

## Chapter 2

**The Hermeneutical Key for Interpretation****JESUS APPEARS TO JOHN*****Revelation 1*** (Continued)

We finished verse 6 in the last chapter; we will pick up with verse 7.

Revelation

1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they [also] which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

This wail is going to be because the One Who is coming back, the One they see, is going to be coming to bring judgment. They know it because they have rejected Him, and to look upon Him is to know yourself as sin. This is going to be a great discomfort for the peoples of the earth that see Him coming back again.

Revelation

1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

God is describing a time frame that is all encompassing. It goes across all of eternity, beginning with the past, coming through the present, and going all the way out to the end. He, Jesus, is all of that. Now we move to John.

***John***

Revelation

1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Now at this point John has been banned to the Isle of Patmos, an island where prisoners who have been branded as criminals are sent. John tells us what he did: he was a witness for Jesus Christ. Because he was a witness he was banished to this island. Tradition has it that they attempted to kill him by dropping him in boiling oil, and it did not kill him. So as an old man condemned to die, they put him on the island. I do not know how to take that tradition. I really do not know, but we do know that John is on the Isle of Patmos at this time. He has been banished, and he is to spend the rest of his life there.

**Tribulation**

I want to point out for you that John is identifying himself as your brother and your companion. He is your brother in three things: (1) tribulation, (2) kingdom, and (3) patience. You need to see that John has gone before you in these three things. Enduring tribulation, which also conveys the idea of patience, is the avenue to the kingdom. You do not get to the kingdom in this life apart from tribulation, and you do not stay in the kingdom apart from patience. John is our brother and companion in tribulation, kingdom, and patience.

Three references for you to note are: 2 Timothy 3:12, Acts 14:22, and Romans 5:1-5. These passages have to do with tribulation, and they clearly say that there is no departure from it if you are going to follow after right-

## REVELATION

eousness. You and I are going to go through tribulation.

### Patience

Another reference that has to do with patience is Luke 21:8-36 and onward. Luke 21:8 says, “And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived . . .” We talked about deception last week. Deception is unknown by the one being deceived. The knowing of truth sets us free from deception.

Luke

21:8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am [Christ]; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

21:9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end [is] not by and by.

21:10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

21:11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

21:12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute [you], delivering [you] up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

21:13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

21:14 Settle [it] therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

21:15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

21:16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and [some] of you shall they cause to be put to death.

21:17 And ye shall be hated of all [men] for my name's sake.

21:18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

## 2. The Hermeneutical Key for Interpretation

21:19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

Patience is a picture like this in Chart 2.1. If I am going to practice patience, I am going to stand under a burden. Patience is *Hupo-meno*, and it means to abide under (*hupo* = under, and *meno* = abide). Patience means that you abide under the great pressing bur-



**Chart 2.1**

den. The great pressing burden is the persecution of Luke 21:12, and if you pander to your own flesh, you are going to run and escape to some easy place. But if you will be patient, you will stand under this burden, and you can imagine it being like a giant rock or something that you may have on your shoulders, like the picture. You are holding this burden up, you are tired, and you are going through life holding this burden up. Your knees are shaking, and your muscles are straining, and your bones are hurting. You want to drop it off and be like everybody else. But patience holds you under it, and you abide under it. That is what patience is.

You possess your souls in patience in (Luke 21:19). You do not possess your souls when you drop the burden. That would be to escape. To possess your soul is to be able to deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow

Jesus.<sup>1</sup> That is to possess your soul. Be able to say, “No,” to your soul. It means to be able to say, “Yes,” to the pain and to the sacrifice. Sacrifice is self-denial, a requirement for discipleship.

You should know, however, that the burden becomes light when you are in yoke with Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Self-denial and self-sacrifice through giving your life to Jesus for His use are impossible without His enablement. Thus the burden becomes light in comparison.

We are dealing with this patience as described through this passage that we just read. He says that you are not to give thought to what you are going to say. Settle that in your heart! What are you going to say? You are going to say “Yes” to Jesus, and “No” to the fear of death. Settle that in your hearts. Do it now, and then if it is settled in your heart when the time comes, God will give you the wisdom and the words that will destroy the arguments of those people. They will not understand. They will say, “How can this be?”

We have a history full of our forefathers who have done these things and have stood the test because it was settled in their hearts. I admire the way these people overcame their fear of death. I will include in this chapter a story of one. You will see how it was settled in his heart, and how the words come out. When the words come out of the settled heart, they are words from heaven. We, then, need to have this settled in our hearts. Now, go to the death. Do not worry about the pain or the fears and all of that kind of thing. You settle it! And then when you go to die, grace will be there. Please remember that God does not give dying grace on a non-dying day. But

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 16:24

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 11:30

## 2. *The Hermeneutical Key for Interpretation*

when the dying day arrives, God’s grace will be there for us.

The pathway to the kingdom is through tribulation, and patience holds you in that tribulation. You will not run, you will not drop your burden, but you will stay with it.

### **JESUS IS SEEN**

In verse 9 John linked himself with us, and in verse 10 he says,

Revelation

1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, . . .

Now here is a statement that John is in the Spirit. That means he is walking with Jesus, he is not in the flesh. He is in the Spirit. He is attuned to the Spirit, and he is drawing close to the Lord. It is the Lord’s Day. He is worshipping the Lord, and as he draws close to the Lord, the Lord draws close to him and speaks to him, and it is a voice that sounds like a trumpet. It is behind him, and verse 11 says that the voice identifies Himself as the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. Then the voice gives him a commandment and says,

Revelation

1:11 . . . What thou seest, write in a book, and send [it] unto the seven churches which are in Asia; . . .

then He names the seven churches.

1:11 . . . unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Last week we dealt with the seven spirits, and the number “seven” gives the idea of being the whole of a thing. The seven spirits of God is the Holy Spirit. The seven churches of God is the whole church. There are seven specific churches, and we are going to deal

with the specific churches, but together they represent the whole church.

Revelation

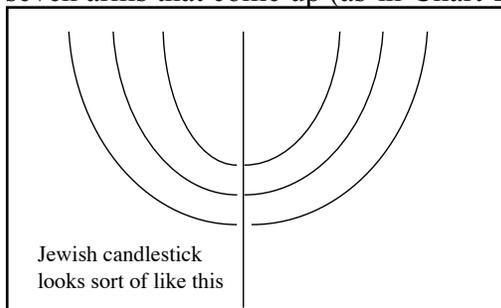
1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks [one] like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

### *The Church Is Seen First*

I would like to focus your attention here on the fact that the Lord is behind John speaking to him, and when John turns to see who is talking to him, he does not see the Lord. He sees the church. That is the way it is today, folks. People see you first, not Jesus first. He turns and sees the candlesticks, and then he sees One walking among the candlesticks. When the world looks at you, they see you first, and then they see Who is walking among you. That is the Lord among them. Because they are gathered there in the Lord's name, there He is among them.<sup>3</sup>

This is **not** the Jewish candlestick that has the seven arms that come up (as in Chart 2.2).



**Chart 2.2**

It is not that kind of candlestick. It is seven independent candlesticks. It is not one candlestick with seven arms. Each church stands on its own, and has not a corporate destiny,

but it has an individual destiny. There is both a unity and also a distinction in the destiny just as there is in the individual Christians. Even though there is unity in our destiny, there is also a distinction in our destinies.

Many people dislike hearing about distinctions in heaven. They want to think that they can do anything they want to do, and they are going to have crowns and mansions and all this glory that we sing about all the time. To be sure, there is going to be perfection in heaven, but I want you to know what perfection means. If you have a 40-watt light bulb, and a 100-watt light bulb, both of them are perfect, but when you turn them on, the 100-watt light bulb is brighter. Thus you have distinctions among perfection.

Homer: Last week I asked if we look around and see where God is working, we could join Him. If we have individual destinies, then does that mean that when we look around God is going to show Himself to us in what He wants us to do?

V: That is right. We are not a lockstep bunch. Each of us has different gifts, different callings. The only way for you to please God is for you to follow Him. My fellowship is going to look a whole lot different from your fellowship, otherwise we are all "toes."

Larry came by my office to discuss his calling in the Body of Christ. He was wanting to be an eye, and I said, "No, you are not an eye, you are a toe." He got all upset at me and argued about that. We broke off our conversation promising to pray about it for a week. When we came back together, Larry said that God told him that he was still going to be an eye. I said, Okay, "God told me that He is going to let you be an eye, but the only thing you are going to see is the inside of a sock." (Much laughter.)

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 18:20.

Carl: The candlesticks represent the light of the seven churches?

V: No, actually the seven candlesticks represent the churches themselves. We will see this when we get to the hermeneutic.

Bob: That was an interesting point that you brought out when you said that the whole world sees us first. It makes me think that when they see Jesus they need to see Him in His holiness. When they look at us, what does the world see? What we do reflects on Jesus and our relationship with Christ, and that is why a lot of the time some in the world do not want to come to church. The churches look just like them in the world and do the exact same things they do. The world does not see a difference. So I see what you are saying: Your light is shining. They are going to see you first, and Christ illuminated by you.

V: Amen. That is good.

Ted: I think verse 10 represents what you were talking about. Here John was all alone, nobody there to show off for, and it is the Lord's Day. He is worshipping, and he is in the Spirit there all alone. He is on his path.

V: Yes, he is on his path.

Ted: He is all alone, but he is still on his path. Because he is on his path, the Lord came to him.

V: The Lord came to him. So, you see, you can be on the Isle of Patmos all alone, and still be in perfect fellowship. But fellowship requires patience. When your patience is being tested, you will be tempted to recant and get off the isle, but you must deny yourself and stay on course.

Mary: Do you have a reference for perfection in heaven?

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V: No, I do not have a specific reference. I have a principle. *Telos* is the Greek word for perfect. It means also "end point." We get our English word tail from *telos*. Thus to be perfect means that you reach the end. Heaven is our end point. Therefore, we will be perfect in heaven.

### ***Lord Described***

Next comes a description of the Lord, and it begins with his priestly garment. This garment is also described in Exodus 28. Let us now move on to His hair, verse 14.

#### Revelation

1:14 His head and [his] hairs [were] white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes [were] as a flame of fire;

1:15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

This is a description of what John saw when he looked at the Lord. He saw a white-headed man whose eyes burned like fire, a fire that lights, consumes, evaluates, and does the purification. And then, amazingly, John looks down at His feet. He looks from His eyes to His feet, and His feet are like burnished bronze. That is bronze that has been burned in the oven, and it is bright and shiny, because it has come through the fire.

### **Beautiful Feet**

I want you to see that our Lord walked through the fire. He has given us an example to follow so that we will walk through the fire. Somewhere it says something about beautiful are the feet.<sup>4</sup> Beautiful feet belong to those who take the message of hope to the people. Stay under the burden no matter what comes against you. You keep pressing

<sup>4</sup> Romans 10:15... "as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

forward, you take that message on out there, and nothing but death shall stand in your way. It is going to cost you, and you are going to go through the fire. When you go through the fire on your way to heaven, the people of heaven will look at your feet, and say, “He has been through the fire, beautiful feet.”

We need to get our feet burnished and get them out there in the fire. Stay in the fire, keep pressing forward, stay under the burden, do not let anything stop you. Stay on your path. If you are on your path, you might end up on the Isle of Patmos, you might end up in jail, you might end up being killed just like we read in Luke. There are a lot of things that are going to happen. It is for sure that you will be persecuted. The Bible says that, but settle it in your hearts ahead of time that you are not going to run from the burden. Instead you are going to stand in there and take your hit.

Paul: It is interesting to me that not a hair on your head shall experience death.<sup>5</sup> I was thinking that this was written not just for our time but for John’s time, too. John himself being where he was is an example of the horrendous treatment that Christians got even unto death during that time. I was just wondering if there is some future reference in the Scripture that I referred to that applies to us who are not under the kind of

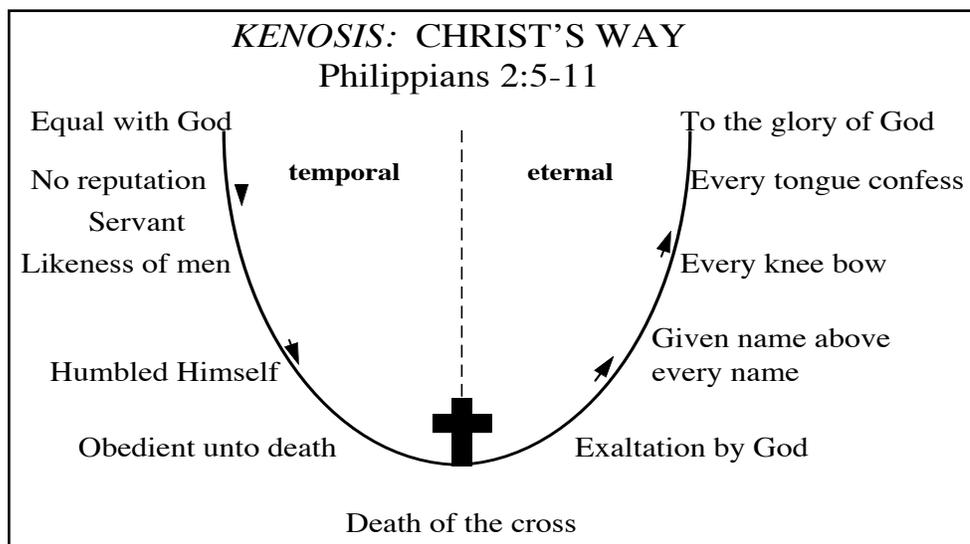
<sup>5</sup> Luke 21:18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

stringent death burden that the early Christians were?

V: Okay, I want to talk to you about that. Many people want to have no pain, no suffering, easy life, Christianity as a bed of roses, continuous celebration, name it and claim it prayers. When all this suffering comes down on that type of Christian, how are you, if you are one of those Christians, going to react?

**Kenosis**

I want you to see that life is made up of the temporal and the eternal. When you can see with the eyes of wisdom and faith, you can see the difference. Philippians 2 tells us about the *kenotic* walk, the walk of denying yourself, picking up your cross, and going after the Lord even unto death. Jesus came down. He humbled Himself. He was a servant. He became a man even though He



**Chart 2.3**

was equal to God. That equality with God was no theft because that was who He was. He had no temporal reputation, and He became obedient even unto death on the cross. This is the *kenotic* pathway (see Chart 2.3).

What you need to see is that the left side is the temporal, and the right is the eternal. When Jesus died on the cross, He was exalted even to the point of people calling Him Lord and bowing the knee to Him. He is Lord on the right, but He got there through a temporal descent. He left His first estate and came down as a man and a servant, and He met at the bottom His death. Because He was obedient to the Father, He was exalted. The same principle applies to us. The Scriptures about suffering also apply to us. The way to the kingdom is through suffering and patience. He did what God's Word tells us. He did it perfectly. He is Lord. Every tongue will confess that He is Lord.

What is your path? It is identical to the Lord's path. God commands us in Philippians 2:5 to have this *kenotic* mind that was demonstrated by Jesus. He is our model. The words that describe Him also describe our path. Our whole life is fulfilled in those kinds of words. We must sacrifice for the lost world. Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost. He did it through death. Guess what you have to do? You are going to do the same thing. "As my Father has sent me, so send I you."<sup>6</sup> Therefore you are going to follow Jesus.

His path is the path of self-denial. You can't be a disciple apart from self-denial. Therefore, as you come down, the temporal path on Chart 2.3, you are following the Lord. Patience is to stay on the path. Grab hold and hang on to Him. You can see the cross ahead, but you stay on the path and keep going toward it. Your whole psychology, your whole soul, every part of our being says, "throw the burden off, get out of here" (see Chart 2.1). But if you are patient, you will possess your soul. You will go to the cross.

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<sup>6</sup> John 20:21.

You will not deny the Lord. You are His slave, and you will let Him give you the words when the trial takes place because it is settled in your heart.

We travel the *kenotic* path. We do the same thing as the Lord did, and afterwards we are exalted. If you lose your life, you will have it.<sup>7</sup> Whoever is last shall be first.<sup>8</sup> He says, "Not a hair of your head will perish"<sup>9</sup> even though they whack your head slam off, your head and your hair and everything is going to be resurrected, and you are talking about an eternal consequence.

### **Upside Down *Kenosis***

The reverse of the *kenosis* is a horrible and deceptive thing, but we all are caught up in it. The reverse is an upside down *kenosis*. Instead of denying yourself, you indulge yourself. Instead of sacrificing and becoming humble, you become proud and arrogant. Instead of going to the death, you climb to life, and pretty soon you get a throne. The Lord hung on a cross at the bottom, but we want to sit upon a throne at the top.

But there is another side to this upside-down *kenosis*, the eternal side, because we divide this one, too. If you get your life now, you will lose it. If you are first now, you will be last. If you achieve your exaltation on the temporal side, you will be humbled in eternity (see Chart 2.4). So there are eternal consequences for what we are talking about.

If you can begin to see across this chasm from the temporal to the eternal on Chart 2.3, you will gain much wisdom. It takes the eye of faith because you cannot help but see the suffering and sacrifice on the temporal side.

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 10:39.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 20:16; Mark 9:35; Luke 13:30.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 21:18

There is the stake. There are the fires; you are to be burned at the stake like some of our forefathers. You are looking at the fires, and as you are coming down and approaching them, you are saying, “My goodness! I don’t know if I can handle this or not.” But if it is settled in your heart, you can look across, past the death. This vision is described as laying hold of the hope that is an anchor of the soul that lies on the other side of the veil.<sup>10</sup>

Oscar: Always have your eyes on the Lord.

Mary: Endure the cross and enjoy heaven.

V: Yes, much joy and rewards are on the other side. You despise your suffering for the joy that is over there. You can do the same thing as the Lord, and if you will do it, you will thank me for this truth forever.

Jack: I have always been told that patience is a virtue, and what you are saying here, enduring the *kenosis*, you are being patient all the way through to reach your just reward?

V: Yes. Patience means you stay with it. *Hupomeno*. *Hupo* means under, and *meno*

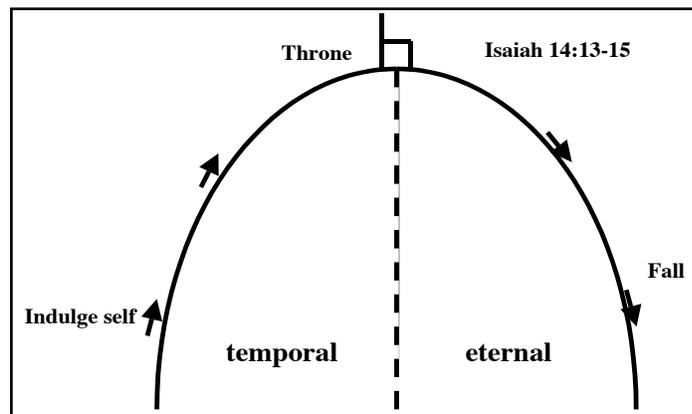


Chart 2.4

means to abide. You abide under it. Abide means this is where you are going to be. If I am going to come to see you, I am going to come, find a burden, look under it, and find you. That is where you abide. If I am going to send something to you, I am going to send it to the one under the burden.

Sybil: What does *kenosis* mean?

V: It means to empty yourself. And that is why this starts off “He emptied Himself.” Philippians 2:7: “Made himself of no reputation” (KJV).

Henry: It says, we will be joint heirs with Him in the by and by.<sup>11</sup> That means we have to join in on His walk on His path to be joint heirs.

V: There will be no joint heirs apart from the joint walk. Without the walk, only the destination of heaven will be joint.

Let us go to verse 16.

Revelation

1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance [was] as the sun shineth in his strength.

So He has this brilliance around His countenance, and in His right hand are the seven stars, and out of His mouth comes the two-edged sword. The two-edged sword is the Word of God, and the seven stars are, as we are going to see in verse 20, the seven angels.

Revelation

1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

1:18 I [am] he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for

<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 6:18-20.

<sup>11</sup> Romans 8:17.

evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

### Fear

“Fear not” is a volitional thing. Fearing when you see with your eyes, fearing when you hear with your ears, fearing when you feel with the touch are all spontaneous. When you have experienced threats through your senses, fear can just well up in you. It is involuntary because it comes with the senses. What the Lord does here is to command you to take hold of that fear, and then, bring it under your will. He says, “Fear not.” He wants you to move it from the sensory, or perceptory sensation, to the rational. Fear will move you off the *kenosis*. Fear is the enemy of faith. Peter walked on water until fear gripped his soul, and then he began to sink.

You have to move to the rational, and what He says is, “Here is something for you to hang your rational thought on.” He identifies Himself as the First and the Last, the One who was dead and now lives, and gives a description of Himself. Fear, comes into you because of what you see in your eyes. You see something, and you say, “Oh, I cannot bear that.” No, you must grab hold of that fear because it is an involuntary response to your perception or sensations. You must grab hold of that fear, bring it under your will, and then use reason to hold it there and conquer it.

If you can begin to see with the eyes of faith, you can look beyond the cross to the eternal. Then you will not fear the temporal because the exaltation has to come through the gateway of the cross. That is the rational overcoming of your fear that can erupt in you involuntarily. But you must bring that fear under your will and reason and seal it with your faith. That has to be done by observing Jesus. Jesus said, “I transcend both time and

## 2. The Hermeneutical Key for Interpretation

the grave, John.” John feared and fell down as a dead man. Jesus put His hand on him, and said, “Fear not for I AM.” That is how you are going to conquer fear. You cannot conquer fear by dwelling on the temporal area. You will be wiped out. Jesus bridges the chasm from the temporal to the eternal. By looking at Him, you can bridge the chasm, too.

Jill: You know Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is telling the disciples and everybody not to worry. He said, “Seek ye first the Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you.”<sup>12</sup> So I see what you are saying. When we focus on the temporal or the fear or whatever, it takes away our zeal to do the will of God. But if we focus on Him, He is going to abide in us and give us the strength to get through whatever it is. Unquestionably.

V: Unquestionably. One time I was with some friends, and at the time I was poor. I said, “I am poor.” My friends told me, “Bill, you are so rich it is unbelievable.” I said, “What are you talking about?” They could see that I was rich even though I was poor because you have to be able to see across the gap. They could see across the gap.

Tim: I was thinking about the Scripture that says, “God has not given us the spirit of fear” (2 Timothy 1:7). The spirit of fear then comes from Satan. We have to handle it under that understanding because God has not given it to us at any time.

V: That is right. As a matter of fact, He commands us not to fear.

Bob: Sound-mindedness is the spirit He has given us. We have to use that sound-mindedness to subdue those fears.

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<sup>12</sup> Luke 12:31.

Beth: “Come boldly before the throne of grace.”<sup>13</sup>

Betty: Could this same value work for afflictions?

V: Yes, absolutely.

Jack: This is not “name it and claim it.”

V: No, sir. This is hard stuff. You have to suck it up. You are in a war, and fear is one of the weapons being used against you. Your choices are to let it grip your soul and move you accordingly, or you can take hold of it and bring it under your rational faith and stay on path.

Oscar: That reminds me of involuntary fear that Peter had when he was walking on the water, and he looked at the circumstances. He took his eyes off Jesus.

V: Yes, and began to fear.

Now, Christ has the keys of hell and of death. That gives us some assurance because that means that our Lord is in charge of those areas, and who has the keys to heaven? We do (Matthew 16:19). We have the keys to heaven. Now all of these lost people are going to wonder why you did not use the keys. We will get to that at the Great White Throne judgment.

Jerry: We have the keys to heaven?<sup>14</sup>

V: Yes, you have been entrusted with that precious possession. The Gospel which you have is the power of God unto salvation.<sup>15</sup>

Revelation

1:19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

## 2. *The Hermeneutical Key for Interpretation*

Now here is a statement where He wants John to write down what he has seen in the context of time. It is linear in scope. You have the past, the present, and the future. The Lord has identified Himself as the beginning and the end, the One who was alive, was dead, and now lives forever. The Lord, then, put Himself on our kind of timeline, and He is saying to John, This is what I want you to write about, and it is a sweep of history. So now He gives him the hermeneutic in verse 20.

### HERMENEUTIC

Revelation

1:20 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 which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Stars, then, are angels, and the candlesticks are churches. That is a hermeneutic that we can take hold of. The Lord gave it to us in the first chapter, and we are going to take it the rest of the way in this course.

Jack: Since there are angels appointed unto the churches, I know that we have read in other commentaries where demons are appointed to the nations and people. Is that the same context?

V: Yes, exact same context.

Tim: When God finds a church dead, He takes an angel from that church or from that congregation? Like it said, “I will write on the doorpost” (Deuteronomy 11:20). He will write the church is dead. He will write “Ichabod.”

V: He will write “Ichabod,” and remove His Spirit.

Tim: Does He only take the angels from

<sup>13</sup> Hebrews 4:16.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 16:19.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 1:16

there, or is that something different?

V: No, He removes His Spirit, but I'm not sure about the angels. I do not know.

Ted: Could another congregation come in and revitalize and the Spirit come back?

V: I think so because that could be an awakening of a different corpus.

Betty: What is the definition of Ichabod again? He removes His Spirit from the church?

V: Yes, He removes His Spirit from the church.

Tom: You said God took the Spirit out of the church, but He does not take the Spirit out of us?

V: That is correct. God removes His Spirit from "among" them.

Now before I move to Chapter 2 of Revelation, let's review our hermeneutic. God is speaking in signs. John is describing the signs, and we are to interpret the signs from the descriptions. God interpreted the first two signs for us so that we could see how to do it. God says that candlesticks are churches and that stars are angels. Therefore throughout this book references to stars and candlesticks will mean angels and churches respectively.

## REVELATION 2

John took his commission from the Lord seriously, and he started writing. Now that is neat. God says, "Do something," and the disciples say, "All right," and they do it. Kind of different now, is it not? He has to beg us, and then He cannot get half of us to do what He wants us to do.

Joe: Is not the reference to angels here the pastors of the churches?

## 2. *The Hermeneutical Key for Interpretation*

V: I am going to come down on this idea right here. In the book of Revelation you have the symbol, and the stars refer to angels. If star refers to pastors, then you have another or third thing. You have star, angel, and also pastor. I am going to stop at this point with the way the Lord said it, and He said that the symbol refers to the thing, and that is it. But you do not have to agree with me! You have every right to be wrong (whole class laughs).

Joe: You are saying, and I agree with you. I want to change nothing. The Bible says it, and that is it. I have heard what he said about the angel being the pastor, but you are saying on this particular passage about these churches, that the angel to you just means literally angels.

V: That is what I am saying.

Joe: Just what the Bible says. He assigned an angel to each . . . .

V: I am not becoming literalistic because this whole book is a drama using images, and the images are symbols. The Lord, then, is going to give us instruction throughout the entire book in this realm, but He is giving us a hermeneutic here about how to get down to the real thing that He is talking about. This is symbolic kind of talking. You know how He used the parables, and He said, "The reason I am using parables is so that you who are of faith can know what I am talking about, and those who are not of faith will not know what I am talking about lest they come to salvation apart from faith. We are not going to have that salvation apart from faith. What I want you to see here is that, even though I am being kind of a "stick in the mud" as to where you want to come down on this, this is as far as I am going to go at this point.

I do not want you to think that I am a literalist because you cannot be a literalist in

this imagery. He said that He is signing this message from God: signification. He is signing all of this through His angel to John. That means that John sees images, and He writes down what he sees which are descriptions of images. It is up to the man of faith to understand what God is saying through these images. That is why we had the prayer last week of commitment of ourselves to be slaves. This book is only for slaves. If you are not a slave, you are not going to get the understanding. You will get it only to the human level at which I am talking. The best I can do is the human level. But if you are going to get what God is saying, you are going to have to get beyond that human level. You have to be a slave.

As a slave, you have to know what God is saying to you when He says, "Follow me." That is the prior question. We come back to the question from last week: "How do you follow the Lord?" Each one of us is going to follow differently because we are slaves who have been given different assignments. If I go try to do Joe's assignment, I am wrong even though I might do it better than he does.

Wanda: We do that though.

V: Yes, we do.

Wanda: It is like two zebras standing out there, one zebra's got stripes almost in a bullseye, and he says to the other one, "Bummer of a birthmark. I wish I had stripes like yours," you know. We do that with our burdens. You know, "That burden is not so bad. I think I can handle that one better." We choose, and we start playing the role of God, by saying we can handle one burden better than the other one. If we step out from under the burden that God placed us in, we are wrong.

V: That is correct. No matter how good you are doing with the wrong burden, you are wrong.

Tom: Who was it that said that the angel is the pastor?

V: There are a lot of commentaries that say that. As a matter of fact, most of the commentaries say that.

Tom: Angel means messenger does it not?

V: Yes.

Tom: Would it be more accurate to say that you erased that little arrow there in Chart 1.2 between the angel and John? and say that the angel would be the messenger between God and the pastor?

V: All I know is that the star is an angel. That is all I know.

Paul: I was thinking about this very same thing, but I had a different thought. You have freed my mind to look at symbols in Revelation for symbols sake because I have been bombarded with questions having been preaching for quite a while. I have been bombarded for a long time on this hermeneutic of this angel being the pastor of a church. But the way I see it now, God through Jesus Christ sends an angel to the church, empowers that angel to thereby empower the pastors thereby to empower the people. That is what he meant. When He said angel, He meant angel.

V: We reach an absurdity with departing from God's hermeneutic which says that the stars are angels. If we should insist that the angel is not an angel but a pastor, then we have a pastor giving the signs to the Apostle John. This would put a pastor in the hierarchy of Chart 1.2 above an apostle who is writing the descriptions of the signs given by the pastor. Who could be the pastor of



**Description of Jesus**

The description of Jesus is twofold:

1. He holds the seven stars
2. He walks among the seven candlesticks

**Commendations**

1. Work, labor, and patience
2. No bearing evil
3. Tried false apostles
4. Borne with patience
5. Labored without fainting
6. Hate Nicolaitanism.

You see what I am doing, taking the descriptions just like they are in the Scriptures, pulling them out and laying them in these columns here so that I can begin to see a picture of this kind of church. This kind of church is in the present, because at the end of the passage (2:7), God says that he (singular pronoun) that has an ear should hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Every one of us is going to get categorized into one of these seven churches here. When you determine in which category you are, hear what the Spirit says to the churches, and do what He tells you to do, the exhortation.

Homer: Are you implying that the exhortation applies to the individual Christian?

V: The individual Christian, you bet. When we are looking at the universal church, and we have this Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira laid out—1, 2, 3, like this passage. It does not mean that each one has a steeple up there. What it means is that you take Christendom, and you can pull out the category of Ephesian Christians, you can pull out the category of Smyrnan Christians, etc. We are not dealing with institutions. We are dealing with kinds of Christians within the universal church. Then the exhortation at the

end says “he that has an ear.” If you have an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches. That is a command. You have to have an ear. We prayed that we would have ears. The sad thing is that I have preached in churches filled with people that have solid bone on each side of their heads. Some of you have preached in the same kind of churches that I have preached in.

Joe: The Nicolaitans are *gnostics* or something like that are they not?

V: You can read the commentaries and choose whether to believe them or believe me. You can be wrong with the rest of them. I cannot find an authority for Nicolaitanism. It is, therefore, up to me. The way I see it, “Nico” is to fight or do battle with, to conquer. “Laitanism” is the laity or laymen. Fight and conquer the laity. What I see is that this means hierarchicalism in the church. Clericalism. Church History discloses what that evolves into.

Joe: Work-centered idolatry.

Homer: I read in one of the books where it said idolatry and pagan worship.

V: No. You know how we were talking about fellowship of the Lord, how each one of us is required to follow the Lord. Nicolaitanism is for somebody to get between you and the Lord. They say, “Follow me. Follow me. I know better than you, follow me.”

Paul: It is kind of like how the institutional church has it set out, the church is the only way to true salvation according to their doctrine.

V: Exactly. And God hates that kind of deal. You know what that does? It dethrones Jesus Christ as Lord. I cannot follow you and follow Jesus at the same time. God called me! He said, “Bill, follow me!” Do you know

who I am going to be judged by? The One who said that! If I follow you, I do not care how good you are. If I follow you, He is not going to say, “Oh, man! you did good. You really did good! you went down there and did all that other guy’s stuff. What about my stuff?” You follow Jesus Christ because He is your Lord—nobody else. There is nobody on this earth that is good enough for you to follow. You follow Jesus. That is the way it is, and my job as teacher is to get your hand and His hand hooked together and get out of the way. If I can do that, man, you are going to launch out on the great adventure. You will be on the greatest adventure your life can have, but if you follow me, it will be humdrum and disaster.

Steve: Amen! (Whole class begins to laugh).

V: Touche! Touche! I will get even!

### ***Reprimand for Ephesus***

The reprimand column has one—left first love. Ephesus was the church where John spent some time. The church had the Apostle Paul and Timothy there for a while. When Paul went to Macedonia he left Timothy there. After Paul was executed in Rome, Timothy came back to Ephesus, and they grabbed him and executed Timothy in honor of the goddess, Artemis. He was a sacrifice to a goddess. That is Timothy.

We had the Apostle Paul, Timothy, and then the Apostle John spend much time at Ephesus. John was banished to Patmos from there. Now he is writing back to his church. He was the last bishop there.

Notice this: The Apostle John was the apostle of love. There are some studies about the differences between John, Paul, and Peter. But John is known as the apostle of love. He

## ***2. The Hermeneutical Key for Interpretation***

teaches love. The book of John will tell you all about love. Here he is writing to his church where he taught love all the time he was there, and they have left their first love.

Pastors, if you are hurting out there, you are hammering, and hammering, and you are giving them your best. Just know that there was one ahead of you that gave it His best, and at His very strength is where they departed. That is a hurting thing. John, when he was there, had disciples around him including Polycarp whom we will look at in the next church, and Papias and Ignatius. These guys went on and became famous in their own right, because lions ate them, they were burned at the stake, and they suffered with that patience all the way to the end, having settled it in their hearts that they are going all the way.

### ***Exhortations for Ephesus***

The exhortation and or else for Ephesus are:

1. Remember
2. Repent
3. Resume works (or else get candlestick removed)

Many people think that Gospel and grace precludes works, but I am going to tell you right now, works are very much a part of our salvation. You are saved unto good works. Do not shy away from that. The “Else” is that your candlestick will be removed.

Beth: This is under exhortation?

V: Exhortation is what a prophet does: You repent or else God is going to do this. This is what exhortation is.

Beth: So He removes the church.

### ***Promise for Ephesus***

Then we come to the promise: Eat of the tree of life in the midst of paradise.

If you will re-examine Chart 2.5, you will see how these items are related. Look at the description of Jesus. Jesus is described as holding the seven stars. That means He holds all the angels in His right hand. That tells me of His power. He also walks among the seven candlesticks. That describes fellowship. Why do you think He described Himself in terms of power and fellowship to this church? “First love” deals with fellowship. “Remove the lampstand” deals with fellowship, “do the first works” deals with power. Eating of the tree of paradise deals with fellowship. He is describing Himself in terms of what that church needs. Here, then, is a thesis, and it describes how it all comes together. It links down tightly, and it is a package deal that has unity, understanding, and it is tailor-made for that particular church.

Who of you in here are Ephesus? You need to see the power of your Lord, and you need to see the fear of losing your fellowship with Him. You need to have the fear of losing your candlestick, of His setting you upon the shelf, and saying, “Just sit up there and do not bother me. I have some real saints carrying their burdens to the stake. If you want to play and have it made, just sit over there and just stay cool and quiet. I am going to work with the real warriors.”

That removal from service is the “or else,” and Paul feared this with a passion. The idea that he could be set aside, not to lose his salvation, but to be set aside and not called on to bring glory to the Lord is real? Can you think of a worse fate in this life? If you have that fate in this life, it will go for eternity. Great will be the loss.

Henry: The Lord wants us to do work. If you do not do the work, you are disobedient, and that causes you to lose power. If you

## 2. *The Hermeneutical Key for Interpretation*

have been disobedient, when you repent, is your power going to be restored?

V: Yes, it will be restored. Your opportunities to obey in the past have been lost, but you can resume at this point. This is a promise here. You can resume, you can step out to follow Him, but first remember, repent, and then step out. That is what He wants of this church.

Henry: Does that mean that some of the preachers that have fallen, and their testimony is torn up, once they repent they resume the power? Are they called back? A lot of churches like to bash them, but if they repent they resume the power. Are they called back?

V: No, No! If you do a public disgrace like that, you may lose your title, office, reputation, and all of those things, but you can have the power of God. All you have to do is draw close to Him; He will draw close to you.

Sybil: Just like with Jeremiah. Repent or lose your office.

V: That is right.

### **SMYRNA**

We are going to move to Smyrna. Before going into the Scripture, I want to talk about Polycarp. He was the bishop at Smyrna. He was the disciple of the Apostle John in the same way that Timothy was the disciple of the Apostle Paul. The next letter is to Polycarp’s church.

This is the story of Polycarp’s arrest and his martyrdom. The reason Polycarp’s history is worthy is because he had settled the matter in his heart. It is an example worth following.

**MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP***The Bishop of Smyrna**A.D. 155**Written by the church at Smyrna**Taken from**Documents of the Christian Church*

edited by Henry Bettenson,

1963 edition, Oxford University Press.

During the games of pitting Christians against wild beasts in Smyrna, the people desired Polycarp to be brought among the atheists.

Note: The reason they called Christians atheists was because they would not adopt all of the polytheism that the Roman Empire had adopted. The Roman Empire, every time they conquered a nation, adopted the gods of that nation, and so they just kept adding on, adding on, adding on; pretty soon they had this whole bunch of gods. And then here are these Christians saying, “We aren’t going to worship all of those gods.” So Christians were called atheists by the Romans.

When Polycarp was apprehended, the sheriff tried to persuade him to confess Caesar as Lord and thereby save himself. When Polycarp refused to confess Caesar as Lord, he was taken to the stadium. As Polycarp entered the stadium, a voice from heaven was heard by Polycarp and the Christian witnesses to tell Polycarp to “be strong and play the man.” (p. 10) But the Proconsul urged him, “Swear and I will release thee; curse the Christ.” (p.10) And Polycarp said, “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he has done me no wrong: how can I blaspheme my king who saved me?” (p. 10)

When the Proconsul continued to persist, Polycarp answered “If thou dost vainly imagine that I will swear by the genius of Caesar as thou sayest, pretending not to know what I am, hear plainly that I am a Christian. And if thou art willing to learn the doctrine of Christianity, grant me a day and hearken to me.” (p. 10)

After the fire was laid and about to be lit, they were about to nail Polycarp to the stake, when he said, “Let me be as I am. He that granted me to endure the fire will grant me also to remain at the pyre unmoved without being secured with nails.” (p. 11)

“All the people were amazed at the great difference between unbelievers and the elect. . .” (pp. 11-12)

Class! Polycarp is a great example of solid Christianity. There is a difference between the *kenotic* Christian and those on the upside down *kenosis*, and if you can just settle it in

your heart, the world will see that difference. Polycarp was the bishop of the church to receive the second letter. We will deal with the contents of that letter in the next chapter.

## Chapter Questions

1. Explain how Jesus is seen after the church is seen?
2. Describe the hermeneutic, and under it, what are the stars and the candlesticks?
3. Describe the Lord’s appearance to John.
4. What is the relationship between fear and faith?
5. Who was Polycarp and how did he die?