

Back to The Future: Understanding Revelation: Suffering and Future Hope, 1:9-20

The Situation of the Revelation

Persecution

The Christian society in the Roman province of Asia at that time was hard pressed. It is probable that the Revelation reflects the situation during the reign of the Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96), who carried to its second stage the persecution of Christians begun twenty-five years previously by Nero. Nero's persecutions had been sporadic; Domitian's seem to have been more systematic. The effects of Nero's antagonism were felt in Rome only, while under Domitian, who was hungry for divine honors, the persecution spread to Asia. Christians who worshipped the Lord Christ were being invited to worship the Lord Caesar. The battle was joined. The hearts of Christian people were filled with alarm. Already some of their number were receiving personal insults. Others were being boycotted in business. One or two had even lost their lives. Could the church survive the storm which seemed to be on the point of breaking? Persecution was not the only peril to which the churches of Asia were exposed. There was also error to be refuted and evil to be overcome. False prophets were abroad, who were contriving to deceive even established Christians by their heretical philosophies. Immoral men and women too were contaminating the church by their influence, and standards of behavior were being lowered.¹

The Human Author, 1:9

< *Y'jg í your brother*

John is almost certainly the only living apostle, probably about 90 years old now, the most venerated person in the church living at the moment. Yet, he humbly
tgh'tu'vq'j ko ugh'cu'õ{qwt'd tqvj gt .õ'qpg'qh'f qw

He is a sharer of

Suffering ô general hardship that Christians deal, Acts 14:22

Kingdom ô John looks forward in hope to the establishment of the kingdom that is coming

Patient endurance ô remaining in a difficult circumstance

He knows by experience what his readers are going through

He was on the Isle of Patmos

í dgecwug'qh'vj g'Y qtf'qh'I qf'cpf'vj g'vgnko qp{'qh'Lguwu'E j tkav

John had been faithful to the written word of God and the living word of God.

He was exiled to the Isle of Patmos in punishment for his faithfulness.

¹ John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of His Church*, p. 8.

The Divine Author, 1:10-20

What I heard, 1:10,11

ōC'hqwf'xqlæg'hng'e'vtwo r gvö

A loud sound or voice clearly indicates the importance and solemnity of what is about to be spoken (5:2, 12; 6:10; 7:2, 10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12, 15; 12:10; 14:2, 15, 18; 16:1, 17; 19:1, 17).² í 'Vjg'luqwpf'dgj kpf'j'ko òy cu'cu' loud and clear as a trumpet blast, signaling the necessity to submit to y j cvxgt'k'e'qo o c'p'fgf³

C'eqo o c'p'f'vq'ōwrite ö

He did not write on his own; he was told to do so by Jesus Christ. 12 times in this book he receives this command (1:19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5).

What I saw, 1:12-16

Seven golden lampstands, stands for portable oil lamps.

In v 20, we are told what this represents. The church is to be a light, a luminary to a dark world.

Co qp i'vjg'ico ruwcpfu'y cu'ōuqo gqpg'hng'vjg'ūqp'qhb cpö

Doubtless a reference to Daniel 7:13

References his capacity to judge (John 5:22,27; Acts 17:31)

Clothed down to his feet: Reference to dignity and rank

With a golden sash around his chest: the divine messenger in Daniel 10:5, same person, one who had dignity and was royal.

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, 1:14.

T glgtgpeg'vq'F cp'9< :y jgtg'vjg'ōcpelgp'v'q'k'f'c {uö'k described. This speaks of his longevity, his pre-existent state.

His eyes were like blazing fire: penetrating intelligence and righteous wrath

His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace

This speaks of shining purity of metal that is aglow, Dan 10:6. The fact that his feet had this quality shows he was moving among the churches.

His voice was like the sound of rushing waters: Usually suggests powerful forces

² Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7, An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 91.

³ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7, An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 92.

His right hand had seven stars, 1:16

The right hand symbolizes power, and here probably power to protect his churches

Out of his mouth came a sharp double edged sword

*The word for sword refers to a large sword. The roman sword was shaped *rhng't'iqp iwg'hp'vjg'gpf.'cpf'fqwdig'tglgtu'iq'bi tgcigt'lj c trpguð'Kvlurgmu'* of a warrior defeating his enemies and pronouncing a sentence of judgment upon them*

His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance

This speaks of the glory of Jesus Christ, something John saw sixty-five years earlier, Matt 17:2.

This first vision of John, then, included an indication of Jesus' Messianic office with its associated functions: judgment of the unrighteous and comfort of the suffering righteous, His high rank that fits Him as an agent of imposing divine wrath, His activity in imposing that wrath, His preexistence along with God the Father, His penetrating intelligence that enables Him to perform righteous judgment, His movement among the churches to enforce standards of moral purity, His identification with the Father in the power of His utterance, His authority over the seven messengers and the churches they represent, His power to overcome His enemies and pronounce judgment upon them, and His return to earth to implement judgment upon mankind.⁴

What I did, 1:17a

The vision completely overwhelmed John and he fell as though dead.

What he said, 1:17b-20

He placed his right hand on me, Matt 17:7

Do not be afraid (similar to Dan 10:10)

The function of the words is to bring comfort to the fearful

I am the first and the last

Doubtless a reference to his eternality

I am the living one

The one who has the essence of life, both physical and spiritual in his being

I was dead

Clear reference to his death on the cross

Behold, I am alive forever and ever

Reference to eternal life now available in Jesus Christ

⁴ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7, An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 105.

I hold the keys of death and hades

Vq'õj qnf'ng{uö'urgcm'qhlluthority. Christ has the power to open and close jgnæ'i des.

So What?

The one who holds death, life and eternal life wants to talk to those who are in his churches.

This Christ is the one who can protect his churches

This picture of Christ is different than the ones we see in the gospel.