

The Revelation of Jesus Christ
Part Five:
The Ever-Present-Help-in-Times-of-Trouble-King
by
Rev. Charles R. Biggs

Introduction

In our last study we learned how Jesus was revealed in Revelation chapter one was revealed as the *Speaking King*, who ever lives to instruct and to teach His Church through His Word and by His Spirit. Today's study will be our final study of chapter one of the Book of Revelation. We will focus today on the presence of Jesus Christ with and among His people. From Revelation chapter one, we learn that Jesus is also the "Ever-Present-Help-in-Times-of-Trouble-King"! He sits at God's right hand, but is close and with us by His Spirit.

But some cringe at the thought of God being "ever present" or close. Some philosophers in history have described the sense of dread and fear they have at the thought of the God of the Bible. One such philosopher described his anguish and angst with an analogy to a canary trapped in a cage. The bird could do little to prevent the omnipresent presence of a person around her cage and could not escape the constant gaze of the omniscient observer. So men who do not know God have every reason to fear God and to abhor his presence, but this was not the way man was created to be! For Christians, the reality of God's presence in Christ does not bring painful, gut wrenching, angst and annoyance but true delight! This is our hope: Christ is ever-present and with his people!

Revelation 1:16-20: ⁶ And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. ¹⁷ And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. ¹⁹ Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; ²⁰ the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

Standing in the Shadow of Love Incarnate

Jesus speaks through His Word to His congregations throughout history, but He is also truly *with us*. Before Jesus ascended to God's right hand, he told his disciples that he would never leave them nor forsake them. The author of the Book of Hebrews reminds us of the same. In Hebrews

13, the author writes that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us! Do you ever feel lonely? Do you often realize how close Jesus is to you? (or perhaps the thought of this *closeness* scares you).

In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, John is overwhelmed when he is privileged to see the Risen Christ. In verse 17, he responds by falling at his feet as though dead. Seeing the a vision of the glory of God is not the easiest thing for the human frame, mind or heart! When men encounter the Living God, they are immediately struck with their sinfulness and insignificance in comparison to the Great Creator (cf. Isaiah 6:1-12). Here in Revelation chapter one, John is literally standing in the shadow of love-incarnate! Jesus will also walk among the congregations in Revelation chapters 2-3, reminding us that Jesus is close to his people because of his love and forgiveness he has extended to them.

Despite John's very understandable reaction to Jesus' glory, notice Jesus' gentle compassion and nearness that he teaches to John and to His people. Jesus tells him: "**Fear not**; I am the first and the last, and the Living One..." Jesus tells John and instructs us that although none of us should be able to stand in his holy presence, he is the One who died for his own and allows them to come into His Holy presence. Jesus is saying do not fear my presence, for the judgment of death and Hades is under my power and authority.

The very thing that causes men to cringe in fear before the Glory of the Living God is knowing that we have no right to stand in his Holy shadow, much less his Holy presence! However, Jesus through His death ("I was dead") and resurrection ("I am alive for evermore"), he now has overcome the boundaries that kept men and women away from the presence of the LORD. Amazingly enough, instead of being consumed by the Holy and Sovereign One, we call Him "Father" because of the work of Christ on our behalf. This should cause us to worship in the way that is revealed in Revelation chapters four and five! *Worthy is the Lamb!*

The Fragrance of Our Father

Long, hot and humid, and many times uneventful summer days were common when I was young growing up in the South. The summer would hold great promise at the end of the school year, but by the end of July, my brother and I were bored and thought we had done about everything that could be done in one summer. Oftentimes, there was a feeling of loneliness and isolation that came from hot and humid summer days. These were the long days of spinning endlessly on my tire swing, situated on my stomach, staring at the deep red Georgia clay where the only things that seemed to be enjoying themselves was the June Bugs on the low notes, July Flies on the high notes, and the crickets filling out the unique orchestration with the strings. After "doing it all" in one summer, what

would help me to be encouraged during these days? It was the simple, yet exhilarating anticipation of the return of my father home from work in the evenings.

I looked forward to the presence of my father particularly in the summer. I guess I thought since I was out of school, that he should have been as well. This was the time of baseball where Dad and I would listen to the Atlanta Braves on the radio together, sitting on the back porch in the evenings, rocking slowly back and forth as we sipped iced tea. He didn't talk much; Dad was very quiet when he got home. He had a lot on his mind in trying to take care of his family (I realize now), yet he had a smell, or fragrance that I was comforted by.

Dad had a certain fragrance or smell about him that was distinctly manly, yet was my father. No other father or person was like this smell, this fragrance, this presence. When he would get home, it delighted me to no end. Sure, he was tired and not always in the best and friendliest mood, yet I longed for the fragrance of his presence because it meant I was not alone; it meant that he was near and that everything in my little world was going to be alright as long as he was around!

We are blessed as Christians because God our Father has made his permanent presence known and continued through Jesus Christ and the sending forth of the Spirit of God. Just like my earthly father who had a fragrant presence, so our Heavenly Father makes his presence known to us as well. Because of what Jesus Christ has done for us, we can know that He truly never will leave us nor forsake us!

May these words comfort you as you realize that Jesus is truly the *Ever-Present-Help-in-Times-of-Trouble-King!* There is not a situation, a day, or a person in your life that can ever threaten his precious presence in your life to assist you and to help you! And as I still remember the fragrance or the smell of my own father's presence, so Jesus comforts us continually by the fragrance of life and favor toward us proclaimed again and again through His Holy Word! (2 Cor. 2:14).

'Great' and at the Same Time 'Close' to Us!

As Christians, we experience challenging times in this world, much greater than the long, hot, sometimes boring days of the summer of my youth. There are times of being unsure of what tomorrow will bring. I know a family who does not know whether their mother will live another day. Another family is concerned financially; they are "strapped", credit cards to the limit, and they wonder if God will help them since they got into the "mess" by their own foolish doing. Another man wonders if his child will ever be normal like other children. An elderly couple have been questioning whether their wisdom is really needed, or even considered in

their congregation anymore. Some are concerned with the way Christ's church has been given in too much to a pop culture that focuses on mindless entertainment instead of worshipping God in spirit and truth!

In all these situations we can be comforted as Christians that God is close to us and present during these struggles. Because He is both Transcendent as well as Immanent to us, he is powerful enough to help us, and close enough to love us! He is great and close! There is hope as Christians that God is both Transcendent and Immanent. God's Transcendence teaches us that He is Great and Sovereign and Holy, yet His Immanence teaches us that He is near to those who love Him in Christ. Long before the Christ came to this earth to live, die, and be resurrected and ascended to His throne, Isaiah wrote of God's character to the Israelites who were going to undergo God's judgment for sin. Isaiah prophesied:

Isaiah 57:15¹⁵ For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Isaiah reveals our God who is indeed unapproachable without a Mediator, but One who is close to, or present with those who are of a "contrite and lowly spirit". The purpose of God's ministry to His people? Isaiah says: "to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite." As God's people, we should rejoice that although our lives can be perceived as "complex messes". We should remember that our lives are sovereignly ordered and our destinies wisely determined by the Holy One who inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15), and this one dwells near to His people as the *Ever-Present-Help-in-Times-of-Trouble-King!*

How should we respond to this gracious King Jesus who truly is "with us"? We should praise Him for His work in our lives, for his constant walking with us, and help in times of our troubles. What he has done, what he has accomplished, he has done for those whom he loved, so that they would have an ever present King to rule over them and to help them!

"Flesh of Our Flesh, Bone of Our Bones"

Part of my fascination with comic books, and part of what is fueling the revival of comic book heroes especially in films today is the need of a hero. As the popular song goes: "We need a hero." The need for a hero is better, and more precisely translated "a Savior". We not only need someone to save us from ourselves and the corrupt world around us, we need a lasting and living hope for the future! As time-bound beings we are concerned and need a future. Without hope we know there is only loneliness and despair.

As a people living in a fallen world, we are not without hope and without a hero or Savior. We have searched endlessly to find a Savior, a Redeemer, a "Superhero" who would save us! Yet we look around and there is no one to be found here on earth. As Adam searched desperately, yet in vain for a wife among the animals, so we search for a Savior among the sinful folk. But then we look and from the Lord's own hand One is sent to us. One who is "flesh of our flesh, bone of our bones" - one like us, one who can be near to us (yet Who is without all the sin that causes us to find in mere mortals an ironic and sarcastic anti-hero who is as lonely and fearful as we are, who lives his so-called heroic life as Nietzsche's 'Superman' and as an intellectual samurai hit man' from the mind of Quentin Tarrantino!).

The hope of the incarnation of Jesus Christ is that He is truly Immanuel, "God with us". In our times of fear and uncertainty we should reflect upon the incarnation of Jesus. *Incarnation* simply means "enfleshed" or "with flesh". When 'incarnation' is spoken of God it is astounding and mind-boggling to think about. However, we should always be reminded that our Glorified Savior, who became man in the fullness of time, is still man and will remain the Glorified God-Man for all eternity. When God "put on" manhood, or enfleshed himself, or became incarnate, it was for the purpose of becoming man to represent and redeem men who believe. He came to be our true hero and Savior and Lord!

Our God, Our Brother, Our Hero, Our Savior, and Our Lord

In our times of trouble and uncertainty we should be reminded that this Glorified God-Man is at the same time our God, our brother, our hero, our Savior, and our Lord. But He truly is close to us by His Spirit. In fact, he is so close to His people that He indwells them by His Spirit (John 15)! We should never fear the Lord's presence or anything else in the world. We should be reminded that Jesus Christ is near to us and to His congregations. As he revealed himself walking among the congregations (lampstands) in Revelation chapters 1-3, so he still walks with and among us today! He meant what he said when he promised that he would never leave us nor forsake us!

Remember that the person at God's right hand who has been given supreme authority over heaven and earth has a human face! And when we look to him by faith we see in the eyes on that human face, eyes of sympathy and understanding. We see one acquainted with our griefs, sufferings, and our struggle with sin. We see our hero! We see our Savior! Who or what have we to fear as long as He is with us? And for all eternity, he will be with us! Remember in your struggles, the hope that the author of the Book of Hebrews writes:

Hebrews 4:14-16: Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do

not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

We will close our study of *Revelation* chapter one with the great and encouraging words of the psalmist. From Psalm 27 David poetically describes our God and King who is indeed always close to his people!
Psalm 27: OF DAVID. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?² When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.³ Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.⁴ One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.⁵ For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.⁶ And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

⁷ Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!⁸ You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek."⁹ Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!¹⁰ For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in.¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.¹² Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence.¹³ I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!¹⁴ Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

Conclusion

May you use this study of *Revelation* chapter one to inform your reading of the entire *Revelation of Jesus Christ*. May it be profitable as a study to guide you through a much misunderstood and under read book of Holy Scripture. As you read the Book of Revelation, remind yourself of how Jesus reveals himself in chapter one. Jesus is the...

- 1) Resurrected and Living King
- 2) Coming Judge and King
- 3) The Speaking King
- 4) The Ever-Present-Help-in-Times-of-Trouble-King

Soli Deo Gloria!

For Further Reading: The books below are helpful for understanding 'Revelation'! Read them all, but read Poythress and Beale first!

Herman Bavinck- **The Last Things: Hope for this World and the Next.**
Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Published by Baker Books, 1996

G. K. Beale- **The Book of Revelation**, New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, 1999
G. C. Berkhouwer- **The Return of Christ**. Studies in Dogmatics Series. Published by Eerdmans, 1972
Dennis Johnson- **Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation**, P&R, 2001
Vern S. Poythress- **The Returning King: A Guide to the Book of Revelation**, P&R, 2000