

Jesus, the Living One

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[0:00] Well, turn with me now, please, to the passage we read in Revelation chapter 1, and reading again 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.

Well, this revelation that came to John, as he tells us himself here in verse 9, came to him when he was in the Isle of Patmos.

Patmos was a place that the Roman authorities at the time used as a penal colony. They used to send people there who they regarded as troublemakers or potential troublemakers, and that's how they regarded some of the leading figures in the church as well at times during the times of the Roman Empire.

And he tells us he was here in verse 9 in the Isle of Patmos for the patient endurance and tribulation of Jesus.

[1:20] He was there because he was regarded as a threat to the authority of the empire. He was sent to the Isle of Patmos to be banished there.

It was an island which was very difficult to escape from. In other words, he was one of those persecuted for his role in the church, for his leadership in the church, for his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's interesting, he calls himself their brother and partner in tribulation and the kingdom and patient endurance that are in Jesus.

Now, that obviously would be greatly encouraging to those that he was writing to, because it's obvious going through the book of the Revelation that he was writing to people who knew what persecution was. And he was writing to encourage them, so he describes himself as being at one with them.

And he's saying to them, although I'm an apostle, I'm in the same situation as you are. I haven't escaped the persecutions. I'm writing to you from the Isle of Patmos.

[2:26] And he says he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week. He was in the Spirit. That means he was under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

That doesn't mean he was in an ecstasy where he didn't know what he was doing. But he was under the control, under the inspiration, and under the government or control of the Holy Spirit. So, in other words, what he's writing afterwards, the interpretation of the things that he saw and heard, they came to him because of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He was under that Holy Spirit's influence at the time.

He was there in the Lord's Day in the Spirit. And it's significant that he mentions it was on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, which was a celebration in many ways of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, as it still is for us.

This is what the Lord's Day is for us today. We are here today celebrating the fact that Christ is risen from the dead, ascended to glory, as we've been singing in Psalm 68. He ascended up on high and led captivity captive.

[3:31] He assumed his place on the throne of heaven, on the throne of the universe, presiding over all his enemies, including, as we'll see here, death as well.

And that's important in the context of the book of the Revelation. It's probably a book that most of us don't read too often, and a book that has many things in it that are difficult to understand and difficult even to present by way of setting out its teaching.

And it's quite common and understandable that people avoid the book of the Revelation, you know, so as not to go into it too deeply, because it is, in parts, very difficult to understand, even for ourselves who preach the Word of God.

But it's important that we realize, what is the purpose of the book of the Revelation? What is the main thread of teaching running through the book of the Revelation? It is the triumph of Jesus. It is the supremacy of Jesus over all the powers that are in the universe, including the power of the devil and his angels, the powers of evil. This thread right through the book of the Revelation says, Jesus is King.

[4 : 42] Jesus is Lord. There is no power like the power of the Lord. There is no authority like the authority of the Lord. And the book of the Revelation is a book, however difficult passages in it are to understand, it's clear right through that this is the thread of teaching.

We have a Savior who rules the world. We have a Savior who is King, not just of time, but of eternity. We have a Savior who will always be King, who will never relinquish his kingship, who will never be defeated in carrying out his kingship.

Today we're worshipping this King. We're worshipping the one about whom the book of Revelation is and reveals his supremacy.

So these are the things he says that he heard and saw. So let's look more closely at verses 17 and 18, 17 to 18 especially.

When I saw him, he describes what he saw there in the passage there from verse 12, when he turned to see. And in fact, from verse 12 down to 16, that's actually the longest description of Jesus that you have in the whole Bible.

[6 : 09] It's a precise description of Jesus. All these words describe the person of Jesus and where he is. And it's the longest uninterrupted description of Jesus in the Bible.

That's by the way, but it's important. And what is John's response? Well, something a bit like in Acts chapter 9, when Paul was on the way to, Saul was on the way to Damascus when he was carrying certain messages, having been for years an opponent of Jesus.

He met the risen Jesus. Jesus came into his path and interrupted his progress and revealed himself. Glory is light from heaven, the same Jesus here that you find here in Revelation.

And what John is telling us is, when I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. He didn't say, Lord, it's great to see you. He didn't react as if this was just an ordinary person or some important human being that was revealing himself to him.

He fell at his feet as though dead. In other words, it's telling us today what an awesome sight it is to see the risen Jesus. What an awesome sight is the glorified Lord.

[7 : 27] We're not worshipping today somebody who is tiny and just of limited significance. We're not worshipping today somebody who's just a made-up figure by the church over many centuries.

We're worshipping one who is so awesome that the Saul of Tarsus, who thought he was in charge of his own life, and John here, the apostle who knew Jesus very well, fell at his feet as though dead. It was such an overwhelming, awesome experience to have this confrontation with the glorified Christ.

Now, John knew Jesus very well. John knew Jesus in his time on earth. He was one of his disciples.

He was one of the closest to Jesus in his walk with him while Jesus was with the disciples in this world. He knew Jesus very well. He was very familiar. He loved Jesus.

[8 : 34] He knew him as one that was special to him. But he had never seen him as he saw him here. He had never before been confronted with a glorified Jesus.

He didn't fall down before him, though he knew Jesus very well previously and say, Lord, it is good to see you. It was good to see him. But he fell at his feet as though dead.

He was overwhelmed. The glorified, risen Christ was such an awesome sight. This was the only proper response, just to fall prostrate at his feet and acknowledge him for who he is.

And you know, this is such a wonderful emphasis, not just in terms of the awesomeness of the glorified Jesus, but go to verse 13. In the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man.

This is Jesus being described. The lampstands, he tells us in the final verse of the chapter, are representative of the seven churches. In other words, the whole church. I think we can take it that the letters to the seven churches at the time, they were real churches in real locations on earth.

[9:55] But they really stand for, if you like, the whole church throughout time where Jesus presides over them and speaks to them. But he says he is in the midst of the lampstands.

Who is in the midst of the lampstands? What's he like, this person that's in the midst of the lampstands? Here we are gathered here today as worshipers of the Lord, and we have the assurance of the Lord that wherever the two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst.

Who is there in their midst? Whose presence are we seeking today? Presence of this person. This glorified Jesus through his Holy Spirit.

And you know, there are many times when I, as much as anybody else, need to stop myself and just ask myself and say to myself, who are you going to be preaching about today?

Whose presence do you want to be with you today? Whose presence do you want to be in that congregation today as you preach the gospel to them? This Jesus. This person.

[11:07] This grand, magnificent, in many ways, indescribable person. That's who's here today.

That's who's here in our midst. We can't see him physically with your eye, but if you experience today his touch on your heart or on your mind, remember who he is.

Remember what he's like now. Remember where he is. Remember what John says about him.

Remember John's response.

Remember the way he was overwhelmed by this vision of Jesus. Friends, we live in a world where Jesus is, if thought about at all, is denigrated.

Just a figure you kick aside as you think about him briefly. Or somebody you find easy to ridicule as you ridicule the gospel.

[12:18] Just think of what it's going to be like. Just what it's like now to be in the presence of the Jesus who's in the midst of his church. Think of what it's going to be like to face him as he sits on the throne of judgment and at the end of the history of the world.

Think of all those millions of people who've dismissed him and who come when it's too late to realize what a glorious person he is. What authority he has.

What magnificence is here. Who is Jesus to you? What's he like in your own experience? What do you think about today as you think of Christ?

Do you just think of someone who appeared on the earth for a few years and gave great teaching to the disciples and died on the cross of Calvary and arose again from the dead and is that about it?

Is Jesus in your life the biggest the most important the most significant of all people?

[13:31] Is he your saviour? And if you confess him as your saviour is this how you see him? Is this who you serve?

John's response response is falling as though dead as his feet but he laid his right hand on me he said and of course that's and he touched him he laid his right hand on me saying fear not I am the first and the last.

Briefly you find in the gospel records the Lord coming to lay his hand on certain people maybe at the time he was healing people he communicated something through his touch as well as through his words and John is saying he laid his hand on me saying fear not in other words he's saying John don't be afraid I understand why you've fallen at my feet as dead but don't be afraid and he said that to the disciples when he was walking on the sea and they were terrified and he said don't be afraid it is I it's myself and you know one of the wonderful things that you can take from this today is that the glorified Christ for all his magnificence in all his magnificence the glorified Christ still has the same touch of comfort of assurance of reassurance for his people here on earth it's the same Jesus who ministers to us in our need here as minister to John here on the isle of Patmos that's your counselor that's your friend this glorious exalted Jesus he's the one you today experience in your life as a Christian the one who lays his hand upon you and assures you it's me you can't see me

I'm glorified I'm exalted I'm indescribably magnificent I have all authority in heaven and earth but I'm here for you isn't that something that encourages your heart today as it also humbles us that this Jesus is the one who's with us on the way through life when our trust is in him that whatever our circumstances it's this Jesus that comes to us and say don't you be afraid I'm in control I'm on the throne of the universe I have my hand on your life I have a grasp of you and of your future as well as your past don't be afraid where else is an assurance and reassurance like that today and so he comes to reassure John and he says to him fear not

I am the first and the last and the living one I died and behold I am alive forevermore I am the first and the last in other words it's really telling us something about the uniqueness of God and the uniqueness of Jesus the uniqueness of this person it takes us back to the likes of Isaiah chapter 44 where God is saying there thus says the Lord the King of Israel his Redeemer the Lord of hosts I am the first I am the last besides me there is no God who is like me let him proclaim it let him declare let it be said it before me fear not nor be afraid have I not told you from of old and declared it is there a God besides me there is no rock I know not any the same God of Isaiah now appearing to John as the risen glorified Christ I am the first and the last the living one

[17:37] I died and am alive forevermore in other words the reassurance that comes to us from Jesus it's not just a spoken word even though it is his word it's based upon certain truths if your heart is going to be comforted today you need your comfort to come on the basis of something sure something certain some truth that you know will not give way under your feet there it is in the Bible the truth of God the truth that is in Christ himself that's where your comfort is based that's where we look to for our hope isn't it we live in a world where many politicians will say no this is hope we've got hope for you what's it based upon sadly many times it's based on human wisdom only but Jesus comes to you today in the gospel and says this is comfort for you this is reassurance for you this is certainty for you fear not because I am the first and the last

I am the living one who died and is alive forevermore now it's possible to translate that when he says the first and the last and then what follows on from that as the first you can think of God being the source of all the creation he created brought all things into being I am the first I am the one who's been there from all eternity and I brought everything else that exists into being and I am the last he will bring all things to the conclusion that he has always had in his purpose and has appointed in other words you could say from this that if you ask the question who's going to have the last word on human destiny who's going to have the last word on your life and my life who's going to have the last word when it comes to my relationship to eternity and the things of eternity he is I have the last word he's saying not Putin not Trump not Hitler not Nebuchadnezzar not Pharaoh none of these great word leaders down through the course of history though they themselves thought that they were the masters of their own situation and of other nations as well and God is saying regarding them and regarding everybody else who's thought that they had the last word over other people no God is saying

Jesus is saying I have the last word you may think you've got the last word in your own life you may think that you're in control of your own life you may think that today and I may think and others may think when we come to leave this world we're going to be in charge of our own destiny no no we're not Jesus is saying I have the last word I'm in charge of it I'm in control of it I'm the governor and you're my subjects I'm the first and the last the almighty but he says then I am I died and I am alive and behold I'm alive forevermore now that can be translated some people will translate it something like follows I am the living one who died and behold I am alive forevermore

I am the living one who died and behold I am alive forevermore in other words you think of the death of Jesus as the living one the God he is in our nature having taken our human nature to himself you think of this God the son of God the second person of the glorious trinity that God is the living one who came into this world to die who experienced death through our human nature as he gave himself to die the death of the cross I am the living one who always had life in myself who was none other than God from all eternity but I'm the living one who died my divine nature didn't die but I died through my human nature I experienced that death which you deserved through my human nature as I gave myself to the death of the cross mystery absolutely but what a glorious truth and how important to see it as a glorious truth

I am the living one who died or who became dead and I'm alive forevermore I rose from the dead I defeated death I'm now sitting on the right hand of God the Father I'm in charge of the universe I have the scroll as later chapter here 5 will tell you I have the scroll that is opened up where all the events of history are unfolded and I'm in charge of it nobody else could open it but I opened it and I turn its pages and I'll do that till the last page is turned and when the last page is turned that will be the end of human history in this world in this life but I will turn it I'll be the one who'll do that and as he says himself in John 10 before he died that it was for this reason the Father loves him because he said

[23:29] I lay down my life so that I might take it again this command I received from my Father what's he talking about this is Jesus speaking to the disciples speaking before his death and this is

how he speaks of himself it's because of this the Father loves me because I lay down my life because I the living one the living son of God I lay down my life through my human nature I've come to die but not only that so that I might take it again in other words he's speaking of his resurrection only the living one the son of God could lay down his life in order to take it again in order to take it back by resurrection from the dead and what's resurrection from the dead it's triumph over death the triumph that's mentioned here as well I'm the living one who became dead and I'm alive forevermore you see all of that fits into this great thread that we mentioned at the beginning running through revelation the thread that gives us the greatest assurance today that if we are the Lord's people then we're going to share in his victory we're sharing in it already but throughout eternity this will be our song unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins to him be glory and majesty and dominion and power forevermore forevermore

I am the living one who became dead and I am alive forevermore what a saviour you have today what a privilege is yours to be a Christian not just to be taught by words that Jesus left us in the Bible not just to know that he has given us certain things that will last us throughout time and on into eternity but what a privilege to know that this is our friend this is our companion this is the one we love this is the one we look after us will look after us why are we assured of that well because of what he's done already because he's the living one who died and now is alive forevermore and he finishes by saying and I have the keys of death and Hades

Hades sometimes translated hell in the older translations but Hades is a Greek word which really really means the realm of the dead or the place of the dead sometimes there's there's no distinction made between those who left this world have gone to heaven and those who've gone to a lost eternity you can call hell or Hades but Hades sometimes is just a general description of what's beyond this world we continue to live beyond this world and in other passages of the Bible it's obvious that Hades the realm of the dead is actually inhabited by those who live forevermore and those who have an eternal death in hell and the way hell is usually described but you see the important thing here is not so much going into the meaning of the words as such though that's important I have the keys I have the keys of death and of Hades of the realm of the dead I'm the only one who has the authority to unlock it or the authority to lock it and today as your saviour Jesus is saying as he's come to release you from the guilt of sin as he's forgiven your sin as you've come to accept him as your saviour Jesus is saying I have turned the key in your life and released you from the grip of death from the grip of condemnation as Paul wrote to the Romans there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus why is there no condemnation because of what Jesus has done and who Jesus is why is there no condemnation because he has the key of death and if Christ unlocks the door of death to any one of us and saves us from it nobody's going to close it on us but the other side is equally true remember because if once we've lost left this world and enter a lost eternity if we're not saved

Jesus is going to turn the key on hell for us and nobody has the authority to open it there is no exit when Christ has turned the key that's why it's so important for you and for me today that before we die we have come to know him as the one who has unlocked the door to life for us and locked the door to hell forever against our entry john's response and christ's reassurance and at the end of revelation it comes to a climax in its teaching when it speaks in chapter 20 about the great throne the great white throne that was set up before whom everyone who ever lived will come to be will come to stand and this is you remember how it says in chapter 20 and verses 11 and 12 then i saw the great white throne and him who was seated on it from his presence earth and sky fled away and no place was found for them and i saw the dead great and small standing before the throne and the books were opened then another book was opened which is the book of life and the dead were judged by what was written in the books according to what they had done and the sea gave up the dead who were in it death and hades gave up the dead who were in them and they were judged each one of them according to what they had done then death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire this is the second death the lake of fire and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life he was thrown into the lake of fire friends these things in eternity are real but christ has come to rescue us from that death and hell that the bible speaks of and to bring us into the possession of that life which he himself has authority to give us a life which he says in john's gospel is abundant life he came to give us life he experienced and gave himself to death to give us life he rose from the dead to give us life he is exalted to heaven to give us life he is the glorious one before whom paul and john fell down at his feet as though dead but you know all of that is so that you and i

will live through him so that we will know him as the one who said i am the way the truth and the life whoever comes to me i will never cast out may god bless these thoughts on his word to us we're going to sing in conclusion now singing in psalm 95 psalm 95 in the scottish altar 1 to 6 oh come let us sing to the lord come let us everyone a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation let us before his presence come with praise and thankful voice let

[32 : 29] us sing psalms to him with grace and make a joyful noise and as we sing these verses to the end of verse 6 we're conscious that we're singing about and we're singing to the one who's described in revelation as our great king oh come let us sing to the lord oh come let us sing to the lord come let us every one a joyful noise make to the moment And make a joyful noise.

For God, a great Lord and great King, half of all God's ears, shares of the earth that met his hand, the strength of hills is his.

To him the spacious sea belongs, for he the same did be.

That high land also from his hands is for man's worshiping.

O come and let us worship him, let us bow down with hope, and on our knees before the Lord, our ringer, let us all.

[35 : 10] If you would let me get to the main door, please, after the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.