



Jesus at the Office Revelation 1

Where is Jesus when life is out of control?

Shortly after penning 1 John in the early AD 90s, the Apostle John was exiled on Patmos for proclaiming the gospel. Near the end of the first century, Christianity was facing at least three pressures: (1) the *religious pressure* of local synagogues who persecuted Christians similarly to what Paul experienced in the book of Acts. (2) The *political pressure* from the Roman Empire, who venerated the emperor as god. Emperor Domitian insisted that all official government publications and edicts be prefaced with: "Our Lord and God Domitian commands" Some of those emperors took this title too seriously; but to many Romans it was just patriotism. Thus, to refuse saying "Caesar is Lord" was at best impolite and at worst an act of treason. Since the Romans believed in many gods (polytheism); they expected Christians to worship the "Lord Caesar" along with the "Lord Jesus." Christians refused. Battle lines were beginning to be drawn. (3) Thirdly, there was *cultural pressure*. Western Asia (Turkey) was a more affluent part of that region; Christians were getting cozy and comfortable in their culture. This showed up in the churches as some were tolerating immoral and unethical lifestyles after the likeness of the Old Testament adversary, Jezebel.

In every age it has been the same. The devil's tactics do not change. As we look around the world today, the same pressures are harassing different churches. In some areas of the world, open hostility to the gospel is accompanied by physical violence. In others, the church is wrestling in intellectual combat with an insidious ideology or materialistic philosophy which it cannot come to terms. Elsewhere the struggle is in the moral field, and the world seeks to cajole the church into the conformity to its own ways. (Stott 1990, 10)

Jesus is in total control!

Though John was in exile; he discovered that Jesus was not! One Sunday on Patmos around AD 96, John saw Jesus "at the office." He had once seen Jesus as the Galilean peasant rabbi; or the crucified Messiah; even the resurrected Son of God. John now beholds the glorified Son! John sees Jesus as He is! Seeing Jesus "as is" changes everything!

Jesus ordered John to write! This vision was not for John's personal edification; it was a message to be sent to the churches! "*Show them what will soon take place!*" It is

pictorial and visual, countering the crude and common cultural images of John's day. Revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ; he is both its "content and agent."
(Peterson 1988, 27)

Furthermore, Revelation 1 is the most critical vision we need to grasp because it tells us that in a world that appears out of control, Christians serve One who is in control. Jesus is in their circumstances (v. 12). The Second Person of the Triune God deeply knows the lives of his servants. He is closer to His people than they themselves know. Having defeated evil, He stands with royal and stately dignity (v. 13); & with the eternal wisdom and penetrating insight (v. 14). His strength is matchless, from the stability of his feet to the ocean roaring thunder of his voice (v. 15). His right hand is in control and His judgment is decisive and final. To see His face is to see the blazing sun (v. 16). He is the first and the last, the one who is forever alive; and who holds uncontested power, the master key. To have the master key is to have total and complete control.

Jesus knows the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, & threats of these seven churches. Seven is a symbolic number of completeness; thus, what is true about these seven churches is true for all churches! He has already declared victory over Satan and "soon" will culminate this victory in the final overthrow of evil and the devil. Jesus wants to encourage us in our suffering and challenge us toward enduring faith. There is nothing to fear. "Fear not!"

Are you with Jesus or not?

The message of Revelation goes against our culture's multiculturalism. Jesus is absolute. In John's culture, the Roman Empire is not the beautiful goddess "Roma" as depicted in temples. Rather, she is a harlot (Revelation 17). Jesus helped John see the world as it really is! Are we seeing this world as Jesus sees it?

What in my life resembles the world? Where am I guilty of watering down my faith? When the book of Revelation originally made its way to seven churches; it was a circular message. All the churches were aware of all Christ said about them all. We need to pay attention because a storm is coming!

We need to live constantly prepared for the difficulties and opportunities ahead. We need to see our difficulties as opportunities! And we must persevere. Revelation's message to Christians then and now is, "*Be faithful even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life!*" (Revelation 2:10)

While driving by the fire station the other day, I saw the main engine truck backed into the station; the front doors were opened; even boots and fire gear were positioned at the foot of the truck's front doors. A "get there by four minutes" readiness existed. Likewise, because Jesus reigns; because He knows; and because He is near, His word is clear: Listen! Read! Heed! Get ready!

Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3 NIV)