

EASTER SUNDAY INTERLUDE
Comfort And Direction From Our Risen Lord
(Revelation 1:9-20)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In the last six weeks, we as a Church body have faced the passing of four men we know. This is a large loss of men in such a short time for a body our size, and it produces a need for comfort and direction in us as a Church!

In addition, a number of believers we know both outside and inside our Church are facing potentially life changing trials regarding issues in their families, careers, health, finances, housing or mental and emotional welfare.

Besides all this, much of the international scene is in a state of upheaval and uncertainty: the April 2, 2026, lead editorial in the Republican-American, p. A6 bore the title, “Global chaos overwhelms U. S.,” and it told of the international problems associated with Iran, Ukraine, Gaza, Venezuela, Columbia, Cuba, Nigeria, Greenland, Taiwan, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Somalia and Sudan.

Need: *So we ask, “What comfort, encouragement and direction does God have for us this Easter Sunday?”*

- I. When John wrote the Book of Revelation, he and the Christian Church faced humanly daunting trials:**
 - A. Over 28 years before, the apostles Peter and Paul had been martyred by the Roman Emperor Nero in A. D. 67 along with many other Christians who had been cruelly tortured and martyred for their Christian faith.
 - B. John had since been banished to the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea for his faith, Revelation 1:9. This occurred in the reign of Emperor Domitian (A. D. 81-96; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, “Intro. to the Revelation to John: Date,” p. 1785). John was in his 90s, and Victorinus, the first commentator on Revelation, “stated that John worked as a prisoner in the mines on this small island.” (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 930)
 - C. Domitian “accepted a form of address which implied his divinity and mastership . . . As god-monarch of the Roman realm, placed above all both in appearance and in fact, he needed no Senate to partner him but only ministers and servants.” (The Cambridge Ancient History: Vol. XI – The Imperial Peace, A. D. 70-192, p. 41)
 - D. Christians suffered greatly under this emperor: “(A) man suspected or accused” of disloyalty “might save himself . . . by offering sacrifice before the image of the *princeps* (Emperor); if he refused he could then be charged with *atheotes*,” a capital offense, and be summarily executed. (Ibid., p. 42, 32)
- II. However, in this difficult setting, the Risen Lord Jesus Christ appeared to John in His divine power:**
 - A. John heard behind him a loud voice like a trumpet, declaring that He was the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, alluding to Isaiah 44:6 where God referred to Himself as the only true God in contrast to any other alleged deity (like Domitian)! Jesus then told John to **WRITE** what he saw and send it to the seven churches of Asia – to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. (Revelation 1:10-11)
 - B. John turned around to see Who was speaking to him and he saw seven golden candlesticks, what Christ in verse 20 identified as the seven churches, and in their midst the Lord Jesus Who was dressed as a (our high) priest and judge, Revelation 1:13. (Ryrie, op. cit., fn. to Revelation 1:13)
 - C. His head and hairs were white like wool, illustrating His eternality as God, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, signifying His penetrating judgment as our judge, Revelation 1:14.
 - D. The feet of the Lord were as fine brass, another symbol of judgment (Revelation 1:15a), and His voice was like the sound of many waters, illustrating His divine authority in His decisions as judge, Revelation 1:15b.
 - E. Jesus had in His right hand seven stars, what He identified in verse 20 as the messengers to the churches, 1:16.
- III. When John saw the Risen and glorified Lord, though he had comfortably sat next to Him at the Last Supper in John 13:23-25, John now fell at his feet as dead, stunned by His power and glory, Rev. 1:17a.**
- IV. What the Risen Lord then did in response to John’s reaction richly ministered to edify and direct him:**
 - A. The Risen Lord extended His right hand, the one that sovereignly held the messengers of Church History, and in comforting encouragement, He placed that hand of power, security and support on John, Rev. 1:16, 17b.
 - B. Jesus then told John, “stop being afraid (for your benefit),” the verb “Fear not” rendering the present **middle** imperative *phobou* from the root verb, *phobeo*, meaning “fear, dread.” (Rev. 1:17c; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 838; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 428) It was to John’s benefit that he stop being afraid of Jesus!
 - C. To explain His reason for this command, Jesus repeated His former claim He was the first and the last, the only true God opposite the claims of Emperor Domitian (Rev. 1:17d). Christ’s display of His glory proved it!
 - D. Jesus added that He was living, and that He “had died for My own benefit” (*egenomen*, aorist **middle** indicative of *ginomai*, “be, become” (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., loc. cit.; p. 158, 126; Wm. D. Mounce, The Analyt.

- Lex. to the Grk. N. T.) “and behold I am living forevermore,” Rev. 1:18a. Jesus here taught that He had given up His life on the cross, no one taking it from Him, and that for His interest in saving people! (John 10:17-18)
- E. Further, Christ said that He had the keys of death and of Hades, that He fully controlled who died, when they died and where their souls went at death, Rev. 1:18b. To John in his physically threatening setting as an aged prisoner forced to work in a mine as Christians were being slain by an evil emperor, this was a huge comfort!
 - F. Following this declaration of the divine power, sovereignty and encouragement by the Risen Lord, Jesus directed John *again* to **WRITE** His message to the seven churches, Revelation 1:19. In other words, Christ was highly motivated for John to be focused on the Lord’s assignment that he minister His Word to believers!

Lesson: The Risen Lord wanted John to know that He willingly gave His life on the cross for John’s salvation, that He wanted John to be richly encouraged over the trials he faced, and that Jesus was the only sovereign God over every part of man’s existence, including how long people lived, when they died and where their souls went at death. Thus, Christ strongly wanted John to focus on His calling that John fulfill Christ’s ministry assignment for him!

Application: (1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) May we realize that our Risen Lord Jesus Who loved us and gave Himself for us is sovereignly and intensely involved in our lives and our welfare so that we cease fretting about the trials we face and rather concentrate on fulfilling His assignments for us in this life.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message or provide additional helpful information . . .)

Sticking to one’s calling amid hard trials sent the UCONN men’s basketball team to the Final Four this year.

With ten seconds to go in their Elite Eight game against Duke, the UCONN men’s team was down 70 to 72, and Duke had the inbounds. Duke planned to hold onto the ball to run down the game clock and be fouled to keep UCONN from defeating them by getting a chance to make a shot from beyond the three-point arc to win the game.

After Duke inbounded the ball and made a few quick passes, UCONN guard Silas Demary, Jr. deflected the ball and UCONN guard Braylon Mullins scooped it up and quickly passed it to UCONN forward Alex Karaban who was in three-point territory. Braylon later reported that since Alex had made a three-point shot shortly before, and since Braylon hadn’t made any three-pointers that far into the game, he believed that Alex should make the shot.

Alex spotted one of Duke’s best players starting to move up to oppose him, and Alex felt that from that great distance with that opponent he would have a tough shot, so he quickly passed the ball back to the unguarded Braylon.

Meanwhile, UCONN head coach Dan Hurley was reluctant to call time out, for doing so would allow the excellent Duke coach to set his players in a tough defensive stance, making it far harder for UCONN to score. Thus, Dan Hurley decided not to call time out unless either Alex or Braylon put the ball on the floor to dribble with it.

When Braylon caught Alex Karaban’s return pass, he saw the game clock had only 3 seconds left on it, and since going to the Final Four was on the line and no one else had time to shoot, Braylon realized that he had to take the shot himself even though he was 35 feet away from the basket, he had been scoreless in the game from three-point land and he had never practiced shooting from that great distance. Braylon Mullins then shot the ball.

The basketball arced high into the air and went down through the rim, hitting nothing but net and making a ripping sound! UCONN was suddenly up 73 to Duke’s 72! Four-tenths of a second remained for Duke to inbound the ball, but when they did, Alex Karaban batted the ball away, the clock ran out, so UCONN went to the Final Four.

What made this historic win possible was that Silas Demary, Jr., Braylon Mullins, Alex Karaban, coach Dan Hurley and the other UCONN players were each focused on doing what they knew was the best thing they could do under difficult circumstances. Duke had outplayed UCONN for much of the game and it looked impossible for UCONN to come back to win the game. However, Silas blocked a Duke player’s pass, Braylon scooped up the loose ball and fired it to Alex and Alex fired it right back to Braylon who then shot the ball. Coach Hurley let the men play, trying to take advantage of the disorder of Duke’s broken play versus calling time out and letting Duke set up a defense to make it harder for UCONN to score. As each man focused on what was the best thing he could do under trying circumstances, Braylon Mullin’s shot from 35 feet away went in and UCONN ended up in the Final Four!

This event illustrates what our Risen Lord wants us to do amid the challenges we face this Easter Sunday. God has His assignment for each of us, and if we know what that assignment is, the focus He wants us to have is a focus on performing that assignment regardless what difficulties we face. In the end, He will greatly reward us!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life. May we then trust our Risen Lord’s sovereign oversight of our welfare and focus on His calling for us for His eternal reward.