

Why Jesus Tells Us Not to Fear

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Revelation chapter 1. Read first at verse 10.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. Then at verse 12, then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands.

And then it says, and in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man. And then at verse 17, when I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

But he laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades.

Write, therefore, the things that you have seen, those that are, and those that are to take place after this. Now, as we know, this is a book, the book of Revelation, that always intrigues us.

[1 : 1 6] Because there's something about us, we always have this fascination with the future. We always want to know, or at least often want to know, or we would like to know, or have a rough idea. What is ahead?

What's ahead of me? What does the future hold? At a personal level, but also, I suppose, even at a national and an international level.

There's always this curiosity as to what lies ahead. And that's what makes this book really quite unusual, because it is a book that speaks to us a lot of what has already taken place, but also a lot of what is yet to come.

So, it is quite an amazing book, as all of God's word is. Now, this book, Revelation, is just that. A revelation is really an opening up, an unveiling, and enabling us to see behind the scenes of what is.

And so, it is aptly titled Revelation. In fact, the whole of the Bible is a revelation. We have what we call a natural revelation in the creation, because the creation tells us something about God.

[2 : 3 1] It tells us the kind of God who made this world. It tells us that he is a God who has always been there. He's eternal. He had to be before there was anything.

It also tells us that he is a God of great power to have broadened to being what was never there before. It also tells us something of the artistic mind of God, where we see the intricate beauty of this world that he has created.

Psalms 8 talks about that, how the psalmist looks at the creation, and he looks at how God has framed this world by his fingers.

It gives you this picture, almost of an artist at work, painting or forming. And when God made this world, he didn't do it randomly. It was deliberate.

Everything he did, he did with a special plan, a special purpose. And we see in this world the delight that God took in everything that he did.

[3 : 3 8] Because after he made everything, at the end of every day of the creation, he said over it, it is very good. So the creation tells us something of who God is.

But God has given us more than that. He has given us a special revelation, and that is what the Bible is. Because God has opened up to us so much in his word, which tells us so much that the creation couldn't about the kind of God that he is.

And that is why the Bible is so incredibly precious and important to the believer. Because through the Bible, God has revealed so much of himself to us, and he has, in fact, revealed so much of ourselves to ourselves.

You see, there are things that you and I could never have come to understand about ourselves apart from God's word. And there is so much about God that we could never, ever work out ourselves apart from the fact that he has revealed it to us in his word.

So that is why the word of God is so important to the believer. And it is something that, it is vital for us every day. And we cannot stress that too much, the importance of reading a little of God's word every day.

[5 : 05] And if you are a believer, please, please do not miss out reading God's word. Because, you know, even as Christians, we can become complacent, and in our very, very busy lives, we can substitute a quick word to the Lord in place of his actual word.

Make sure that every day you read something of God's word, because this is where he speaks to you. And if we miss that, we miss a lot. Because God, through his word, teaches us, he instructs us, he rebukes us, he challenges us, he helps us to grow and develop.

So the word of God, as we know, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. And the enjoyment of God is important, because a lot of people don't understand that.

That's one of the great things of being a Christian, is your ability to enjoy God. A lot of people think that Christianity is something that's all about rules and regulations and do's and don'ts, and that it's a burden.

It's a very reverse. Christianity is freedom, and Christianity brings you to the place where you come to know God.

[6 : 21] And the more you come to know of him, the more you want to know of him. And the more that you will seek, continue to seek him. But here we come to this amazing book that has both baffled and comforted the church down throughout the years.

And in this first chapter, we find the Apostle John, who's now an old man, and he has been banished to this island, the island of Patmos. And on this island, he is given a sight of Jesus, the like of which he had never seen before.

You've got to remember that John had been with Jesus for three years in this world. He had heard wonderful things from the lips of Jesus, and he had seen Jesus do wonderful things.

In fact, the Bible would have us believe that John was closer to Jesus than any of the other disciples. But he had never heard Jesus like this before, and he had never seen Jesus like this before.

John had been on the Mount of Transfiguration, and he had seen the glory there. He had seen the transfiguration of Christ take place. But what he saw now was something that the like of which he had never seen before.

[7 : 44] And we see the reaction from John that he actually fell down as one dead with what he saw. Now, we find that it's on the first day of the week that this I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

And that, of course, is the first day of the week. That was when the early church gathered together and the day that they met together to worship the Lord. And that's why we have continued to follow that example that has been set out for us in the Word of God.

And as we meet together on the first day of the week, the day that reminds us of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And John says, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

Now, of course, every single believer has the Holy Spirit within them. And every believer is ministered to by the Holy Spirit.

But I think we're aware that not every believer has the same awareness of the Spirit's ministry and the Spirit's influence at the same time.

[8 : 51] because many things can come into our lives that cloud our vision of the Lord. And if we grieve the Spirit, which, remember, it's very easy for us to do, we're not as aware or conscious of His ministry, of His promptings, of His leading, as we should be.

It's not that the Spirit has changed, but that we, we have, as it were, clogged up our spiritual arteries with other things so that we don't hear, we're not sensitive as we should be to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Well, John, as an old man who was, I believe, living in absolute devotion of the Lord, he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. And he heard this loud voice behind him like a trumpet.

And he turned round to see what this voice was or who was speaking. And what he saw was not like anything he had ever seen before. Now, we're not going to look at that because we've looked at this before, the vision that John had, where he sees this awesome, this, as we know, it's the Lord Jesus Christ, and what he sees here of his eyes, his feet, his voice, the mouth, the face, all these things.

In fact, we read about it there in verse 13, and in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash round his chest.

[10 : 21] The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

In his right hand, he held seven stars. From his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

And then it tells us, when I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. This is the exalted, the glorious Jesus Christ.

This is the Jesus before whom you and I have to give an account. This is the Jesus who will be on the throne. The Jesus in all his humanity, because the human nature that Jesus took, he continues to have forever.

But he is, as a son of man, he is now the exalted, glorious, altogether wonderful person.

[11 : 32] And this is one of the things that people often don't understand, because when you talk about appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, a lot of people will think of Jesus simply as the babe of Bethlehem.

They will think of Jesus as a man who walked through this world. They will think of Jesus as a man who was crucified on the cross at Calvary. Well, the Jesus that we're seeing here is no longer the babe of Bethlehem, although he's still with his human nature.

He is no longer the one with the crown of thorns or the spear pushing his side or the nails through his hands. He is the altogether glorious, almighty God of God.

and he is the one before whom you and I are going to have to appear. This is the one that we are to appear before. This vision that John got of Jesus Christ is a picture of the one before whom you and I are to appear.

You see, there are two appointments set out for you and me and for everybody. There is the appointment of death and following death there is the judgment. These two things are told us in the Bible.

[12 : 49] It is appointed unto man once to die and after death the judgment. These are two appointments we cannot escape. The only way we can escape the first one is if the Lord returns first.

But other than that, we will have to meet these two appointments. And so it is quite an awesome thought that this is the one before whom we meet.

John fell down before him as one dead. And you know it tells us that in Philippians that there will come the time when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Everyone. The Hitlers, the Stalins, the Pol Potts, all these evil tyrants in this world who at the snap of their fingers destroyed huge numbers of their own fellows, their own people without batting an eyelid.

Those who had the power of life and death in their hand, they will appear and they will bow before Christ and they will acknowledge him that he is the Lord.

[14 : 03] Every single soul that has ever lived in this world will acknowledge that. All the world leaders, the Bushes, the Trumps, the Mays, the Blairs, the Camerons, every single one will bow down before Jesus Christ acknowledging that he is Lord over all.

Every single one. The most radical Islamist Islamist who hates the Christian with a passion and would slaughter left, right, and center will bow down and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord over all.

Every atheist that ever lived in this world, those like Dawkins who gave all their energy and their great intellect to trying to undermine the Christian faith and remove it, they will bow down before the throne and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord over all.

That's what it tells us. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And surely it is in this world while we have time, while Jesus is being offered to us, that it is now that we do that because that's what the Lord is saying to us.

Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Accept me, accept my gift. Mr. McKeever has written a wonderful start to the newsletter and if you haven't read it, read it about the gift at this time of year.

[15 : 38] Read it because it's the worst thing that you can do is to be offered the gift and to refuse it. Please, in this world, bow before Jesus and acknowledge and confess that he is your Lord.

So anyway, we find that John falls down before Jesus, before this vision that he's given. But Jesus lays his right hand on him and we see here that this is a touch of love, a touch of affection, a touch of identity, a touch of reassurance and he says, fear not, don't be afraid.

And how often the Lord comes to us with these words through all the different storms and temptations of life, maybe that's where you are tonight. Maybe even as a Christian you're saying to yourself, you know, I'm full of fear and you know one of the reasons I'm afraid, I've made a profession as a Christian and I'm afraid that I won't keep it going right throughout my life because I struggle every single day.

Every day I feel I might make shipwreck. Every day I feel I'm going to let the Lord down. Every day it's a battle. Every day it's a struggle. What's going to happen to me?

The Lord is saying to you, my trembling, struggling, believing friend, fear not, don't be afraid. He's putting your hand upon you.

[17 : 11] He's reassuring you. Maybe you're struggling endlessly with temptation. Maybe you're struggling through trials. Maybe trials other people know about. Maybe trials that nobody else knows about.

Personal to you. And again, as we were hearing last night, the wonder of how Jesus is the one who has already been there. He is the Son of Man.

He has been where you are. But the Lord is placing his hand upon you tonight as well. And so he says to us, fear not.

Why does he say to us, fear not? A couple of things. A couple of reasons why we are not to fear.

And the first is this, the Lord who is putting his hand upon you.

And not only is he putting his hand upon you, but he has you in his hand. He is saying to you tonight, I am the Alpha and the Omega.

[18 : 10] I am the one who is and the one who was and the one who is to come. I am the beginning and the end. Now see what that is actually saying.

I, the Lord, who has my hand upon you and have you in my hand, I am the one who is before everything and I am the one who is after everything.

I am the one who was and the one who is and the one who is to come. Every single thing, past, present, future, is under my control, under my sovereign control and power.

And you, as being part of the church, are at the very centre of that. Now, that surely must be one of the most reassuring things that we can ever hear or understand.

No wonder the Lord says to us, fear not. You see, the Lord is over everything. The Lord knows everything before it ever happens. Remember the dream that Nebuchad Ned's had and Daniel interpreted and where he was given this vision of this great statue which spoke of the different world empires that were to come.

[19 : 27] There was a Babylonian and then the Persian and then the Greek and then there was the Roman Empire. And during the time of that empire, that part iron, part clay with the feet, there was this stone, of course, which remember was the picture of God's kingdom, the ushering in of God's kingdom through Jesus Christ, that was to grow and to fill the whole world.

So that centuries, centuries beforehand, while Nebuchad Ned's was the ruler of this great empire, Babylon, the Lord gives him this vision, this dream of the unfolding of centuries and of how Daniel interpreted.

And that shows us that God is in control of everything. Nothing, not even a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge. Empires come and empires go, nations rise, nations fall.

He remains the same yesterday, today, and forever, and he is God over yesterday, today, and forever. And that means that nothing has ever come into your life that has come without his knowledge.

and even, I would say, without his permission. You know, sometimes you'll see when there's a great tragedy and people, sometimes church people, trying to excuse God, as it were, saying that God wasn't aware of this.

[21 : 02] God is aware of everything, and is in control of everything. And he is turning and working everything for his own glory.

Even although you and I cannot understand that, and that's why we have to sometimes stop, and only faith can lay hold on this, where God says, you know, my ways are not your ways.

My thoughts are not your thoughts. And then he says, I'll try and explain how different your ways and your thoughts are to my ways and my thoughts.

Just as the heavens are high above the earth. You and I, when we look up and we see just the vast distance, we're talking there of going up and up, just way beyond what we can understand in distance.

Well, the Lord is saying, that's the gulf that exists between the way you think and the way I think.

And we've also got to remember that, because God has a purpose and a plan.

[22 : 09] And one day, that will be one of the wonders of glory, where we will then begin to see and we'll begin to understand how he did all things well.

Maybe for some of you tonight, you can't say that. Maybe your hearts are broken. You've been crushed by God's providence. There are things in your life and you say, I do not understand, and probably in this life you never will.

But you know one day you will. And you say, Lord, I now see what you did. I couldn't see it here. I couldn't see it in the world. But now I see it.

And so we have to learn to trust. And that's why the Lord is saying by way of reassurance, don't fear. I'm in control.

I'm in control of your life. Even when you think your life is out of control, when you think things have gone just as bad as it possibly could, I'm still on the throne.

[23 : 10] And I'm still ruling. I'm still governing. And that's one of the wonderful things. And so we see that at the very center, as we said, it says in verse 20, as for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands, and the lampstands are the seven churches.

At the center of God's purpose of everything, it's a church. We've got to remember that out of this world, the only thing that the Lord is going to take out of this world is the church.

Not all the other glories of this world, just the church. The church is his prized possession. The church is his great delight.

The church is the people that he loves. And again, we heard that this morning, while, yes, Jesus died personally and individually for us, we've always got to think of the collectiveness of the church. And the church is it. As often been said, the whole of history and all that's happening in this world is the scaffolding around the church.

[24 : 23] And at the end of the day, the scaffolding is taken down, and the church is all that matters. church. And the Lord will take what is today despised, because you've got to remember that that, if you were to say to people today, if you were to do a survey in Great Britain and say, what is the most important part of life in Great Britain?

How many people would say, the church? They wouldn't. It would be right down at the very bottom of a survey. But in God's sight, it's the most important. And this is what he is going to take with himself forever.

See, we live at a time where we feel the church, particularly here in the West, so much under threat, and it is. And the world has changed beyond recognition, even in the last few years.

One of the things that has come in is this incredible sense of intolerance. We live in an incredibly intolerant society. and we're seeing it at all fronts.

And it's speeding up. Everything's speeding up. The world is changing. And there is a growing intolerance towards the church, towards the Christian. And it's very easy for us to fear and say, oh man, what's going to happen?

[25 : 42] What's going to happen to the church? What's going to happen to me as a Christian? The Lord is putting his hand on you tonight and saying, now fear not, I'm still in control. I love my church.

I have died for my church. I have given my life for the church. So we've got to remember that. And the other thing, very briefly, we see just in the last few minutes, the other great reason why we are not to fear is that Jesus says, not only I am the first and the last, he says, I am the living one.

I died and behold, I am alive forevermore. and I have the keys of death and Hades. That's what he's saying. He's saying, I did die.

I tasted death. I went under its power for a while, but I did that for you. I know what death is like. I've been there. For a very short time it conquered me, but I conquered it.

death is no longer the great conqueror. And what's more than that is, I have the keys. I have the keys of death.

[26 : 56] And what a reassurance that is for you and for me tonight. Because you and I have to die. But who has the keys? The Lord, Jesus Christ. He has the key.

He has your life in his hand, and he has the key of that. And of Hades, that is the place of the dead. We can say the place of the dead, the grave.

And Jesus has been there as well. Isn't that wonderful? You know, we always think of the grave as such a cold, lonely, dark place.

It's almost like Jesus has said, you know, I went to the grave to warm it up for you. I've been there before you. It's all right. Because, you know what, I have beaten it.

I've conquered it. I've risen from it. Death can no longer conquer you. The grave will no longer hold you. Because, I've been there and I have one victory over it.

[27 : 57] And that victory is yours. That's what Jesus gives you. And you see how important it is to be a Christian? You see how awful and lonely it is to be without Christ?

Christ. Because you have everything in Jesus. Some translations have a die of the keys of death and of hell.

Well, Gehenna was a different word to the Hades, but to a certain extent it is also true that Jesus has the keys of theirs as well. Because, you know, those who live a life, their whole life, and die the death, where they have to their very last breath rejected Jesus.

Jesus has that key as well because what he will do is he will say, I'm going to give you what you chose every single day of your life.

Every single day of your life you chose not to have me. Well, for the rest of eternity I give you what you chose.

[29 : 07] Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. And that's the worst sentence, the worst words that any person can hear. But Jesus has the key of that as well.

He is in control of everything. And that's why tonight I want you to lay hold upon the fact that Jesus who died is alive forevermore.

There is no other person in the whole wide world that could make past, present, or future could make a claim like that. Lazarus could say to people, you know, I was dead and I'm alive.

But he couldn't say, I was dead and I'm alive forevermore because he had to die again. But Jesus can say, I was dead and I am alive forevermore.

I am the living one. I am the source of all life. No other person ever can make a claim such as that. Isn't it extraordinary how people will close the Bible, how people turn away from this, how people get angry when they're told about Jesus and what he's offering?

[30 : 23] Does that not show the absolute distortedness of sin? It's so blinkered, it's so blind, it's so twisted. And behind it all, of course, is Satan who is blinding the eyes of those who see not.

You ask tonight, Lord, open my eyes, open my heart, open everything so that I will see you and I will believe in you and I will trust in you so that the living life that you are may become the living life that I have.

will you ask Jesus then tonight that you will know his hand upon you and a hand of love, of reassurance, a hand that is there saying, you belong to me.

No greater words that you could hear than Jesus saying that to you. You belong to me. Ask Jesus to be your Lord. Let us pray. Oh Lord, our God, we again give you thanks for the great truth that your word proclaims to us.

We ask that we may indeed trust in you and accept you and believe in you. Help us to understand that you truly are the living one, that you are the author of all life, the source of life.

[31 : 44] You are life in yourself and you give life. And once you have given life, once you come in your life into a person's heart, that life remains forevermore.

O Lord, then we pray that all of us here may close in with you and believe in you and trust in you.

Guide us in everything, bless the fellowship that follows on, and take us all to our homes safely.

In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen. Let us conclude singing from Psalm 102, and this is from the second version of the psalm, Psalm 102, the second version in the Scottish Psalter.

The tune is Rockingham. It's on page 368. My strength he weakened in the way, my days of life he shortened, my God, O take me not away in mid-time of my days, I said, thy years throughout all ages last, of old thou hast established the earth's foundation, firm and fast, thy mighty hands the

heavens are made, they perish shall as garments do, but thou shalt evermore endure as vestures, thou shalt change them so, and they shall all be changed sure, but from all changes thou art free, thy endless years do last foray, thy servants and their seed who be established shall before thee stay.

Psalm 102, verses 23, to the end, the tune is Rockingham. My strength thee weak and end the way, my days of life be short and ahead, my God, oh, take me not away, and may time of my days I said, thy years throughout religious last, oh, would thou hast established the air's foundation firm and past, thy mighty hands the hands of me.

[34 : 39] The parishion lost garments do, but thou shall ever more endure, as best yours thou shalt change them so, and they shall all be changed sure.

But from all changes thou art free, thy endless years to last foray, thy servants and their seed to be, established shall before thee stay.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.