until he has put all his enemies **under his feet**. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*'<sup>1</sup> As we hear about all the deaths on the news, many are not well in this pandemic, but there's **good news in God's Word: Jesus is alive and well!** And His death for sin and resurrection gives hope for life in this sin-plagued world. He is risen! Those were the words to the disciples who were in lockdown and in fear in their homes in Lk 24, it says '*the Lord has risen indeed.*'<sup>2</sup> Today we'll see the risen Lord in Rev 1.

The context is a lonely solitary believer unable to be at church. It had been many Sundays for John in lonely exile on the isle of Patmos (think Alcatraz) – the ultimate lockdown. John was in total isolation from God's people as a prisoner of the Roman empire but he was still in worship on the Lord's Day. He was met by the glorious victorious Christ in a special way on that day. John was alone, but not alone as Christ taught him day before Good Friday.

And John received a message about the future, including plagues to come to this world, but he saw the living Lord exalted and enthroned and in control. John may be in solitary confinement but Jesus is the Sovereign Conqueror.

The Son, His Father, and His Spirit have a word for us.

**1:8:** "*I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the **Almighty**."*<sup>9</sup> *I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*<sup>10</sup> *I was **in the Spirit on the Lord's day**, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet*<sup>11</sup> *saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*<sup>12</sup> *Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,*<sup>13</sup> *and in the midst of the lampstands one like a **son of man**, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.*

<sup>14</sup> *The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,*<sup>15</sup> *his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the **roar of many waters**.*<sup>16</sup> *In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a **sharp two-edged sword**, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*<sup>17</sup> *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "**Fear not, I am the first and the last,***<sup>18</sup> ***and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*** [He is risen!]

Let's pray. Almighty God, you are the beginning and the end. You declare the end from the beginning. You're in charge and we're not, as you've made clear to us in these times. You're God and we're not. You're in full control. We come in the Spirit this Lord's day to hear His Word like a trumpet and a roaring waterfall. Lord Jesus, you are holy, you're a consuming fire, your Word can pierce our hearts and cut us both ways. Heal us and help us not to fear. Give us patience to endure. You're risen indeed and you hold the keys. You hold the stars in your right hand and lay that hand on us to hold us fast. And because you live, we can face tomorrow. Because you live, fear can be gone, we know you hold the future, because you live. In your name we pray. Amen

God is a Trinity, this message will be another look at **the Trinity and Easter**.

1. **God the Father is almighty over history (v. 8)**
2. **God the Spirit helps the lonely (v. 9-12)**
3. **God the Son is risen in glory (v. 13-18)**

### **1. God the Father is almighty over history.**

v. 4 addresses churches and starts with grace and peace from God who is and was and is to come. v. 6 says the Son '*made us a kingdom, priests to his God and **Father**...*' In v. 8 the Father says: '*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*' says the Lord God, "*who is and who was and who is to come, the **Almighty**.*" That phrase is also in v. 4 '*him who is and who was and who is to come,*' then v. 5 adds '*and from Jesus...*' So this is the Father who's Almighty and over all from beginning to end. Alpha and Omega = first and last letters in Greek alphabet, from A-Z and everything in-between, God is controlling all. Jesus shares these titles.

Most scholars think John wrote this in the 90s AD when Emperor Domitian was in power. That emperor insisted he himself be called 'Lord and God.'<sup>3</sup>

One of the emperor's titles was **autokrator** (*autos=oneself, krator=ruler*). 'he was calling *himself the sole ruler* of the Roman Empire. But [God's title in v. 8 is the Lord God, the **pantokrator**] *All-Ruler, panta="all", krator="ruler" ... to say...' Domitian, you may think you're the sole ruler, you may think you are the one in charge, but [the Lord is the true only **Almighty**] **Pantokrator...** the One who truly rules not only the roman empire, but also the universe!<sup>4</sup>*

**What's our vision in these times?** It needs to start with the vision John had in Rev 4, where he saw a throne in heaven and One seated on a throne with dazzling wonder and crashing thunder. And the angels cry out '*holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come*' (v. 8, same terms). He's the Creator and Orchestrator of all, in total control as He holds the scroll of history. Our big God is large and in charge of all things big and small. No pandemic makes Him panic or pace in heaven, He's on the throne

### **No press daily press briefings in heaven or emergency strategy sessions**

In Rev 1, v. 4, John and churches needed to hear grace and peace from Him.

In John's context, Christians were fearful, unable to meet as they did before. Not only could they no longer gather in the temple like the Acts 2 church, it was destroyed by Rome, not one stone left on another. And no livestream in the catacombs, many lost lives, but Rome wasn't sovereign, the Almighty is

3/31 WND headline: 'Americans think God is sending serious message with coronavirus...The survey commissioned by Joshua Fund found 44% believe the crisis is a "**wake-up call** for us to **turn back to faith in God**" and also "signs of coming judgment" ...there is a feeling in the country "that Americans need to embrace faith and return to religion"... "Americans in near full lockdown are...turning to God, the Bible and Christian sermons for answers, some of them for the first time. That may be the most important silver lining in this crisis so far." ...29% believe the crisis suggests "We are living in what the Bible calls the 'last days.'" It found 22% of self-identified non-Christian respondents and 40% of Christians said the crisis has resulted in more interest in God and spiritual matters...[many] to start reading the Bible and listen to Bible teaching and Christian sermons online, even though they usually don't; search online for teaching on Bible prophecy and God's future for mankind; and/or engage in more spiritual conversations'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>*Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for **the time is near**.*

It's near not based on what we see on the news but based on what we see in the NT. God's curse has been on this world since OT times but in judgments there's grace and blessing on ones who hear and heed Christ's wake-up call.

Look at Rev 3 for that very language, wake-up: <sup>3</sup> *Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and **repent**. If you will not **wake up**, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.* So we won't know the hour He'll come, but the wake-up call is for us to repent.

I'm not a prophet or a son of a prophet, my dad and I both serve under non-profit ministries. But the prophet John does have things to say about plagues

- Look at Rev 9:20 and I take it as parallel to what Jesus said in Lk 21 about plagues to the end, but they're not the end. Instead of turning from sin when the plagues were lifted or didn't take their own lives, as the crisis stopped, Rev 9:20 '*The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent** of the works of their hands...*'
- Look at ch 16, and there's worse plagues, 16:9 '*They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.*'
- Now go back to ch 3, and it's important to see it's Christ's love that moves Him to move His people to repent. 3:19 *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.* It's loving of God to knock, to get our attention and repentance to avoid eternal plagues

### **Repent, turn from your sin to the Savior's love**

So go back to ch 1 but think back to plagues in biblical history. There were plagues on Egypt and miracles – Egyptians said '**this is the finger of God.**'<sup>16</sup> In Egypt each time God lifted the plague it says Pharaoh hardened his heart. That's the sad reality is when this coronavirus plague lifts, **many hearts will be hardened** again. Listen to what God told Pharaoh in Ex 9:14 '*I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth.* <sup>15</sup> *For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth.* <sup>16</sup> *But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.* <sup>17</sup> *You still set yourself against my people...*' ESV '*You are still exalting yourself...*' (Ex 9 explains some of the Egyptians feared the word of God and heeded it and God was merciful).

### **God gives grace to the humble who respond in faith**

Isa 19:22 shows God<sup>7</sup> uses plagues to save: *The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them...Egyptians... will worship... The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "**Blessed be Egypt my people...***

### **Blessing by repenting. Turn, trust what He did on the cross for you**

I've heard of one related to a family in this church God saved in this crisis!

In Lk 21 Jesus told His disciples about future persecution and plagues or pestilences as part of what '*will be your opportunity to bear witness.*'<sup>8</sup>

**The U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams** has had opportunity for that in his role in this crisis. He said just last week 'I often think about the many places in the Bible where we're told that God doesn't put you where you're going to be comfortable. God puts you where you need to be. It's a very difficult situation that I am in and I have to remind myself of that and I often tell people...1 Peter 5:7 "Cast your anxiety on Him for He cares for you." I think it's important that people remember that because people are scared. People are anxious. They need to know that there is a larger plan... and amidst all of this tragedy there are some tremendous opportunities...'<sup>9</sup>

## **2<sup>nd</sup> point: God the Spirit helps the lonely.**

Rev 1:9: *I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* <sup>10</sup> *I was **in the Spirit on the Lord's day** ...*

You get the impression reading v. 9-10 John is remembering his brothers in Christ (as he calls himself that in v. 9) and is missing fellowship with them. But he had **the Comforter**, and what Paul calls *the fellowship of the Spirit*.<sup>10</sup>

And he also remembered his Lord told He would be alone yet not alone, and the promise: '**another Helper to be with you forever...the Spirit of truth**...'<sup>11</sup>

We also heard in the last message '**the Spirit helps us in our weakness**,' that context includes loneliness and fearfulness.<sup>12</sup> Some of you are just a 1 or 2 of you this Lord's Day, Paul experienced many more week of that, he wrote '*Only Luke is with me*' (2 Tim 4). In his death row cell, Philippians talks about '*the help of the Spirit of Jesus*' and us who '*worship by the Spirit*...'<sup>13</sup>

John was helped in a special way by the Spirit to worship, he was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's Day' (that's the Day the Lord Jesus rose from the dead). That's what Easter celebrates, and **every Sunday we celebrate He is risen!** The early church couldn't gather in buildings for a couple more centuries, but in homes or wherever they could they worshipped in the Spirit this day.

An ancient Christian writing called **The Didache**, written around the same time as Revelation) said 'every Lord's Day do ye gather yourselves together ... and give thanksgiving ... for I am a great King, saith the Lord ...' (14.1).

10 years after the **Didache Ignatius** wrote 'Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath...let every friend of Christ **keep the Lord's Day as...resurrection day**, the queen and chief of all the days [of the week].. on which our life both sprang up again, and the victory over death was obtained in Christ ...'<sup>14</sup>

For 2000 years Christians all around the world worship on Sunday mornings the Lord who rose that first resurrection Sunday morning. The Sabbath in scripture is Saturday, but Jesus rose on and the church was born on Sunday (Pentecost Sunday). They met on the first day of the week (Acts 20). Even when John was all alone on the Lord's Day, he was in worship on this day.

In Jn 4 a **Samaritan woman** asked Jesus if worship needed to be in a certain place (their mount vs. Jewish temple mount). Jesus told her a day is coming, and has come, when worship isn't about a place, it's about the person. '**God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.**'

God is Spirit and the Spirit is God. The Spirit inspired all scripture and He speaks as the Word of Christ goes forth in worship. Look at Rev 2:18 "*And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God...*

<sup>29</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

So as the Son of God speaks, **the Spirit is speaking to the churches. 7x** in Rev 2-3 Jesus speaks and says this is what the Spirit says (1 and same God).

14:13 *I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Blessed..."* [then John hears] "**Blessed indeed," says the Spirit**... What a blessing to lonely John in exile! The Spirit helped him in his tribulation and isolation and the Spirit helps us.

Like John away from our brethren we can still worship in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, hear Christ speak in His Word, and the Spirit shows His glory.

**Which takes us to our...**

### 3<sup>rd</sup> and final point: God the Son is risen in glory

On Good Friday Jesus was stripped of his robe and given a **crown of thorns**.

In Rev 1:13 John sees the Son of Man with a long robe and golden sash. A **priest** would wear long robes, a **king** would wear a golden sash, and in v. 19 Jesus speaks as a **prophet**. As the Son of God He's **Prophet, Priest, and King**

In v. 14 the hair on his head once covered in blood is now white as snow. Those eyes once swollen from being beaten, and closed in death, are now aglow like fire. In v. 15 His feet once shredded by nails as he died are now like perfect bronze and John falls at those feet thinking he's about to die! At Calvary, the parched mouth of Jesus said in weakness '*I thirst,*' asking for water. The end of v. 15 says now His voice is stronger than many waters.

**You can't ignore His voice**, it's roaring like many waters, tsunami, Niagara. Let it drown out all other competing voices, or it will take you down. In v. 16 the hand they nailed to the cross to hold it in place is holding the stars. At the cross as He died, the sun went dark, now His face is shining like the sun.

In v. 16 the mouth that John heard say '*it is finished*' as He died pierced to a cross, that mouth now speaks with power to pierce others, like in Acts 2. If His Word hasn't pierced and saved you, trust Christ before He judges you!

Heb 4 says **His Word is like the surgeon's scalpel** that can dissect '*soul and spirit,*' it's '*sharper than any two-edged sword... discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*'

**His eyes of fire** can burn through and see you in your innermost sin and the end of v. 16 says His face is like the blazing sun, a consuming fire. But if you repent, this convicting vision also has a comforting voice for us. This same apostle John had seen that before. The gospels say Jesus on a Mount was transfigured before Peter James and John, it says '*his face shone like the sun ...dazzling... the disciples... fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear."*

Same response in Rev 1 (on his face) then '*fear not, I was dead, I am risen.*' Same words the angels said to John and the disciples after Jesus had risen. 'Fear not, He is risen!' He is risen indeed! He rises and says '*fear not, rise.*'

In v. 17 in spiritual shock and awe John falls before this dramatic traumatic glory, immobilized and paralyzed. But the Savior doesn't leave John there!

The right hand that holds the stars in v. 16 reaches to pick up this trembling servant. The mouth that in v. 16 has a sword speaks to John words of peace.

The feet like burning bronze in v. 15 didn't incinerate John when he fell at them. The eyes like flames of fire in v. 14 didn't consume him, they saw his heart and his fears and the voice like many waters in v. 15 now soothes fear.

- the One who walked on the waters in a storm and said "*It is I, fear not...*"

- who also said His eye is on the sparrow and '*not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, you are more valuable than many sparrows!*' Jesus cares for little things, and your cares aren't little to Him, He values and loves you, so FEAR NOT

This is what John needed to see in his isolation and this is what we need to see in ours. It's so natural for us to focus on ourselves. But **the risen King Jesus** lifts up John's eyes from his uncertain future on this rocky island to Christ the solid rock we can stand on. Christ holds the future in His hand. The ancients thought stars determined their destinies, but Jesus holds the stars in His right hand of power as sovereign over destiny, risen, reigning!

**Ps 8** says **He made stars, the work of His fingers**, how majestic is His name! He whose hand holds stars and helps John says in **Jn 10:28** '*I give ... eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*' There's **eternal life** and **eternal security** for all in **Christ's hands**, so fear not! If His right hand is on you like in **v. 17** you have His favor, blessing, power.

**<sup>17</sup> ...Fear not, I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup> and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.**

We don't need to fear because **Jesus conquered death**. He's the Sustainer of all life, and because He holds death's keys He's the Savior who can set free.

**If you've never turned from your sin** and trusted Jesus as Lord to free you, I pray this vision makes you bow and confess He is Lord to the glory of God. He's eternally sovereign over when we live and die, when He turns the key is when we die, and He's in control and in charge of all our life till that day.

Steve Green sings: 'all the things that have kept you away, that keep you defeated day after day after day, the heartache that nobody sees, that eats at your soul like a cruel disease. He who set the captives free, It is He, it is He who holds your keys ... He holds the keys'<sup>15</sup>

May this vision of the risen Christ in His glory be the key with our fears of today or fears of the future. May the glory of our sovereign Lord help us with our struggles. And may His blazing glory like the sun in its strength be the center of our universe that everything else revolves around, in worship on the Lord's day and all of life. He is reigning, returning, and He is risen!

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20-26 NIV.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 24:34 KJV, NKJV.

<sup>3</sup> James Hamilton, *Revelation*, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, "Four Views of the End Times" DVD, session 2 (Rose Publishing).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wnd.com/2020/03/americans-think-god-sending-serious-message-coronavirus/>

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 8:2, 8:19.

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 19:22-25 NIV.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 21:11-13.

<sup>9</sup> SOURCE?

<sup>10</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:14.

<sup>11</sup> John 14:16.

<sup>12</sup> Romans 8.

<sup>13</sup> Philippians 1:19, 3:3.

<sup>14</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 62–63. [note: some date this writing 108 AD, the Didache 95-100 AD?]

<sup>15</sup> Steve Green, "He Holds the Keys."