

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Revelation: God's Revelation To His Servants Today On Events About To Occur

Part I: Prologue: Almighty God's Introductory Message To His Servants Today

(Revelation 1:1-8)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

If ever God's servants needed a direct, informative, edifying message from Almighty God, it would be today:

(1) The international world is swamped in ungodliness, illustrated in how "Nigeria's efforts to rescue more than 200 schoolgirls abducted last month have been hampered by an ill-equipped military sapped by decades of corruption . . ." Ibid., Drew Hinshaw, Julian E. Barnes & Heidi Vogt, "Distrust Hampers Nigerian Search," p. A1.

(2) Nationally, we are also deluged with ungodliness: (a) Douglas Belkin's story, "List Grows Of Canceled Graduation Speakers," Ibid., May 13, 2014, p. A1, told of growing list of university graduation commencement speakers who have been rejected due to political incorrectness. Anne Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, was cited in this report as saying, "There are serious implications for what is going on here; universities are becoming havens of the closed minded."

(3) We face godless challenges to our Christian faith: when Harvard Divinity School professor Karen King revealed "the discovery of a Coptic (ancient Egyptian) gospel text on a papyrus fragment that contained the phrase, 'Jesus said to them, 'My wife . . . ' the world took notice. The possibility that Jesus was married would prompt a radical reconsideration of the New Testament and biblical scholarship," and undermine the historical Christian faith! (Ibid., May 2, 2014, Jerry Pattengale, "Houses of Worship: How the 'Jesus' Wife' Hoax Fell Apart")

Yet, Pattengale told how the New York Times promoted the papyrus as "not a modern forgery," and a flood of similar articles supporting the authenticity of the "Jesus' Wife" papyrus appeared right before Easter, an evident "rush by the media and others to embrace the idea . . . that Christian beliefs have been mistaken for centuries." (Ibid.)

(4) Even in conservative evangelical circles we face the alleged prospects of the dearth of godliness: with the recent passing of a beloved, godly giant in Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, age 99, long-time professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, many Christian blogs have already lamented the dearth of "great spiritual leaders" in the Church!

Need: So we ask, "In view of today's oncoming tide of ungodliness and what also seems to be weakness in the Church, does Almighty God have an informative, edifying message for us Christians who serve the Lord today?!"

- I. When likely the last surviving apostle, the aged, exiled Apostle John, wrote the book of Revelation in A. D. 95 or 96, he and the Christian Church faced a great, oncoming tide of ungodliness:**
 - A. The Apostle John wrote the Revelation in exile for his Christian faith on the Island of Patmos, Revelation 1:9.
 - B. John wrote it as likely the last surviving apostle in A. D. 95 or 96 in the era of Rome's emperor Domitian who greatly persecuted the Christian Church, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 925; Z. P. E. B., vol. Two, p. 155.
- II. In such a bleak setting for John and the Church, God the Father gave Jesus Christ a message to share with His servants in the Church like John about what would occur in their future, Revelation 1:1-2.**
- III. As that future was *imminent to them*, God's servants would be blessed in heeding the message, 1:2-3:**
 - A. The word rendered "shortly" (KJV) or "soon" (NIV, ESV) in Revelation 1:1 is *tachus*, meaning "quickly, without delay" (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 814-815), and the word in Revelation 1:3 rendered "at hand" (KJV) or "near" (NIV, ESV) is *eggus*, meaning "near, soon," Ibid., p. 213, so the events of the Revelation were *imminent*, about to take place for God's servants in the Church.
 - B. Thus, it was **imperative** that God's servants **read** and **heed** the Revelation to be **blessed of God!** (Rev. 1:3)
- IV. However, ALL of God's SERVANTS in the context are *CONFINED* to the "seven churches of Asia" in Revelation 1:4a (and Revelation chapters 2-3), and this fact plus the context of the seven churches show they PREDICT SEVEN CONSECUTIVE ERAS of CHURCH HISTORY (as follows):**
 - A. The Revelation 1:4a seven churches even in John's era contained only a small part of the universal Church of God's servants, cf. 1 Peter 1:1, Romans 1:1-7, etc. The seven churches thus *typified* the **universal Church**.
 - B. Also, the **context** reveals these seven churches represent *seven consecutive eras of Church History between John's A. D. 95 exile on the Island of Patmos and the pretribulation rapture of the Church (as follows):*
 1. The rapture, **still future today**, typologically occurs at Revelation 4:1-2, a passage that begins the "things hereafter" part of the Revelation in **contrast** to "the things which *are*" of the **current** Revelation 2-3 era as noted in Revelation 1:19, and John in Rev. 4:1 is called to heaven as if by a trumpet as in the 1 Thess. 4:16 (cf. also 1 Cor. 15:52) rapture. The Revelation 2-3 seven churches thus *typify all of Church History!*

2. Then, if a messenger leaves Patmos where John was to go to the seven churches, the geographical layout leads him to visit them in the **order** they **appear** in **Revelation chapters 2-3**, Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 932.
 3. Also, if the Revelation 2-3 messages to the seven churches are treated as occurring in **consecutive order**, scholars see a "remarkable" similarity between Revelation 2-3 and "the movement of church history," Ibid.
- V. Thus, every servant of God in the Church universal living between A. D. 95 and the future rapture of the Church lives in one of the "seven churches" ERAS of CHURCH HISTORY, so the MESSAGE of the REVELATION to ANY such servant of God is truly IMMANENT to HIM just as Revelation 1:2-3 claims!**
- VI. God then has the following Revelation 1:4b-8 INTRODUCTORY message for US servants of HIS NOW:**
- A. The eternal God the Father, God the Holy Spirit (represented in the seven spirits before the throne, picturing the seven-fold perfections of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2) and Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the risen and coming king of the earth, express grace and peace to **us** Christian servants of God living **today**, Rev. 1:4b-5a.
 - B. John then gave a brief doxology to Christ, praising Him for loving **us**, for washing **us** from **our** sins in His own blood and making **us** kings and priests unto God and His Father, asserting glory and dominion forever and ever unto Jesus followed by John's own expression of "Amen," Revelation 1:5b-6.
 - C. In addition to this edifying introduction, John wrote of the great Christian hope that Jesus Christ **will** truly **come** in the clouds at His Second Coming (Rev. 1:7 with Acts 1:9-11), that every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced him, the Hebrew people, and all kindreds of the earth **will** mourn because of Him as they recognize their accountability unto Him for sin, Revelation 1:7a with Zechariah 12:10-14; Matthew 24:29-30.
 - D. In view of the ungodliness the Church faces in **our** era **today**, John exemplified for **us** the godly response to this hope by authoring his heart-felt expression of, "Yes (indeed), Amen!", Revelation 1:7b (*nai, amen*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 837; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 534-535; Ibid., p. 45)
 - E. Then, in a final thrust to edify **us** believers in **our** era of the Church, God added references to Himself to get **us** as His servants in His Church to focus on **His all-sufficiency** for the issues of life **we** face **today**, Rev. 1:8:
 1. First, the Lord indicated, "I Myself am the Alpha and the Omega," Rev. 1:8a, picturing the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet that recall God's claim in Isaiah 46:9-10 where He said there was no god but Himself, the Lord Who declared the end from the beginning, saying His counsel would **sovereignly** stand for **us today** regardless of the efforts to the contrary of all other created entities that exist in sin **today!**
 2. Second, the Lord indicated He was the **Eternal** God, sovereign in **OUR** era where **WE** believers find **OURSELVES TODAY**, that **WE** thus find **Him sufficient** to address **OUR** needs **TODAY**, Rev. 1:8b.
 3. Finally, the Lord referred to Himself as the *pantokrator*, the "Almighty," the "Omnipotent" God (Ibid., p. 613-614) Who is **infinitely** **ABLE** to exercise His sovereignty in **our** era to **MEET** **our** needs!

Lesson: *God wants each of us His servants living in our era of Church History to know that He has a message in the Revelation that uniquely applies to us so that if we heed it, we will be richly blessed. God furthermore wants every one of us servants of His to know that our Great Savior, Jesus, is truly returning in glory, that He will hold all men accountable for their deeds, that we as God's servants must trust He is sovereignly going to fulfill His Word, that He is available in our era to meet our needs and that He is infinitely able to meet those needs today.*

Application: *May we (1) trust in Christ to be saved (John 3:16) and (2) serve God, doing His will. (3) May we heed His message to us in our era, knowing He is a fully relevant, able, interested God relative to all of our needs.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

As evidence of God's sovereign help in **our** era, shortly after Easter, the "Jesus Wife" fragment that we learned in our sermon introduction had been supported by the media was shown to be false. Jerry Pattengale (Ibid.) reports that the fragment's Gospel of John text was found to be "directly copied from a 1924 publication" with "the same line breaks as the 1924 publication," and "the fragment contained a peculiar dialect of Coptic called Lycopolitan, which fell out of use during or before the sixth century." Ms. King of Harvard Divinity School who revealed the fragment to the world had performed two radiometric tests on it and found the papyrus plants used to make it were "harvested in the seventh to ninth centuries" after the Lycopolitan Coptic dialect was no longer used! (Ibid.) Pattengale then cited "Alin Suci, a research associate at the University of Hamburg and a Coptic manuscript specialist" who "wrote on April 26: 'Given that the evidence of the forgery is now overwhelming, I consider the polemic surrounding the Gospel of Jesus' Wife papyrus over.'" The fragment was found to be a hoax, and the historical Christian faith was vindicated!

May we be encouraged that our God is sovereign and fully willing and able to help us as God Almighty in OUR era of Church History. Accordingly, may WE KEEP serving Him TODAY, looking for His return!