

**MESSAGE NOTES**  
**Revelation Unveiled-- Part 2 of 26**  
**“Who's In Charge”**  
**Revelation 1:9-20**

**Introduction:** The *Book of Revelation* was written by Jesus' disciple John to seven churches in Asia Minor (an area we now know as Turkey). They were churches he loved, as he was the Bishop of the Christian churches in that region. John has a vision given to him by God when he was imprisoned or in exile on an island called Patmos – an island about 40 miles out to sea off the coast of Turkey. He writes the vision down, and it is words and images meant to give them encouragement and hope in the midst of the persecution they are currently facing, and what they will face in the future.

**Read Revelation 1:9-20 (NIV) ...**

**Why are they being persecuted, and how are they dealing with their suffering with the patient endurance John writes about?**

**1. The Roman Emperors decide to declare they are god...**

Julius Caesar was the ruler and dictator of Rome. At that time, the Roman people did not consider their kings or queens a deity or a god. They weren't like people in Eastern countries such as Egypt, Persia, or Babylon who thought their Kings and Queens were divine and so they worshipped them. But then Julius Caesar went East and he had affair with Cleopatra and came back and said I'm a god too – I am god incarnate. Then his adopted son, Augustus, the one who was Emperor when Jesus was born, decided I'm going to push my dad's deity because IF my dad is a god THEN I AM THE SON OF GOD. After that, Augustus went to Egypt and came back declaring that he was not only a son of god, but he was god too. With each successive emperor coming to power, they push emperor worship more and more and this deification of the emperors has a dramatic impact on the Christians in the cities of Asia Minor where the churches are located which John writes to in Revelation.

The impact was the result of people in Rome not liking that their emperor was declaring himself a god, and they were not going to build a temple to worship him in Rome. However, the people of Asia Minor were glad to gain favor with the emperors and add them to a long list of gods they worshipped. So, they built temples of worship to the emperors in various cities, and those locations became the “Neokoros” or “Vatican” (the worship center) for that particular emperor.

In 81 A.D., Domitian becomes emperor and he is the closest thing humanly speaking to the devil that you could ever read about. The man was absolutely determined that he would not only be thought of as god, but that every one of his citizens would offer their allegiance to him under the pain of death. He demanded to be called Lord and God, King of heaven and earth. Pliny, the Roman writer called him “*The beast that came up out of the sea, his teeth dripping with the blood of good Roman citizens.*” (Keep this phrase in mind as later in Revelation, John will talk about “*The beast that came up out of the sea.*”) Anyone who would not agree with worshipping him would at least lose their home and business; or their freedom and become a slave in a Roman galley or a sex slave in a Roman brothel; and often they would be executed. This is what faced followers of Jesus to whom John was writing.

What made the situation worse is that when Mount Vesuvius erupted and thousands of people were killed, the people asked why did the gods let this happen to us? There was a Roman prophet who declared the reason Mount Vesuvius erupted was because the Flavians (Vespasian and Titus) had destroyed the temple of the Jewish God in Jerusalem. The Jewish God was angry and so he was going to raise their great Messiah from the dead and he who would come and tear the kingdom out of the hands of Domitian. When the prophet said this Messiah's followers live among us and they are called Christians, Domitian declared war on Jesus Christ and Christians.

The Ephesian Christians are at the front lines because Ephesus is the worship center for worshipping Emperor Domitian. Their city was the worship headquarters of the emperor determined to crush Christianity because he saw himself alone as being King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

**The procession of the emperor when the temple was dedicated for them to be worshipped as a god...**

When the temple to worship Domitian is completed, the emperor arrives for the celebration, and the harbor is full with Roman naval ships lined up in rows as thousands of Romans sailors and the emperor are there to dedicate the temple. The procession marching up Harbor Street to the temple involves the Praetorian Guard with their drums, and the 24 elders of Roman Emperor Worship marching ahead with their white robes and diadems on their heads.

The Roman Guards have beautiful gold chest plates, silver clad weapons, and helmets with plumes. The emperor processes up the street with a golden sash that he wore around his chest and the choir is singing, Worthy are you O god, to receive glory and honor and power!

Does that sound familiar, and can you imagine being a Christian in that environment? The Revelation of Jesus Christ in John's vision describes a similar picture, but this one is of Jesus.

## **2. Jesus Reveals Himself to John in a Vision of the Son of Man, The King of Kings and Lord of Lords...**

**Revelation 1:12-13:** <sup>12</sup> *I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, (THE 7 CHURCHES HE HAS JUST LISTED) <sup>13</sup> and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, (JESUS) dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.*

He is saying to those who have seen Caesar come up the main street with his long robe and a gold sash across his chest that Jesus, NOT the emperor, is God. The emperor is a counterfeit god as he comes marching up the street for the dedication of the temple for worshipping him.

The picture of God that John paints is not meant to be a picture of God's physical appearance but of his character. John sees a vision of the power and all sufficiency of God to ENCOURAGE HIM AND GIVE HIM HOPE IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION, and he is told to write down his vision for churches who are struggling under the weight of their tribulation (suffering), and are finding it difficult to be a lampstand (a light) to the world around them.

**Revelation 1:14a:** <sup>14</sup> *The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow,...*

This image in Revelation is similar to the image of the one in Daniel 7:9-10, where along with the description of hair white like wool, is given the title "Ancient of Days". He has all the wisdom that we associate with age, only he is eternal. He has all wisdom and knowledge as he knows all things from the beginning to the end. And he offers infallible wisdom.

**Revelation 1:14b:** *... and his eyes were like blazing fire.*

God offers reliable correction. Are you willing to live in the purifying gaze of God?

**Revelation 1:15a:** <sup>15</sup> *His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace,...*

Jesus, who John sees in his vision, has feet made of bronze – the strength of iron mixed with copper that does not rust. Jesus is the foundation on which we should build our life as through Him, God offers unshakable peace.

**Revelation 1:15b-16a:** *... and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. <sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword.*

God is ready for action and holds us in His hand, and so we have eternal safety and well-being by the unchallengeable power and authority of His word.

NOTE: The phrase, *The Almighty One* in Revelation 1 is a phrase referring to having all power over all of life. Are you and I wholly submitted to the authority of God in our life? Is there any area where you and I are holding out? Are there any sinful habits that you and I are not willing to give up? Are there any dark closets in the home of your heart or mine that are locked to Him? When He speaks to you and me in that still, small inside voice, or in a thunderous voice, do you respond? Do I respond? He is the Ruler over the kings of the earth, and He wants to be the Ruler over your life, but you have to say "Yes" to that. God offers us his rule in our life. We can accept that now or accept the consequences later.

**Revelation 1:16b:** *His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.*

In Matthew 17:2, during the "Transfiguration" of Jesus, Matthew says that when the glory of God descended on Jesus, his face "shone like the sun." John writes about this radiant aspect of God when he says: *"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."* 1 John 1:5 (NIV)

God offers us unblemished righteousness; absolute holiness; HIS LIGHT over the DARKNESS OF EVIL in our life as we live here in this broken and fallen world.

John is saying to the 7 churches that it may look like Domitian has control; (it may look like the devil has taken control because the suffering you are going to go through is unspeakable), BUT God is still in control! He has NOT lost control and that is what the book of Revelation is about as it is written to an ordinary group of people who were facing the devil head on. Some were shrinking back due to fear and persecution. Some were trying to participate in both worlds as they were mixing their Christian faith with Empire. Some of God's people were buying into the Hellenistic Culture of the day along with following Jesus and they were trying to do both. And Jesus is saying through this vision, that is NOT how my followers live. Instead, when you face the Domitian's of your world and you are tempted to give in and shrink back in fear, remember who's REALLY in charge! We know how the story ends!

Revelation 1:7: *"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him."*

In other words, all who were involved in the cause of his death at the cross (and ultimately that is every sinner) will experience fear. Jesus is going to come back, and for many people that will be a fearful thing, BUT NOT for any who know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

**Revelation 1:17-18:** *<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup> I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

John sees one like the Son of man; The Ancient of Days; The Alpha and the Omega; The Ruler of the kings of the earth; and he falls down at His feet like one who is dead (he faints). And Jesus, reaches down and he touches him on the shoulder, and he said, 'Hey John, don't be afraid. It is me, Jesus. The one you knew and loved. The one you walked the countryside with, and ate with, and fished with, and with whom you talked and laughed and learned.

COMMUNITY, one day you and I are going to stand before God and all his Glory, and we will stand before the one who went to the cross and was raised from the grave for us. He is going to say to us who loved Him, trusted Him in faith, have experienced His forgiveness for our sin, and have followed Him – 'It is okay. It is Me. It is Jesus. Don't be afraid. I have the keys to death and the grave; the ultimate enemy of humankind. That gate is going to unlock and no one who follows me is going to be trapped by death.'

**Revelation 1:19-20:** *<sup>19</sup> "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. <sup>20</sup> The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

John experienced God in a way like he had never experienced HIM before, and his exile on Patmos was a place where he discovered that God alone was sufficient for everything he needed in the midst of suffering and tribulation under the weight of persecution for his faith in Jesus. John sees a vision of the power and all sufficiency of God to encourage him and give him hope. He is told to write down his vision for the churches who are struggling under the weight of their tribulation (their suffering) and are finding it difficult to be a lampstand (a light) to the world around them.

AND SO, whatever your Patmos is; whoever or whatever your Domitian is; whatever you face in life that is the Evil One coming against you to as Jesus says, Kill, Steal, and Destroy; Jesus says to you today, 'Don't be afraid. It is me, Jesus, and I have work for you to do – people to love and B.L.E.S.S, the lost to save, requests to pray, great worship to offer. SO, LET'S GO! DON'T SHRINK BACK BUT INSTEAD BE A LAMPSTAND – BE A LIGHT TO THE WORLD and live your life for God's Glory and Neighbor's Good.

### Taking It Home

We encourage you to take a few minutes today and this week to process this morning's message. These questions are designed for discussion with your family, a friend, mentor, spouse, and small group. They are also useful for self-reflection.

1. What stands out to you in these passages from the Bible? From the message?
2. What is difficult for you to understand or accept in these passages from the Bible? From the message?
3. What is God saying in these passages and through what we heard in the message about Himself? About people? About you?
4. What examples are there to follow, commands to obey, or promises to stand on from these passages in the Bible, and from what we heard in the message?