

THE REVELATION

FEBRUARY 25, 2024

Chapter 1:17-20

3. The Reaction (1:17a)

Rev 1:17a And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man.

What did John do? He said, “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man.” The same thing happened to Paul sixty years before when he was on the road to Damascus. The light of the radiance of the LORD was so bright that his companions could not stand it and Paul was blinded that day and never fully recovered from the damage to his eyesight (Acts 9:4). Not so with John. He needed to see the rest of the story that he was instructed to write. He also fell to the ground! *Nekus*, the Greek language says. It means he was like a *dead body* – motionless. But, John does not describe how he felt as he lay on the ground; rather, John is speaking about how he felt as he “fell” to the ground.

4. The Reply (1:17b-18b)

a) The Lord's Comfort (1:17b)

Rev 1:17b And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid;

And then John felt the touch of the hand of the LORD and said, “And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid.’” In the Greek, the LORD said, “Do not have a *phobeo*.” We have an English word for that called *phobia*. It means *a fear of something*. “Oh, John,” Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid of Me. In Me there is comfort.”

b) The Lord's Time (1:17c)

Rev 1:17c I am the first and the last,

Jesus told John, “I am the first and the last.” There we see the LORD’s timing. Nothing and no one existed before Him and nothing and no one will outlast Him.

c) The Lord's Life (1:18a)

Rev 1:18a and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore,

I would like to think that when Jesus said, “and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore,” He was reminding John of their life together when He was here on earth. “John, do you remember when I walked with you, remember when I ate with you, remember when I taught you? Do you remember when I died? But pay attention, that is what ‘Behold’ means do you remember when I rose from the dead? Yes, I was alive, and I will be alive eternally.”

d) The Lord's Power (1:18b)

Rev 1:18b and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Then, in a strange moment, Jesus said to John, “and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” That cannot be good! Remember, John had seen a special sword coming out of the LORD’s mouth. It was one used for stabbing and killing. At that point we explained its use as an interesting fact. But here, Jesus confirms the purpose of that short sword coming from His mouth. He intends to do some killing, and He alone has the keys to unlock the portal to death and doom in the place prepared for those He is about to send to eternal torment. Surely John was shocked. Surely, John had no idea of what was about to happen in the story.

5. The Requirement (1:19a-d)

a) Record - Things Seen (1:19a)

Rev 1:19a " Write therefore the things which you have seen,

Jesus continued and said to John, “Write therefore the things which you have seen.” In other words, “Write down on paper what you have just seen. Write about Me! Tell the seven Churches what I look like. Draw the picture you have seen in words. Paint it pretty now! Paint it like it is. That is your first assignment. Get at it John; do it now!”

b) Record - Things Which Are (1:19b)

Rev 1:19b and the things which are,

Jesus then said, “Write therefore ... and the things which are.” What things? John does not know the promises about them yet, but that is his next assignment. “Write about the things that are.” What does that mean? What things were in existence at that time in 96 AD that Jesus wanted included in this story? Could it be the seven Churches? Jesus was about to make a big hoopla about them. They were thriving at the time. Surely the Churches are “the things which are.” “Don’t start yet John, I will show you what I want you to describe and write as we go along.”

c) Record - Things Which Shall Take Place (1:19c)

Rev 1:19c and the things which shall take place

Then Jesus said, “Write therefore ... and the things which shall take place.” “I want you to write down those things which are going to take place. They are not occurring right now, but they are going to take place in the future. I am going to show them to you – write them down. Write about the things which are and then I will show you the things that are going to take place later.”

d) Record - Timing of the Things (1:19d)

Rev 1:19d after these things.

With that, Jesus added an interesting phrase, “after these things.” After what things? If we have followed the progression in this passage, we have seen that Jesus gave John an outline for this book. First, He said, “write down what you have just seen.” That was to be a description of the LORD. Second, He said, “write down what I am going to show you about the things that are.” That was to be a description of the LORD and His interaction with the seven Churches. Third, “write down what I am going to show you that will take place.” When? “After the LORD has fulfilled the prophecies,

His promises, about the seven Churches,” He says, “then write all the things I will show you about the future after they are gone.” What were His promises about these seven Churches? The LORD will deliver those promises in the next two chapters.

6. The Reading (1:20a-c)

a) The Mystery of the Stars and Lampstands (1:20a)

Rev 1:20a "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands:

Two things that Jesus had shown John needed to be interpreted. He addressed them by saying, “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands.”

When John turned to see Who was speaking to him with the loud voice, the first things he saw were the seven golden lampstands. Then he saw Jesus walking among them. This picture means that those seven lamps were important to Jesus and they were part of the story line concerning His Second Coming.

Then, there was also the need to explain the meaning of the seven stars he saw in Jesus’ right hand. What did they mean? As with most of REVELATION, Jesus interpreted all the promises in this story and these are no different.

b) The Interpretation of the Stars and Lampstands (1:20b-c)

(1) The Stars the Angels (1:20b)

Rev 1:20b the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,

Jesus said, “the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” These seven stars were angels. The Greek word is *aggelos* and it means *messengers*. In the Scripture it is most often translated *angels* and an angel could have been set aside by the LORD for each church, but that would mean a supernatural conversation would be transpiring among these seven angels and the seven Churches at all times. That kind of interaction does not fit any previous example in the Bible. The LORD could do that, but it seems more likely that these seven angels were the seven messengers, or ministers of each of the seven Churches. Ministers were the ones who were tasked with the duty of communicating with the congregants. Whether or not they were truly angels or simply the ministers of the Churches make no difference, each one had a unique relationship to a Church and the LORD intended to continue to use them at the Church for some period.

(2) The Lampstands the Churches (1:20c)

Rev 1:20c and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Finally, the LORD identified the lampstands; they represented the seven Churches of Asia that were part of Jesus’ plan to tell the story about the chronology of the events surrounding His Second Coming. Those Churches were in existence then and the LORD had a message for each one. Each message contained a blessing and a curse. Both were important, but the curse will be the promise that affects the timing of the Second Coming of the LORD.

Chapter 2

V. The Letters of the Book – The Seven Churches

A. Ephesus – The Perseverant Church (2:1a)

Rev 2:1a "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

When the Goths destroyed the city of Ephesus in 263 AD, the Church ceased to exist. The warning from the LORD for this Church was fulfilled. According to historians, the Goths were an East Germanic people and two of their tribes, the Visigoths and Ostrogoths, were instrumental in defeating the Western Roman Empire, the western leg of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue with the head of gold. However, it would take another 213 years before the Western Empire fell in 476 AD. For clarity, the Roman Empire was not divided at the time of the fall of Ephesus. That division did not occur until 22 years after the destruction of Ephesus. The division of the empire occurred in 285 AD when Emperor Diocletian made Constantinople the capital of the Eastern Empire and Rome the capital of the Western Empire.

1. The LORD's Identification (2:1b)

Rev 2:1b The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

When John turned to see the LORD speaking to him, he first saw the lampstands (1:12) and then, in verse 1:16, he saw the seven stars in the LORD's hand. Then, in the last verse of chapter one, the LORD interpreted the meaning of the stars as the messengers to those Churches and the seven lampstands of Asia Minor as the Churches (1:20).

Specifically, in association with the LORD's letter to Ephesus, the perseverant Church, the LORD wanted the members of that Church to remember that He held them in the palm of His hand and He was walking among them constantly. That was the purpose of identifying Himself this way.

What grace and peace can be felt when we know that the LORD is holding us in His hand and He is always walking among us. In other words, He is near, never too far away, always ready to help us with everything in life.

2. The LORD's Oracle to Ephesus

a) The LORD's Acknowledgment (2:2-3)

Rev 2:2 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; ³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.