

## *Valley Bible Church – Book of Revelation*

### **THE VISION OF CHRIST: (1:9-20)**

#### **The Circumstances of the Vision: (1:9-11)**

##### *{The Experience of John}*

Here John begins to describe the circumstances surrounding the vision of Christ after having completed the preliminaries of the prologue. The circumstances center around John's activities when he first received the vision. At this point John makes a few statements which describe his personal situation as he experienced this vision of Christ.

*I John your brother:* This is the third time in the first 9 verses in which the human author gives his name, John (cf. 1:1,4). John was the last living Apostle of the Church. One can imagine how respected and esteemed he would be in the eyes of other believers. However, instead of referring to himself as John the Apostle of Jesus Christ, or as John the Elder which were both official titles that he could have claimed, he simply refers to himself as "your brother." John does not exalt himself above fellow believers, but he identifies himself with them. He is specifically identifying himself with the situations of the churches to which he is writing. Here he reveals his servant's heart and great love for those in the seven churches. This statement by John also emphasizes the fact that the early church was not given to some great hierarchical order as the Roman Catholic church would suggest.

*And fellow partaker in the tribulation:* The term "fellow partaker" is the Greek word *sugkoinonos* which comes from the words, *sun* meaning "together with" and *koinonia* meaning "fellowship or sharing." It is translated "fellow partaker or companion in." This idea of fellowship or sharing was common in the early church. The tribulation spoken of here is not the Great Tribulation which is a good portion of the content of this Revelation. "It is the general tribulation that accompanies the Christian life during the present age." Jesus mentioned this type of tribulation in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:11-12. This would be the same type of tribulation which would lead to the death of the other Apostles, in particular John's brother James in Acts 12:2. This is the type of tribulation mentioned in the letter to the church at Smyrna in Revelation 2:8-11. This type of tribulation is spoken of throughout the New Testament such as in John 16:33, Acts 14:22, and 1 Thessalonians 2:14. We also see this type of tribulation taking place in our own day in countries like China, Indonesia, and many Islamic nations where Christians are actively persecuted and even put to death.

*And kingdom:* The kingdom spoken of here is the future millennial kingdom which will be described later in Revelation 20. This future kingdom is spoken of throughout the New Testament. We see it mentioned by Christ in Luke 12:32 & 22:29-30. We see it mentioned by Paul in 1 Thess. 2:12 & 2 Thess. 1:5. We see it mentioned by James in James 2:5. "Anticipation of such a kingdom is an integral part of the present Christian experience."<sup>26</sup>

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The idea is that although going through present tribulation, believers can be assured that at the time of their salvation they became members of God's kingdom and will be future partakers in Christ's millennial reign on the earth as described in Revelation 20. John not only identified himself as a brother and as a fellow partaker in the present tribulation that these believers were going through, but he identified himself as a fellow member of the future millennial kingdom of Christ as were the believers he was addressing. The picture painted here is that this world is not our home, we are just passing through. John focuses here on the future glory and reign of Christ. What encouragement we can have as we experience trials and tribulations in that our future hope is that of being in the presence of Christ, worshiping and serving Him for all eternity.

*And perseverance which are in Jesus:* The term "perseverance" in the Greek is *hupomona*. This term literally means "to remain under." It is translated as "perseverance, or endurance." It refers to steadfastness and perseverance under certain circumstances. This endurance is a quality that is constantly connected with Christian living (cf. Rom. 5:3, 8:25-26; James 1:3-4). Here it carries the idea of enduring or persevering through tribulation. We must have this attitude of patient endurance as we go through various trials or persecutions remembering to "Consider it all Joy" (James 1:2)!

*Was on the island called Patmos:* "The island called Patmos is located in the Icarian Sea between Icaria and Leros, about 40 miles west southwest of Miletus. It was the last stopping place for one traveling from Rome to Ephesus and the first stopping place for one traveling from Ephesus to Rome. The island, shaped like a crescent with its horns facing eastward, offered a safe place for vessels to harbor and was therefore important to navigators. It was a barren rocky island about ten miles long and five miles wide. It was used as a penal settlement by the Romans as were other islands in its group. Early Christian tradition has it that John was sent to this island during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian and was forced to work in the mines there. Tradition also reports that when Domitian died, John was allowed to return to Ephesus."<sup>27</sup>

*Because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus:* John was dedicated to being a faithful witness of Christ. He was obedient to our Lord's command in Acts 1:8. John informs his readers of the reason he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos. It is the testimony of Jesus bore through the preaching by John. It is recorded in church history that John was serving in the role of elder at the church in Ephesus, faithfully ministering to the surrounding churches and faithfully proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. Because of his faithful teaching and preaching, the Roman emperor Domitian had John imprisoned on the island of Patmos. We too are called to be faithful witnesses of Christ. We are commanded to share our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ being witnesses in an unbelieving world (Matthew 28:19-20 & Acts 1:8).

*I was in the Spirit:* This is a difficult phrase to understand exactly what John means here. However most believe that this is some sort of supernatural experience:

"John's statement in verse 10 that he was in the Spirit refers to his experience of being carried beyond normal sense into a state where God could reveal supernaturally the contents of this book."<sup>28</sup>

"This was not a dream. John was supernaturally transported out of the material world awake, not sleeping, to an experience beyond the normal senses. The Holy Spirit empowered his sense to perceive revelation from God."<sup>29</sup>

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"The Greek word translated 'was' is literally 'became' and therefore indicating that this was something unusual."<sup>30</sup>

All Christians are said to be in the Spirit (Romans 8:9).

It is important to recognize that such visions or supernatural experiences are not possible today. These unusual circumstances only took place as the Word of God was being revealed to God's spokesmen. These dreams, visions, revelations and even miracles were primarily for the introduction of new revelation. Now that God's Word is complete, God does not give new revelations or speak through dreams or visions. There are many from a charismatic background that tell tales of being transported to heaven where they talk with God and are given new revelation. This cannot be the case because God's Word is complete, God's revelation is complete, and His will is fully revealed in the pages of Scripture. There is nothing else that needs to be said.

*On the Lord's Day:* This term does not refer to the eschatological day of the Lord referred to by the Old Testament prophets. The proponents of the Preterist interpretation presuppose that John was talking about the day of the Lord in this passage because they need the events of this book (ch. 4-22) to be chronologically placed during the first century church. Remember they interpret the book of Revelation as past history not as prophetic of end time events. This is actually a reference to Sunday, the first day of the week. Although this is the only reference to Sunday as being called the Lord's day, the following does support this interpretation:

The same adjective is used this way (similar grammatical construction) when speaking of "the Lord's supper" in 1 Corinthians 11:20.

Early Christians found this to be an appropriate title for Sunday since Christ's resurrection was on a Sunday.

This phrase was commonly used by the second century to refer to Sunday. This term came to be used in Asia Minor shortly after the time of the writing of Revelation.

This term became popular to the counterpart term used by the Roman Empire in which they would refer to the first day of the week as "Emperor's day."

\* Thus John received this vision on a Sunday. There have been some who have suggested that this expression is a reference to Easter Sunday. However, there is no substantial evidence to support such a reference. The best that can be determined is that this is simply Sunday, the day Christians gathered together to worship the Lord.

*And I heard behind me a loud voice:* "Throughout Revelation, a loud sound or voice indicates the solemnity of what God is about to reveal."<sup>31</sup> John's experience here seems to be similar to that of Ezekiel in Ezekiel 3:12.

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*Like the sound of a trumpet:* This phrase describes the intensity and clarity of the voice. The trumpet was one of the loudest instruments of the time period and a good illustration as to the intensity of the voice he heard. "The trumpet carries with it the concept of authority also."<sup>32</sup> "The trumpet here signals the necessity to submit to whatever is commanded."<sup>33</sup> "The frequent usage of the trumpet throughout Revelation (4:1; 8:2,6,13; 9:14) is in connection with war, especially in light of the Old Testament association of trumpets with war when they are related to the day of the Lord (Joel 2:1,15:3:16, Zeph. 1:14-16). In this book this instrument serves as a signal to action, comparable to signals that are given on the battlefield."<sup>34</sup>

The Initial Commission to Write: This is the initial commission to write. It is simply stated here in a general way and will be repeated in 1:19 where more detail as well as the outline of the entire scope of John's visions will be given. The term "book" is a term that designated a papyrus roll or scroll. "John is commanded to send what he writes to the same seven churches given the epistolary greeting in 1:4. These churches were centers of seven postal districts, a feature which made them well suited for publicizing the message further."<sup>35</sup> Remember as stated in verse 4 and in the introduction to Revelation, that the order of the seven churches designate the circular route that this book would be delivered.

### The Content of the Vision: (1:12-16)

*{A Glimpse of Our Glorified Lord!}*

John had his back to the voice, so he turned to see who was speaking to him. It is here where John describes the content of what he saw:

#### *The Seven Golden Lamp Stands:*

He first saw seven golden lamp stands. "These were like the common portable oil lamps placed on lamp stands that were used to light rooms at night."<sup>36</sup>

"In the Tabernacle and in the Temple one of the items of equipment was a seven-branched lamp stand, a single-stand with three lamps on each side and one lamp in the center forming the center shaft."<sup>37</sup> [cf. Ex. 25:31-40]

"These seven lamp stands are reminiscent of Zechariah's one lamp stand with seven lamps, each of which was fed by a pipe from a common reservoir."<sup>38</sup> [cf. Zechariah 4:2]

These golden lamp stands are identified as the seven churches in 1:20. "They symbolize churches as the lights of the world (Phil. 2:15)."<sup>39</sup>

"The function of these lamp stands is to embody and give forth the light of God throughout the earth."<sup>40</sup> "The Church is the light-bearer, light in the Lord, not having light of its own, but diffusing that which it receives of Him."<sup>41</sup> Jesus refers to Himself as the light of the World (John 8:12, 12:35-36). God is referred to as light in 1 John 1:5 and as the Father of lights in James 1:17. Jesus also spoke of this function of the believer in Matthew 5:14-16. Paul mentions this function of the believer in Ephesians 5:8 and Philip. 2:15.

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The lamp stands are made of gold. Several other items in Revelation are mentioned as being gold: 1:13 the golden girdle, 4:4 the golden crowns, 5:8 the golden bowls, 8:3 the golden censer, 8:3 the golden altar, 21:15 the golden reed, 21:18 the city of pure gold including the street (21:21). Now the significance here in 1:12 with the golden lamp stands is that gold was the most costly and precious material and thus symbolizes the preciousness and costliness of the church to God. "The church is to God the most beautiful and valuable entity on earth, so valuable that Jesus was willing to purchase it with His own blood (Acts 20:28)."<sup>42</sup>

\* At vs. 13 begins a series of descriptive phrases describing the one whom John saw in this vision:

### *His Appearance:*

*"and in the middle of the lamp stands:* In the midst of the lamp stands the Apostle John beheld the glorified Christ. "The glorified Lord of the church is moving among His churches."<sup>43</sup> Jesus promised His continual presence:

-Mt. 28:19-20: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

-Mt. 18:20: "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

-Hebrews 13:5: "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you"

"Christians do not worship a well-meaning martyr, or a dead heroic religious leader. The living Christ indwells His church to lead and empower it. Believers personally and collectively have the inestimable privilege of drawing on that power through continual communion with Him. The presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in His church empowers it, enabling believers to say triumphantly with the apostle Paul, 'I can do all things through Him who strengthens me' (Phil. 4:13)."<sup>44</sup>

*I saw one like a son of man:* "The source of the "son of man" terminology is doubtless Daniel 7:13. The Lord Jesus applied the Daniel 7:13 passage to Himself in Mark 13:26, setting the pattern that John was certain to follow."<sup>45</sup> "The title emphasizes His humanity and Messianic character."<sup>46</sup> The term from Daniel 7:13 as is repeated here was taken to be a Messianic designation long before the time of Jesus and hence before the time of John. This term is also one of the most frequent titles Christ applies to Himself and is used some 81 times in the Gospels. "It is a title related to Jesus' capacity as judge (cf. John 5:22,27; Acts 17:31), a function that He proceeds to carry out in Revelation 2-3. It also was used by the early church as Christ's title whenever the suffering of believers and Christ's suffering and glory were in view, as they are in this book."<sup>47</sup> It would appear that John obviously recognized His glorified Lord by use of this title.

*His Clothing:* There exists much debate on the symbolism of Christ's clothing as described by the following phrases.

*Clothed in a robe reaching to the feet:* Robes such as this were worn by royalty (cf. Judges 8:26; 1 Sam. 18:4, 24:4; 1 Kings 22:10; and Esther 5:1), and also by prophets (1 Sam. 28:14). The Greek term *podeirei* as it is used in the LXX (The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) is overwhelmingly used to describe the garments of the High Priest (cf. Exodus 28:4, 29:5, 39:29; Lev. 6:10,16:4).

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*And girded across His chest with a golden sash:* "The closest resemblance is to the dress of the high priest who wore a priestly girdle (sash) on the chest a little above the armpits (cf. Exod. 28:4, 29:5, 39:29)."<sup>48</sup> "The high girding was indicative of the dignity of an important office. The high priestly office was such an office."<sup>49</sup>

There also seems to be a close resemblance here to the messenger in Daniel 10:5 who is similarly dressed. Most believe this messenger in Daniel to be an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. This is especially due to the description of such glory and to Daniel's response (cf. Daniel 10:1-9). We also see the angels in Revelation 15:6 described to be wearing similar clothing which is likely due to the high rank of their position.

\* The primary significance here in 1:13 is that of Our great High Priest in the midst of His church. The author of Hebrews mentions quite frequently Christ's priestly role (cf. Heb. 2:17-18, 3:1, 4:14-15, 7:25, 9:11-12). "The knowledge that their High Priest was moving sympathetically in their midst to care for and protect His own provided great comfort and hope to the persecuted churches."<sup>50</sup>

### *His Head & Hair:*

John previously described the appearance of Christ's clothing, now he moves on to give a description of Christ's person. John first describes Christ's head and hair as being white like wool and snow. "White translates *leukos*, which has the connotation of "bright," "blazing," or "brilliant."<sup>51</sup> The same term is used of Christ at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:2) and of an angel of the Lord at the tomb of the risen Christ (Matthew 28:3). The picture here is of a blazing and bright whiteness. Snow is often used to describe this picture because in the sunlight snow will glisten. "Fire at its highest intensity is white; the red in fire is of the earth, earthy, implies something which the fire has not yet thoroughly subdued, while the pure flame is absolutely white."<sup>52</sup> It is a brilliant shining which symbolizes the eternal glory and holiness of our Lord. This description is an obvious reference to Daniel 7:9 in which the same description is given of God the Father. These parallel descriptions affirm the deity of Christ.

### *His Eyes:*

The eyes of Christ are described as a flame of fire. "The Old Testament source of this expression is Daniel 10:6. In this passage the messenger clothed in linen had eyes *as lamps of fire* (LXX) or *as torches of fire* (Hebrew text). This description of Christ is repeated in Revelation 2:18 and 19:12."<sup>53</sup>

"Eyes represent knowledge. God's eyes, are representing His omniscience (knowing all things)."<sup>54</sup> 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth," Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good." Jeremiah 16:17 says, "For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes." Jesus stated in Matthew 10:26, "there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known." Hebrews 4:13 says, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."



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"His eyes as a flame of fire speak of the searching righteousness and divine judgment upon all that is impure."<sup>55</sup> "His searching, revealing, infallible gaze penetrates to the very depths of His church, revealing to Him with piercing clarity the reality of everything there is to know. The omniscient Lord of the church will not fail to recognize and deal with sin in His church."<sup>56</sup>

### *His Feet:*

His feet are described as burnished bronze. This phrase is repeated in Revelation 2:18, but is not found elsewhere. A similar concept is given in Daniel 10:6 however the wording is different, where it is stated as, "gleaming brass" (cf. Ezek. 1:7).

The description here is not only of the process of refinement or smelting in which the metal is purified and made to shine, but it pictures the point in that process where the metal is still at a glow. While there does exist some emphasis upon purity here the greater emphasis is on the red-hot glow conveying the idea of judgment.

"Kings in ancient times sat on elevated thrones, so those being judged would always be beneath the king's feet. The feet of a king thus came to symbolize his authority. The red-hot glowing feet of the Lord Jesus Christ picture Him moving through the church to exercise His chastening authority."<sup>57</sup>

"With uncorrupted purity Christ is strong enough to conquer sin in the church and pure enough to judge it."<sup>58</sup>

### *His Voice:*

His voice is described as the sound of many waters. "The wording of this sort suggests a powerful force (cf. Ps. 93:4; Isa. 17:13). The angelic hymns of Revelation 14:2 and 19:6 also draw on this power symbol. The specific source of the present words is the Hebrew text of Ezek. 43:2, where Ezekiel sees and hears the glory of the God of Israel returning to His Temple in Jerusalem. In the Hebrew of Daniel 10:6, the messenger's voice is compared to the sound of a multitude, suggesting the idea of confused roar."<sup>59</sup>

"When Christ spoke again it was no longer with the trumpet like sound of verse 10. To John, His voice now was like the sound of many waters, like the familiar mighty roar of the surf crashing on the rocky shores of Patmos in a storm. The voice of the eternal God was similarly described in Ezekiel 43:2 yet another parallel affirming Christ's deity. This is the voice of sovereign power, the voice of supreme authority."<sup>60</sup> The voice as described emphasizes the sovereign authority behind the command to write the book.

### *His Hand:*

Of the various features of this vision, this is the only feature that does not draw upon the Old Testament, though it does follow Old Testament imagery."<sup>61</sup>

The stars are identified for us in Revelation 1:20 as the angels of the seven churches.

\* Does this mean these seven churches had angels or could we go so far as to say that every church has its own angel? The answer is NO!!!! The Greek term *angeloi* here literally means "messenger" and is better rendered messengers as in Luke 7:24; 9:52; and James 2:25.

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"They demonstrate the function of spiritual leaders in the church. They are to be instruments through which Christ, the head of the church, mediates His rule."<sup>62</sup> These are best interpreted as the teaching elder of each of these seven churches. Each church as does Valley Bible had a plurality of elders. The messengers as described here would be the elders of each church who performed the primary role of Pastor/Teacher. They would be the Dale Whitehead's of the seven churches in Asia Minor.

The emphasis here is the idea of Christ's absolute authority and complete control over these seven messengers. They are in His hand. They are under His authority. They are controlled by Him.

### *His Mouth:*

His mouth is described as having a sharp two-edged sword coming out of it. "The Old Testament source of the words is Isaiah 11:4, >He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth' (cf. Also Isa. 49:2). Other New Testament passages are relevant because they either liken the Word of God to a sword (Eph. 6:17, Heb. 4:12) or else predict that the returning Christ will destroy the man of lawlessness, >with the breath of His mouth' (2 Thess. 2:8)."<sup>63</sup>

The Greek word *rhomphaia* was a large blade of Thracian origin. The description as coming out of the mouth is not surprising because this sword was short and shaped like a tongue. The blade being double-edged emphasizes greater sharpness.

"The resultant focus of this part of the description is upon the judicial authority of Christ. It combines the force of a warrior defeating his enemies in battle and the pronouncement of his sentence of judgment upon them."<sup>64</sup>

Some believe that here it speaks primarily of judgment against enemies from within the church. "Those who attack Christ's church, those who would sow lies, create discord, or otherwise harm His people, will be personally dealt with by the Lord of the church."<sup>65</sup>

### *His Face:*

"This is a portion of the song of Deborah and Barak found in Judges 5:31. In that passage it describes those who love the Lord. The faces of the righteous are also said to shine like the sun in Matthew 13:43 as is the face of an angel in Revelation 10:1."<sup>66</sup>

There is likely some significance in the words John used here as he remembered his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration when he had witnessed an anticipatory glimpse of the glory of Christ and now is the only to be given a second glimpse of that glory. The description is simply that of the radiant glory on the face of the Lord Jesus. That glory described as the sun shining in its strength is the strongest possible illustration of the illumination of God's glory.

### The Consequences of the Vision: (1:17-20)

Words of Comfort:

John's response to the vision:



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-John's response was similar as it was on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Mt. 17:6) He fell at Christ's feet as a dead man. This seems to be the standard for those who experienced such visions:

-Daniel 10:8-9; 8:17: The response of Daniel.

-Isaiah 6:5: The response of Isaiah.

-Ezekiel 1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 43:3; 44:4: The response of Ezekiel.

-Judges 13:22: The response of Manoah; Samson's father.

-Job 42:5-6: The response of Job.

-Acts 26:13-14: The response of Saul (Paul).

-John's response was a response of reverent fear which was the norm for those who had encountered The LORD.

Christ's words of comfort to John:

-Christ comforted John as he had done before at the Transfiguration by placing His right hand on him. (cf. Mt. 17:7). In addition in both places Christ says, "Do not be afraid!" which are words of compassionate assurance. Jesus followed this by offering comfort based on who He was.

*-I am the first and the last:* This phrase speaks of the self sufficiency and eternity of Christ. It is repeated in Rev. 2:8 and 22:13. It is used of God in Isaiah 44:6; 48:12. The *I am* used of Christ in this statement is drawn off the covenant name of God in Exodus 3:14 once again emphasizing continual existence; and is used by Christ in the I am statements throughout the book of John (cf. John 6:35, 48; 8:12; 10:7,9,11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1,5).

*-and the living One:* This title can be compared to John 1:4 and 14:6. It is also a title used throughout Scripture to describe God (Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26; Ps. 84:2; Hos. 1:10; Mat. 16:16, 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom. 9:26; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6:16; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:15, 4:10; Heb. 3:12, 9:14, 10:31 & Rev. 7:2). The emphasis is on being eternal, uncaused, and self-existent. As for Christ Himself, He is not physically dead in a tomb somewhere, but has been resurrected to life.

*-and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore:*

The emphasis here is on the resurrection. The ultimate authentication of Jesus Christ rests in His resurrection. We do not worship a dead man like so many man made religions, but we worship the living and resurrected Lord.

*-and I have the keys of death and Hades:*

Death is the state or condition, while Hades is the place of the dead. Keys denote access and authority. "Jesus Christ has the authority to decide who dies and who lives; He controls life and death. And John like all the redeemed had nothing to fear, since Christ had already delivered him from death and Hades by His own death."<sup>67</sup>

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\* By these words, Jesus provided John with comfort and assurance. Jesus was all He claimed to be: God very God! The focus of these statements is on the deity of Christ (His eternal attributes) and His finished work. The character and work of our Lord should bring us comfort and assurance.

A Word of Command:

John is now commissioned to write the Book of Revelation. This is a repetition of the commission as previously stated in vs. 10, only in more detail and providing us with the outline of the book:

I. The Things Which You Have Seen. Ch. 1

II. The Things Which Are Ch. 2-3

III. The Things Which Will Take Place After These Things Ch. 4-22.

A Word of Explanation:

-The seven lamp stands represent the seven churches.

-The seven stars represent the messengers of the seven churches.