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THE SUBJECT OF REVELATION AND WHY IT WAS WRITTEN

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
REVELATION 1:9-20
NUMBER 2

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REVELATION 1:9-20 "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. 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 thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto 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. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven 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. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

Many have said that Revelation is a closed book and does not give itself to interpretation. There is no closed book in the Bible. This is God's Word and Revelation is "Union Station" for the Word of God. Before you arrive at Union Station, you have to make many stops along the way to get some information. The word translated "Revelation" is actually "A Revealing" or "An Unveiling".

In our last study we saw the person who preached the sermon to John, even Jesus Christ. Now we are to look at the subject of the message and the occasion for the writing of the book. It was actually one sermon preached by Jesus Christ one Sunday on the Isle of Patmos to one man, John. The Isle of Patmos is ten or twelve miles off the coast from Miletus, which is the port of Ephesus, in the Aegean Sea. It is a rocky island ten miles long and about a half-mile wide. John began a worship service one Sunday morning and evidently had just finished the song service when the worship was interrupted by the arrival of the one who would preach the sermon on that day. Jesus left the throne room of Heaven and moved all the way down to the Isle of Patmos to deliver this sermon and when John saw him he fainted. So we have a picture of the congregation fainting and Jesus had to revive him so he could deliver the sermon to him. The time covered in the sermon was from the completion of the Canon of Scripture to eternity. It is a panorama of history. There are seven points to be found in verses 9-20 so let us list them and then come back and fill in the information.

1. In verse 9 we have the church service which occurred on the Isle of Patmos.
2. In verse 10 we have the beginning of the church service and the interruption of the church service by the voice of Christ, who had come to deliver the sermon.
3. In verse 11 orders for distributing the sermon were given. It was to be distributed to the seven churches of the Roman Province of Asia.
4. In verses 12-16 we have a description of the preacher. The preacher was the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. In verse 17 we have the story of how the congregation fainted.
6. In verse 18 the preacher identified himself.
7. In verses 19 and 20 the sermon outline is given. The actual sermon does not begin until we get to chapter 2. The sermon is chapter 2 through 22. It was preached by Jesus Christ and it was not a short sermon. John was a mature believer and Christ delivered him a long message. Sermonettes are for Christianettes.

REVELATION 1:9 "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."

"I John". This is the human author of the book. The divine author was the Holy Spirit. Now we have a threefold description of John.

"Who also am your brother". Remember, he was the last of the apostles, the very last link with the apostles. But when he sat down in the pew, he was just another man who needed the word of God. As he listened he was just another brother listener. He was a born-again brother listener. The word "companion" means partner. He was separated from his other brother believers by about ten or twelve miles of the water of the Aegean Sea. "In tribulation" refers to suffering and pressure. This came from the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire under the Roman Emperor Domitian. He was Emperor of the Roman Empire from 81-96 A.D. He was a thorough-going rat and his persecution even surpassed that of Nero's. He would have slaughtered John but Domitian was told that John was an old man who had thousands of friends and was regarded with great respect. Domitian was advised that it would be better to banish John to this rocky island than to kill him. Domitian considered Christianity the arch enemy of the Roman Empire, because Christians said that Jesus was Lord. The Romans placed their clenched fists over their hearts and pledged allegiance to Rome with the words "Caesar Is Lord". But Christians refused to do this and they all said, "Jesus Is Lord", and the Romans considered this a revolt against the Empire. So John was spared for they realized if they killed him it would strengthen Christianity. He was the last of the apostles and had the sponsorship of the seven churches. After he died there were no more apostles and one pastor would have one church only. In those days apostles had sponsorship over all the churches. So Domitian gave orders for John to be lifted off the mainland and to be dumped on some rocky island. So John is the partner under pressure.

"In the kingdom" is a noun, and is in the dative case. This is dative of advantage and refers to the fact that it was to his advantage to be in the Eternal Kingdom. "Patience" is a technical word and it refers to the faith-rest technique. It means for one to claim the promises of God and apply doctrine to experience. It should read, "Patience in Jesus Christ". This is a reference to what Christianity really is. One of the 34 things which happens to us when we are converted is that we are put "In Christ". When we get out of fellowship, we are to use 1 John 1:9 and get back in fellowship. This is what is meant by "patience".

"I was" refers to the point of time when the Roman Government dumped him out there on that rocky island. The middle voice of "was" shows that John was benefited by being flung out there on that lonely island. John knew the Lord and even on that lonely island he could have inner peace and inner happiness. He could be there on that island all by himself and still have inner happiness. This is a man in Christ. "For the word of God" is "dia plus the accusative" and should read, "Because of the Word of God". John was there because of the Word of God. He was there because of the testimony of Jesus Christ. This is why he had been banished there.

REVELATION 1:10 "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet"

We now come to the beginning of the interruption of the church service. "I was" in the spirit. It is the aorist tense of the Greek word "Ginomai" and should read "I came to be in the spirit". This suggests that he had been out of fellowship with the Lord, but he had rebounded and had gotten back in fellowship. The aorist tense of this verb tells us this about John. Now how could a man alone on a rocky island get out of fellowship? There was nothing there to tempt John to commit sin. But you see, this suggests to us that the worst sins of all are mental attitude sins, and John was out of fellowship because he had failed to trust the Lord, or because he was frustrated over his banishment, or because he was lonely. But now, on the Lord's Day he got back in fellowship. So it really should read, "He came to be in the spirit". All true worship must come this way. We cannot worship unless we are in the spirit.

"On the Lord's Day" does not refer to the Sabbath but to Sunday, the first day of the week. Christ arose on the first day of the week. The church began at Pentecost on the Lord's Day. The feast of the firstfruits always began on Sunday and this really bothered the Jews. The Feast of Pentecost always began on Sunday, and this also bothered the Jews. They favored the Sabbath but the day for assembly worship was Sunday.

"Heard behind me a great voice". Now up to this time they were having a quiet service. The aorist tense here suggests that this voice broke out of the silence something like the blast of a trumpet.

REVELATION 1:11 "Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto 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 preacher had traveled a long way to come to preach that day. He had come millions of light years distance from the throne of God to that rocky island in the Aegean Sea. The word "saying" is present, active, participle and is what we call a dramatic present. John was commanded to give the message of the sermon to the seven churches. Now how was he to get a sermon to the mainland of Asia? Well, Domitian would die in a few months and John would be released and would get to go back and take it to them.

Jesus said to him, "I am Alpha and Omega". The "I am" is present, active, indicative and means that I keep on and will always keep on being Alpha and Omega. These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Since you know these letters, you know all the letters in between. In other words, the letters of the Greek alphabet were not unknown. And it means that before time was, everything was known to Christ. He knows the beginning, the ending, and all that is in between. Jesus said this at this point to remind John that he knew all about the pressure the Roman government had placed on him and that he had not forsaken him. So from this we are to conclude that we are never to feel sorry for ourselves. Jesus Christ is the Sovereign of history. This also means that Jesus Christ created time and he will bring time to an end.

"What thou seest". Jesus was going to speak to John but he was also going to show John many visions. (As we would say it, Jesus was the first one in history to use an overhead projector to throw his message on the screen.) "Write" is an aorist, active, imperative and that means that John was to write these things down and it was a command for him to do so. "Send" is also aorist, active, imperative and it means that at the point of time when he has finished writing these things down, he is to send it to the seven churches. Then he gives the names of the seven churches. These are not all the churches that existed in that part of the world, but these seven represented all of them.

Verses 12-16 give us a description of the preacher. Jesus is not only the sovereign of history but he is aware of our problems and he has a solution to our problems.

REVELATION 1:12 "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks" The first thing John saw was seven golden candlesticks.

"That spake" is imperfect, active, indicative and suggests that Jesus had spoken often to John before when he was on earth. Now what do these seven golden candlesticks mean? You get the answer in verse 20. REVELATION 1:20 "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." The seven candlesticks represent the seven churches. The candles are burning to indicate that each of these churches are operative. Later on they will be threatened that their light will be put out.

REVELATION 1:13 "And in the midst of the seven 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." Christ is the High Priest of the churches. John recognized him immediately. "Son of man" was the name for the humanity of Christ and John recognized him at once. John knew him well. John was standing there and saw him ascend. He was the first man to see the resurrected Christ. Christ was clothed with a long robe which was not the kind of robes worn by the Romans. The Romans wore short robes. Christ had around his chest a golden breastplate and it means that he was appearing as the great High Priest. Now what could be more fitting than that the great High Priest of the church should preach the closing sermon in the Canon of Scripture?

REVELATION 1:14 "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;" His head and his hair were white like wool. The white hair indicated the eternity of his character. A young man with white hair. The eyes like flaming fire indicated that his sermon was to be a sermon of judgment. He would preach of judgment for the churches in chapters 2 and 3, then the final judgment in the Tribulation and at the Great White Throne. His eyes were flashing lightning. It is a picture of him bracing the churches and he is going to chew them out, and chew them out real good.

REVELATION 1:15 "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters." This refers to judgment which will come in the Tribulation. Brass is the metal used in scripture to denote judgment. The Brazen altar was made of brass. The voice was the voice that pronounced doom.

REVELATION 1:16 "And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Now we have the summary. "He had" is present, active, participle and means that he kept on holding the seven stars in his hands. The seven stars are the seven pastors of the seven churches. The Pastor is called the angel of the church. The word "angel" comes from "Angelos" and means messenger. The Bible tells us of angel messengers and human messengers. The preacher is a communicator. He is to communicate doctrine. He is not primarily a money raiser or a visitor, or a public relations man. He is to communicate doctrine. So the task of the preacher is to study and teach, study and teach, study and teach. So here Christ is pictured as having his hand on his preacher. Now the point is this--If Christ has his hands on the preacher, you take your hands off him. It has been a long time since anyone has tried to tell me what to preach. Since I began preaching line by line and verse by verse, no one has told me what to preach. And that is as it should be. The Lord will tell me what I should preach. Star is the name for the preacher and the seven stars are the seven messengers to these seven churches. The twoedged sword is described again in Revelation 19:15. It is the Lord judging the nations at the Second Advent. His face was as the sun. All color comes from light. Light strikes an object and part of it is absorbed and part of it is reflected. So Christ gives glory and all glory in believers is a reflection of him. When the glory of Christ shines on a believer, you have a reflected glory. Legalism says we produce glory. Grace says we reflect glory.

REVELATION 1:17 "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last" At this point the congregation fainted. John passed out completely. John saw Jesus and fainted. He fell at Christ's feet as one dead. Now how can you preach to a dead person? Well, I've thought of this on many a Sunday morning. So Christ laid his right hand upon him. How did John know it was his right hand? Well, he had lived with Jesus three years and he knew Christ was right-handed. Your hand moves out with your master eye and if you are right handed your right eye is the leading eye. "Fear not" means to stop being afraid. It was in the middle voice and that means that John would be benefited by not being afraid. You can't be a good listener and have other things on your mind. So John needed to clear his mind so he could listen to the sermon.

REVELATION 1:18 "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." He that liveth is present, active, participle and means that Christ is the one who has ever been alive. He is the unique figure of the universe. It refers to his essence. Christ is true humanity and perfect deity. This means that the union of his humanity and deity will continue forever. This is the perpetuation of his hyperstatic union into eternity. "And became dead" is aorist, middle, participle and refers to the point of time when he went to the cross and died. "I am alive" refers to the resurrection. "I have the keys" means that Christ had the authority over death and hell.

REVELATION 1:19 "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" Here now we have the outline of the sermon. John is commanded to write about three things. "Which thou hast seen" this refers to the introduction which we have just studied. So John was reminded to be sure to write the introduction. "The things which are" refers to the condition of the seven churches and this is chapters 2 and 3. "The things which shall be hereafter" and this will be fourfold--

1. The church in Heaven. Revelation 4 and 5.
2. The Tribulation on Earth. Chapters 6-19
3. The Millennium. Chapter 20
4. The Eternal City. Chapter 21

REVELATION 1:20 "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." The doctrine here refers to the doctrine of the church. The doctrine of the church was a mystery in Old Testament times. Every believer "In Christ" and every believer his own priest was reserved for the Church Age. This is described in Ephesians 3:1-6, Colossians 1:25-26 and Romans 16:25-26.

The seven stars represents a new category of leadership. This is the pastor-teacher. The seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches. The church is to give the gospel to all the earth and the Jews are to be scattered all over the earth. The Jews cannot be regathered in the land until Christ returns and calls them back. The condition of these seven churches shows the trend of the churches of all the Church Age.