

Intro:

1. As John writes this letter, a few things have happened. We know that John has been banished to Patmos, we know that a pastor has already been martyred for his faith (Rev 2:13). It has been years since Jesus had ascended and He had not returned yet. Jerusalem had been destroyed. Some in the church had lost its first love, tolerated sin, compromised their beliefs, and had lost their fervor for serving. The whole church thing looked bleak.
2. Now I'm sure that the readers would take comfort in the fact that Jesus would return in glory and defeat His enemies. But before John describes that, he describes the ministry of Jesus here and now. In this part, we see that even though the church may not be perfect, Jesus has not abandoned them. He is still with them.

I. Revelation 1:9-11: *"I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."¹⁰ On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,¹¹ which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."*

1. First we notice some things about John. Remember that John was one of the inner circle of the disciples. Along with Peter and his brother James, they witnessed many things that others did not. John also wrote a the gospel and letters that bear his name. He had authority, he had accomplishments, he had seen things and done things that no one else had done (and only remaining apostle alive), yet how does he address these people? As brothers. He was humble. Recall in the Gospel how John referred to himself (the disciple Jesus loved).
2. Next we notice about John is that he is not immune from what they are going through. He was a companion in the suffering.
 - a. John was banished to the island of Patmos which was a barren, volcanic island in the Aegean sea, and at its extremities was 10 miles wide and six miles wide and was about 40 miles away from the mainland where the 7 churches were located.
 - b. John was probably sent there as a prisoner and not a political prisoner so his conditions would have been worse. He would have had exhausting labor under the watchful eye (and whip) of a Roman overseer, with insufficient food and clothing, and would have had to sleep on the bare ground, remember that this would be hard on us, but imagine a 90 year old man!
 - c. Why is it so important that the people in these churches know that John was suffering like them. (He was not someone who is well off and distant from the pain. He's not on some island sipping tea telling them not to give up.) Have you ever had someone who is not suffering the way you were try to tell you to hang in there. William Barclay: "men will never listen to one who preaches endurance from the comfort of an easy chair"
3. John puts three words together here. The words suffering, kingdom, and patient endurance. Those words in Gk are thlipsis, hypomone, and basileia.
 - a. The word thlipsis meant pressure like the pressure of a weight on a mans chest. It later came to mean pressure of events, primarily of persecution. So the suffering John is speaking about is the suffering for Christ. It's persecution.
 - b. The word basileia meant kingdom.
 - c. Patient endurance: hypomone means "patient endurance". It doesn't mean you just hunker down and endure (It's not let's flee to the mountains and establish a monastery away from everything), this word is better translated consistent resistance. It means being right there in the midst of it but not giving in to it. It means not giving in and not being changed by what is happening even if that means death.

- d. So the situation for these Christians is this, there is only one way to get from suffering to the kingdom, and that is through the patient endurance. (Matthew 24:13, Acts 14:22, 2 Tim 2:12)
4. Next we see why John was in prison. It was because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Now it shouldn't shock us that John was persecuted for this. Jesus said as much. (Matthew 5:10-12). There may be a price to pay for being a Christian, and part of what this book is written for is to convince us that it is worth paying that price!
5. In the book of Revelation, whenever you hear a loud voice or a trumpet, it indicates the solemnity of what is about to be revealed. It's like a "Listen up! This is important!" You will notice that nobody whispers in this book. So whenever you hear the phrase "loud voice" or "trumpet", listen carefully because something big is about to happen.
6. Notice how the churches fall in line to how they would be delivered. When you left Patmos, the nearest seashore town was Miletus, which was closest to Ephesus. So copies would be distributed to each church, and then passed on to other churches in the area.

II. Revelation 1:12-16, ¹² *I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.* "

1. Seven golden lampstands. We later learn that the seven golden lampstands are the seven churches mentioned. Now think about the application of a church being a lampstand. Jesus said the church was to be the light of this world. We are called to be not the light itself, but the holder of that light. We are the vessels that hold the light. Our job is to take the light out into the world.
2. Someone like the son of man. Now before we get into detail about this, what is significant about where the son of man was located? Why is this important? Remember the promise of Jesus, "I am with you always! Even to the end of the age." Jesus had not abandoned them, He was right there with them. Even in the darkest moments in our lives, God never abandons us!
3. Now there is a distinct similarity to this vision and the one given to Daniel. Let's look at this. Turn to Daniel 10:5-6.
 - a. **Dan 10:5-9**, *"I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. ⁶ His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. ⁷ I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. ⁸ So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. ⁹ Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground."*
 - b. Now let's read Revelation 1:13-15 again. Do you see the similarities? The general character of each revelation is the glory of the messenger.
4. So what does each statement represent?
 - a. The word for robe used here was used most often in the Septuagint (Latin Bible) to mean the robe worn by the high priest. Reminds us that Christ is our great High Priest, and the fact that there is a golden sash furthers that.
 - b. Hair was like white wool: Compare this to Daniel 7:9. This affirms Christ's diety, and the hair and such could represent wisdom and honor. Also speaks of divine purity.

- c. Eyes like blazing fire: These are piercing eyes that know everything!
- d. His feet like bronze in a furnace represent to some power, authority, even the swiftness of judgment.
- e. Voice like the sound of rushing waters. Comes from Ezekial 43:2, and it suggest that this voice cannot be tuned out. It's loud, you can't ignore it. It suggest the power of the voice.
- f. Mouth came a double-edges sword- speaks about the penetrating power of the word of God. (Heb 4:12). It can both hurt and heal, sometimes both at the same time.
- g. Face shining in the brilliance is similar to the description of Christ during the Mt. of Transfiguration.

III. Revelation 1:17-20, *"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. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. ¹⁹ Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰ 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."*

1. Fell at His feet as though dead: This was the common reaction when a person came into contact with a heavenly vision. Remember Isaiah's vision, and Daniel's vision. They both had the same response.
 - a. Promise Keepers convention where the speaker discussed what we will do when we first saw Jesus, and said some say hi-fives, but he said we will all fall down and worship.
 - b. This is an image of Christ we don't hear enough of today. I love in the Narnia, "Lucy asks, Is He safe? And the beaver says, "No, no he is not safe. But he is good."
2. Hold the keys: Remember that Rome's greatest threat was to kill you. It killed Jesus. But look, Jesus is alive, and He now holds the keys to death and Hades. Hades is the place of the dead and is equivalent to sheol in the Old Testament.
3. Seven stars: Angels could be translated messenger, so some take this to mean the pastors of the churches. The problem with that is that the same word is used elsewhere about 50x and is always meant to mean angel. A pastor is not pouring out the bowl of God's wrath.
 - a. Could mean that each church has a guardian angel. Michael was thought to be the guardian angel to the nation of Israel (Dan. 12:1).
 - i. Problem with this is that this means that the angel is being rebuked for the sins of the church.
 - ii. Origen believed this to be the case. It compared that angel to a tutor of a child. If the child does poorly, the tutor is blamed.
 - b. Some take it to mean that every earthly thing has a heavenly counterpart, and the angel is the ideal church and is shown to be how far the church had come from it.