

The Book of Revelation

Introduction

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In studying Revelation we come across people with very different views and interpretations of this book. Some are Preterist (past), others are Historicist (Present), Idealist (Timeless), or Eclectic (a mixture of them all). There can't be four interpretations of the Word of God; confusion is not what God intended. It is our intention to read through the Chapters verse by verse as Isaiah says in Chapter 28 'Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little there a little' and ask the Holy Spirit to show us what He wants us to know.

The Apostle John, his home and his imprisonment

You remember that Jesus, looking down from the cross saw his mother and His disciple John standing next to her. You also remember the scripture in which Jesus said;

John 19: 25-27

Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother and His mother's sister Mary the wife of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the Disciple standing by, He said unto His mother, woman behold your son, Then said He to the Disciple behold your Mother.

John cared for Jesus' mother for the rest of her life, and although John's ministry led him to travel extensively it is believed that towards the end of Mary's life they both moved to Ephesus. There is much Early Church History written about the location of Mary's tomb that we need not go into here but the fact that the only Church constructed worldwide in Mary's name was the Church of St. Mary in Ephesus leading to the belief that she ended her days in Ephesus and not in Jerusalem as some suppose.

My wife and I have stood in Mary's three roomed house high on a hill called Mount Ayasuluk above the city of Ephesus, within sight of the Temple of Artemis in the deep valley below, but beyond the notice of the Roman authorities. This hallowed humble home even now has a reverence and a peace that is hard to explain. We wanted to stay in that moment of wonder and Biblical history for a while but the hustle and bustle of tourists and the loud calling of the tour guides of all nationalities to get us back on the coaches made that impossible, but that brief moment is still with us.

In the year 95AD the Apostle John the beloved disciple of Jesus was banished to the open air prison on the island of Patmos. He was arrested for his faith and the continued preaching about Jesus Christ and the way of salvation. At the decree of Emperor Domitian John, along with some of the most dangerous criminals found in Rome was banished to this small desolate, outcrop of rock called Patmos, an island about 30 miles from the coastline of Asia Minor in the blue waters of the Aegean Sea. John's fellow prisoners were of the worst kind, criminal and political offenders that the authorities had given up on and now abandoned to Patmos from where there was no escape. As the ship neared the dock the command for the prisoners to get up and move towards the gangway that led to the dock was shouted out. Herded like cattle with the crack of whips and the screams of the Roman soldiers and the abusive objections from their human cargo they were handed over to the merciless prison guards who had seen all this before.

It seemed almost impossible that The Apostle John, the beloved of Christ who had walked and talked with Jesus, had seen His miracles, ate and drank with Him, seen Him die on a Roman Cross, now the overseer of most if not all the young churches struggling to get established was one of these prisoners and who no doubt had felt the sting of the guards whip many a time.

Common Criminals and Political Offenders.

When the prisoners disembarked from the ship, they were divided into two groups: Common Criminals and Political Offenders and these groups were housed on different parts of the island. The Common criminals were scourged and beaten and under the constant gaze of the Roman soldiers who punished them for the slightest wrong doing. The Political Offenders were treated with a little more respect and allowed to roam the barren deserted island. However they were not provided with clothes, food, water or shelter. Many prisoners died of starvation, exposure, and illness of all types. Most sources agree John lived to be about 100 years old and was the only one of the original 12 apostles to die a natural death but how was it that John was caught up in this dead end situation classed as a Political Offender and banished from society?

After Paul was beheaded in Rome in the year 67AD, the Apostle John's leadership role in the Churches in Asia Minor became far more visible. The local churches, some still struggling with false teaching from outsiders, losing their first love for Christ, being exploited instead of being spiritually encouraged, and were not taught the truth of God and therefore were struggling to get fully established in the Gospel. For over 25 years John was responsible for their spiritual wellbeing and he guided these churches from his hilltop home in Ephesus. About the age of 90 years John experienced a bolt from the blue. Suddenly and totally unexpectedly he was arrested, shackled and taken to Rome to stand trial before the Emperor Domitian as a political offender. I do not propose to spend much time in detailing with the history of this Emperor except to say that according to historians this man became mad. His exploits with young boys, incest, torture of the most horrible kind, and forcing of prisoners to fight gladiators and wild beasts in an arena were just some of his wicked exploits. By the year 93 AD he declared himself lord and god. He had temples built in his honour and required all peoples to drop to their knees in worship when he passed by. Those who did not obey were imprisoned, sent to the arena or banished to the prison on Patmos. An attempt was made on his life. He was hacked to death and his 15 year rule was marked with such horrendous atrocities that the Senate issued an official edict that damned the evil emperor's rule and called for the eradication of his memory, the demolition of his temples, all buildings and statues that had been constructed in his honour.

I mention the short history of this tyrant to show the mercy of God upon John who had been protected from a self-appointed man who now possessed the power to take life at a whim. Many political changes about that time allowed a few years of peace but that came to an abrupt halt when Trajan became emperor who began to persecute Christians directed in particular to the Asia Minor churches who were under the leadership of John. Unknown to John, God had a very special work for him to do that would influence every man woman and child for centuries to come. Sometimes we are unaware of God's plans for us when our life is completely in a mess, but we trust in God to bring about His will for us knowing He has everything under control no matter what life looks like.

After 29 years as overseer of the churches in Asia Minor the last of the 12 apostles who had lived in relative peace and unhindered in his work from up on that hill top and deeply respected by all who knew him, there came a knock on his door and soldiers came in and interrupted his world. They arrested him bound him and put him on a ship to stand trial in Rome before one of the worst monsters of that time. John was loaded onto a ship that would take him to a prison on the island of Patmos. This would be very tough on any man but John was now a frail old man. Early history writers tell us the island was barren, with no shelter from the hostile environment, no vegetation, no fresh water so they were left to fend for themselves. As John explored the island he came across a cave halfway to the top, this cave became his home while he lived in exile. This cave still exists today but sometime in history a small church has been built close by and is managed by local monks. They tell the story that it was in this cave that John was given a vision of the exalted Jesus and He revealed the 22 chapters of the Book of Revelation. For some 1,600 years the cave has been known as the Cave of the Revelation and there is no logical reason to dispute this claim.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

With all the mystifying symbols, striking images throughout, many people despair of understanding the book of Revelation, but Revelation is the end of a wonderful story that started in Genesis Chapter 1, and like all good story's it does have a happy ending for those that love God and His Son Jesus.

Revelation Chapter 1v1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His Angel unto His servant John.

This first verse immediately injects an urgency that makes the reader stop and question. *Things which must shortly come to pass. What things, how soon will these things be, Will I see them?* Right at the beginning God flags up a warning, He says take note, watch what I am saying. The book of Revelation is not a collection of puzzles or cryptograms to amuse us while we wait for the dinner to cook, neither is it a series of events to frighten our congregations with. God in His great love and mercy is showing us what will happen in the end-times and gives us an opportunity to get ourselves ready for Him so we will not be caught up in His wrath when Jesus comes again.

Verse one is the reason for the book and also confirms from whom the revelation comes. The Greek for Revelation is *apokalupsis* which means to unveil or uncover. It is like pulling back a curtain to show that which is hidden so all can see the same thing. When relating to a person it denotes a tangible presence. Within the first few words of this verse we are told who is being revealed, it is Jesus Christ and the revelation was given to Jesus Christ by His Father God. It was not given directly to John. The reason for this Revelation was to show unto His servants in the Church Age, things and events which must come to pass leading up to the time of the return of Jesus. These events will continue from John's day right through the end of Church Age and beyond. Note also before God sent it He added His signature to signify how important this message is The Revelation letter is signed off by God Himself and He gave it to Jesus His Son who sent it by His Angel to His servant John. John's mission was to pass this Revelation on to the seven churches in Asia which were typical of the all the churches both in that time and in the church age to come. So what are these things and events that are so important that the trinity, together with John and an Angel are deeply involved in to bring to us God's servants on earth?

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|---|-----------|
| 1. Events of the whole Church Age | Rev; 1-3 |
| 2. Events in heaven | Rev; 4-5 |
| 3. Events of the future tribulation of Daniel's 70 th week | Rev; 6-19 |
| 4. Events of the millennium | Rev; 20 |

If Almighty God thought it important enough to send John 22 chapters of information regarding His son's return and the events surrounding that return, the things we should look out for, signs that will affect those who are on the earth, don't you think we should study what He says whatever it may cost us. He knew what it would take to dig deep into His word so much so He encourages us to do so with blessings:

Chapter 1v3

Blessed is he who reads and they who hear the words of this Prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.

Both those who read and those who hear are promised a blessing if they practise what is written in this great book. Even those who could not read in the early churches but listened to the Bible readers were blessed. As a boy sitting under my grandfather's ministry I don't

remember hearing much preaching on the book of Revelation but every now and again parts of it were read to me. Sitting under my father's ministry years later we were left in no doubt about Revelation and the return of Christ because my father had a greater revelation than his father and was able to teach us and enable us to make ourselves ready and look for Christ's return. I believe that today there is a greater revelation from heaven that deep in the spirit of man some understanding has been given. Why has God Himself asked us to read and understand Revelation? He tells us in verse 3... **THE TIME IS AT HAND**

Revelation. Who else had Revelation?

*The **Revelation** of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.*

Paul also had revelation from God in Galatians.

Explaining that the false 'gospels' the Galatians were listening to from others were not of God. He said he did not receive the true Gospel from man nor was it taught him he says;

Galatians 1v12

*For I neither received it of man neither was I taught it but by the **Revelation** of Jesus Christ.*

Paul was saying that the true Word of God that was hidden from him was slowly but surely revealed or uncovered to him; the cover had been taken off, or the curtain was drawn back by God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to show the mind of God. That is the route the book of Revelation was given, it is God's Word and He gave it to His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit Revealed it to Paul, The trinity is involved all the time.

St Paul again confirms that knowledge of the scriptures comes by revelation.

Ephesians 3v3

*How that by **Revelation** He (Christ) made known unto me the mystery (of the Cross being the New Covenant)*

Romans 16v25

*Now unto Him Who is of power to establish you according to my Gospel and Preaching of Jesus Christ according to the **Revelation** of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began.*

Paul was able, because of Revelation he had about the new Covenant through the Cross, to share that mystery which had been hidden since the world began.

Revelation chapter 1. Verse 4.

John to the seven Churches which are in Asia; Grace be unto you and Peace from Him which is and which was and which is to come and from the Seven Spirits which are before the throne and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness and the first begotten of the dead and the prince of the kings of the Earth, unto Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

John writes to the seven churches that are in Asia Minor under the prompting of the Holy Spirit. But there were more than seven churches that John was responsible for, why these particular seven. These seven churches represent the Church universal of all time and of all places throughout the Church Age. In the Bible the number seven represents totality (perfect completion) and it is the sign of God's covenant relationship to mankind and especially the Church in the Church Age. Also I believe God chose these seven churches because they were each typical of the thousands of Churches, missions, house churches, Temples, Mosques, or

any other group of people gathered together no matter what the denomination that brought them together. John's letter left no doubt who the letter was from, no-one other than Almighty God could be described as "which is, which was, and which is to come".

The Salutation.

John starts his letter and addresses it to the seven Asian churches and offers Grace and Peace from none other than God Himself and mentions these particular Churches under the prompting of the Holy Spirit. What Jesus had to say could not be confused with any other church and man would have no chance to cloud the message from God and bring confusion.

Who are the seven Spirits which are before the Throne? (Note: some commentators refer to Is. 11:2.) There is only one Holy Spirit and He is the third Person in the Trinity. The oldest manuscripts omit the word 'are' from the verse we are looking at and reads as though the Holy Spirit is *in* the throne, not on it that is God's place but the Holy Spirit is in His exalted position *in* the throne. We also know that the number seven represents God's perfection and completeness. Perfection as we know it is not to be compared to the perfection of God and the Holy Spirit, we could not stand in His perfection, and we would be demoralised by His completeness. So the Holy Spirit in His sevenfold completeness, perfectness and universal energy stands in the presence of the throne corresponding through John the word of God to the seven churches in Asia being typical of the churches in this church age. You and I being a part of this church age must receive this Revelation and take it to heart.

God did not want His all-important end-time message to be shrouded in doubt, confusion, double meaning or man's own interpretation and opinions. So the Salutation or Introduction makes it clear to whom this message was for, and from whom this message came, the confirmation that Jesus is the Prince of the kings of the earth and has God's authority in this matter. It also confirms that it is His Son Jesus who loved the world so much as to wash us from our sins in His own Blood to bring us eternal life at the cross. Then He goes further, proudly explaining that His Son's death makes us kings and priests unto God.

The oldest manuscripts read He has made us a 'kingdom' or He made us 'to be a kingdom' I like this because in Exodus 19v6 speaks of a 'kingdom of priests' and 1 Peter 2v9 speaks of a 'Royal Priesthood', Jesus told the soldiers and His disciples in the garden just before His arrest that His Kingdom was not of this world. So the cross has elevated us to a kingly and priestly position with Christ in the millennial Kingdom thank you Jesus for the Cross.

The Theme of the Book of Revelation

Behold He comes with clouds and every eye shall see Him and they also which pierced Him and all the kindred's of the earth shall wail because of Him, even so Amen.

The word 'behold' means 'Look intensely' not glance at, and the Bible tells us to look for the coming of Jesus...intensely! The true born again believer should be looking up in his heart having developed a longing and anticipation and believing in his heart that at any moment the sky will part and the Rapture will bring Jesus and Saints together. If you believe what the scriptures say about this event you will live your life accordingly so as not to be left behind. As one Pastor said, If you aren't looking you aren't going!

And every eye will see Him. Jew and Gentile and all the tribes of the earth, those who took part in His death, dictators like Stalin, Hitler, bullies like Husain, Arafat, yes every eye will see Him and bow the knee before Him.

I mentioned my Grandfather earlier. He did not know in his day how 'every eye will see Him' I'd love to have asked him how he thought that might happen, he would be amazed if he were alive today to see the wonders of television. We do know now, in our short lifetimes of 60 to 80 years we have computers, portable cine cameras that can go into a man's pocket or a ladies handbag. What you do on your computer we can soon do on a pair of glasses! All pocket telephones can take photos of very high quality and can be sent around the world in seconds. We have television stations that literally cover the world and as we have seen in the news

items anything that happens of importance is shown on TV's in people's homes worldwide within minutes. Even God has waited for such a time as this.

It is God's intention for the people of the earth to look and see the victorious return of His Son Jesus coming with, not in, not on but with clouds, which represents great numbers of Saints. Can you imagine the whole sky filled with the brightness and the glory of Jesus and His Saints, can you imagine the singing and shouts of victory echoing all round the heavens by trillions of blood washed believers who have been waiting for this very moment throughout the centuries. We are just unable to visualise such an event, we have absolutely nothing to compare it to, there has been no event likened to it in history, even Hollywood would be at a loss to create such a spectacle. Because of that there is a danger that this great and glorious event will be dismissed out of hand, simply because we cannot imagine it happening. But do not be deceived it will happen... God said so.

Our verse says; *All the kindred's of the Earth shall wail because of Him* Why would they do that, most of the "kindred's" of the Earth don't believe in Him anyway or have rejected Him out of hand, so surely it shouldn't matter to the world if He comes back to Earth or not. Tell any of these unconverted 'kindred's' right now, as many of our churches, magazines, books and Christian Television programs do week in and week out, that Jesus is coming with trillions of His Saints to fill the Heavens with light and song and these "kindred's" will laugh, turn away and call you mad. But the Bible says they will wail, my dictionary says to wail is to; *to grieve loudly and bitterly, to make a long high-pitched cry, to lament*. These wailing 'kindred's' will know that the Judgment of Christ has come upon them for their sin and shame and rejection of God's Son Jesus, they will also *know* that it is now too late to do anything about it, yes there will be a lot of wailing!

Revelation 1 verse 9

I John, who also am your Brother and companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and Patience of Jesus Christ, was in the Isle that is called Patmos for the Word of God, and for the Testimony of Jesus Christ.

John's humility is shown again as in his Gospel and his Epistles, he only mentions he is the disciple whom Jesus loved; he omits his title and position and reminds the churches of his Brotherly companionship with them in tribulation. The Greek meaning for the word "companion" in this context is "fellow partaker in the tribulation". Tribulation is the necessary precursor of the Kingdom of God,

The Acts 14v22 says:

Confirming the souls of the Disciples and exhorting them to continue in the Faith and that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.

John 16v33

These things I have spoken unto you that you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer I have overcome the world.

In any difficulty we encounter or tribulation we may go through however dark it may be we must have confidence in the knowledge that peace can be ours in knowing that God has everything under control even in the tough events that sometimes plague our lives. Acts 14v22 tells us that *if we endure we shall also reign with Him*. James' 1v 2 tells us; *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him*. It's a fight and very hard at times but our present trials do not compare with the joy that awaits us in Glory, keep at it, hold your head up and don't give in, it is our allegiance to Christ as our King that involves us in the necessity to suffer and endure.

It is very rare indeed that new Christians are taught that tribulation and *much* tribulation at that, of all kinds are necessary to make us eligible for the Kingdom. We would rather concentrate on being prayed for to be rid of our infirmities our pain and difficulties to live free and easy lives. Our verse in Revelation talks of the Patience of Jesus Christ. (I am sorry to bring the Greek in again but we do mess about with the original so much and add new translations that very often miss the point!) The Greek meaning of Patience is “endurance” and Christ had both of these, patience and endurance to go to the Cross in our place. It is in Jesus Christ believers have the right to the Kingdom and the spiritual strength to enable them to endure patiently for it. To be a follower of Christ and follow His ways the true Christian must endure tribulation which may include sickness, pain, heartache, loss and so on. No, I am not too keen on that verse either, but we have the assurance that as we share in His suffering He is with us all the time and has everything under control! A little further on in Revelation, verse 12 of Chapter 3 we read:

Behold I come quickly hold fast that which you have that no man take your crown. Him who overcomes will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God and I will write upon him the Name of My God and the Name of the city of My God, which is the New Jerusalem which comes down out of Heaven from My God and I will write upon him My new Name.

We will note more about overcoming later in our study, but patience, enduring and overcoming are the attributes that Jesus looks for in a Christian. These verses confirm to us that our Christian walk is a walk of faith, a fight, even warfare against our enemy and not as some expect a walk in the park.

In Matthew 20v20-23 the Mother of James and John asked Jesus if her two sons could sit either side of Jesus when they come into the Kingdom. Jesus said you don't know what you are asking. He said “Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with”? In other words can you endure with patience the suffering I am to suffer that is the suffering of the Cross? The answer Jesus got was that they would suffer for Christ and although they asked in error and with the wrong motive Jesus said you shall drink of My cup and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with. He was warning His new followers that there would be pain, difficulties, sorrows, and tribulation to those who were truly repentant and true followers of Him. Many of His disciples died horrible deaths, many imprisoned, murdered, crucified just like Jesus was. To those who are suffering tribulation and trials right now remember we are called to share in Christ's suffering, and I am encouraged in the knowledge that one day soon all suffering will end when Jesus comes back again. I am also encouraged that the scripture says lots of times “and it came to pass!” and that applies to my pains too. (sorry!)

Revelation 1v10

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a great Voice as of a trumpet saying I am Alpha and Omega the first and the last and what you see write in a book and send it to the Seven Churches which are in Asia: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

The original says “I became” in the Spirit. Inferring that there is a transition from the natural state of mind to the Spiritual state of mind, where the things of the world become strangely dim in the light of His glory giving the Holy Spirit free access to the mind given over to Him. The world today may not understand this phrase, “in the Spirit” but as most Spirit filled Christians will know there is a state of ecstasy where the outer world is shut out and the inner spirit of man is taken over by the Holy Spirit whereby immediate connection with the Spirit of God is established. There is nothing spooky about it and the Spirit is subject to man anyway, but in that state where the things of the world have no place you can hear clearly what God's has to say to you. It was in that state, in the Spirit, that John was able to hear a great voice as of a trumpet which was the voice of the Lord. A trumpet is always used effectively when attention is required, and John found himself hearing this voice which was calculated to

capture every wandering thought and to solemnise his whole being to listen to what the Lord had to say. God spoke to Moses in a similar way when receiving the Law. (Exodus 19v16-19) And all the people trembled at its sound. This is what John heard;

Verse 11

I am Alpha and Omega the first and the last and what you see write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia.

And to leave no doubt God named the Churches which He had selected personally.

Ephesus

Smyrna

Pergamos

Thyatira

Sardis

Philadelphia

Laodicea

Write the things which you have seen in a book and send to seven churches in Asia. The number seven is used again to denote the perfection of God and His authority and the importance of what John was about to see.

Verse 12

And I turned to see the Voice that spoke with me. And being turned I saw Seven Golden Candlesticks. And in the midst of the Seven Golden Candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot and girt about the paps with a Golden Girdle.

John turned to see the Voice which we know to be the voice of God the Father. God had spoken before as at Christ's baptism and the transfiguration and here in presenting Christ as our High Priest. John saw seven golden candle sticks and in the middle of the candle sticks a man like the Son of man. A candlestick is described in Zechariah 4v2 it has a central stem of pure gold representing Christ and His Deity and on the top a bowl for the oil which signifies the Holy Spirit. From the stem of the candlestick are six bowels to be filled with oil from the top bowl. With what Christ did at the Cross He ensured a continued uninterrupted supply of the Holy Spirit to the Born Again Spirit filled believer. Here John saw seven of these Candlesticks one for each of the Churches John was to send God's message to. John also saw a figure in the midst of each Candlestick which was Jesus the Light of the World dressed as a Kingly Priest. Each Church was to have a Candlestick but it was not the Candlestick that would give light but the One in the midst implying Christ's continual presence in the midst of His people here on Earth.

Verse 16

And He had in His right hand Seven Stars and out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword. And His countenance was as the sun shines in His strength.

It is believed by most that these stars were the Pastors of these seven churches. I am of that persuasion myself for a number of reasons. I am not a Pastor but if I were it would comfort me to know that if I was sure of my calling and felt the anointing of God on my ministry to be a shepherd to His flock, I am held safely in God's right hand. Many Pastors share that sometimes they feel very lonely not always appreciated and often hurt. A Pastor is one who speaks on behalf of God in this church age, he teaches the Word of God to train, encourage and disciple his church to become Christ's witnesses and ambassadors to further the Gospel. A very important assignment indeed often with opposition from inside and out of the church, but the anointed Pastor can rest assured and take courage that he or she is held safe in the right hand of God.

Verse 20

The Seven Stars are the Seven Angels of the Seven Churches and the Seven Candle Sticks which you saw are the Seven Churches.

If as we believe, the Angels spoken of at the beginning of each letter to the churches are Pastors we find in Hebrews 1v7 and Ps: 104v4 that they are made by God Himself. Also He makes His ministers a flame of fire. We find in our 7 churches we are studying when Jesus looked at their works most were found wanting, what would He find today?

Why does God liken His Pastors to stars? Well let's look at a few stars and learn the similarity supported by Nasser.

Like human beings each star has a beginning and an end, a birth and a death. After its birth a star lives through several cycles of growth but it begins to cast off its outer layers in preparation for death. Every star is destined to die sooner or later.

These Pastors were intended to shine in the spiritual darkness of Asia Minor of the first Century and to guide these churches in worship, teach the word of God and show how to live a life that is pleasing to God.

The life span of a star is determined by the amount of fuel at its core. The more fuel the longer the star lasts but even so the star will not shine forever.

Although a Pastor may serve a church for many years, there is no such thing as a permanent Pastor, there comes a time when his light begins to fade so a new star is born. The lifespan of a ministry will depend on the amount of Spiritual fuel he has at his core and how much he is feeding the core with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The amount of Spiritual fuel in a Pastor, his use of that fuel, his ability to endure pressure at his core and how much he replenishes that fuel are all critical factors that determine the success of his ministry.

It is estimated that there are 10 billion trillion stars in the universe and they are all individual, one of the wonders of God's creation. No two Pastors are the same, God calls some to lead massive churches, others medium churches and some small churches, regardless of size of their congregations, Pastors are called to shine their light in a way that is consistent with their calling. Large or small the churches Pastors are responsible for the eternal destiny of the lives of their congregations. They all represent God in their own characteristics, drawing from their own experiences of God at their core.

So why has God spent so much time explaining to us that the seven candlesticks are the seven churches and the stars are His Pastors? Well God knows only too well the responsibility all Pastors have in all churches, large or small from John's time right through the Church Age. God wants, at the end of time a church that He will be proud of, He wants to say to each of us "*well done good and faithful servant enter thou into My Kingdom*" and much of that He depends on Pastors, so no wonder He has these Pastors in the palm of His right hand, I guess there is no safer place. Take heart, take courage, be assured you are in none other than Gods right hand.

Out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword which is the Word of God. If these stars represent the Pastors of these seven churches then the two edged sword must be preached from the Word of God alone and to do that a strong knowledge of the Bible is necessary.

A.J.Seiss says:

The sword is the symbol of magistracy and judgement. But this is not a hand-sword but a word-sword. It accords exactly with what Christ Himself said, "he that rejects me and receives not my Words hath One that judges' him, the Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day".

His countenance was as the sun shines in His strength. Shining like the sun in unclouded power and reflecting the glory of the Lord so shall the righteous shine.

Verse 18

I am He Who lives and was dead and behold I am alive for ever more, and have the keys of hell and of death.

Jesus said He is alive for ever more. He was once dead for the sins of the people and to make a way back to God, which He did at the Cross but now He is alive forever more and will not die again. Because of His resurrection from the grave having conquered death and hell the keys of Death and Hell were given unto Him and now He alone is the source of life and death. Having passed through death as one of us He is now living in infinite plenitude of life which reassures us His people that His death and resurrection leads us to eternal life with Him.

Verse 19

Write the things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter.

This verse is the key to the understanding of the Book of Revelation which is broken up into three parts.

1. The things which you **have seen** which was the;
The vision of Christ in the midst of the Candlesticks in chapter 1.
2. The things which **are**
Which was concerning the churches chapter 2-3
3. The things which **shall be hereafter.**
Concerns events after the Rapture of the Church, the Great Tribulation and eternity.
Next Study Chapter 2 the Churches.

I am grateful to my friend Graham Towse for his valued contribution.

Be blessed

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