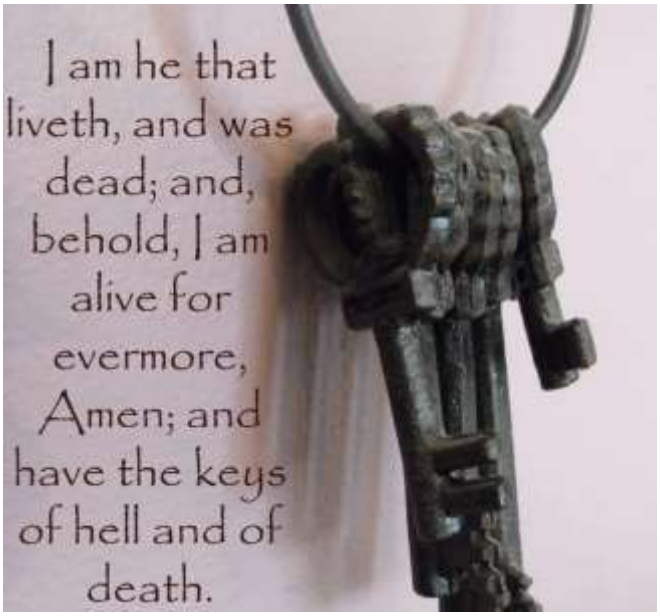
**Thursday Bible Class** 29th February 2024

**Message From The Dead** **Revelation 1:17-20**

Introduction:




*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:*

*18 I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

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

*20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven ecclesias..*

When John saw this vision, he was looking at one <u>like</u> the Son of Man. We discussed that this was in fact a symbolic man who represented everyone, who in the days of their flesh were LIKE the Son of Man. True followers of Jesus have him in such admiration that they align their thoughts and behaviour with his – or try to. Because of this intention and effort they are forgiven for when they fail, and it is counted to them as righteousness, - not their righteousness but that of Christ Jesus – He makes up their lack. Together they form a great cloud of witnesses and are elevated in God's mind to His glory. This man standing between the lampstands was not then, just representative of the Lord Jesus, but all the saints in glory. The

apparition was standing in the middle of seven lampstands. In the last verse of this chapter we have read… *and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven ecclesias.*

It is significant that the Lord Jesus in delivering this Revelation to John gave this direct interpretation. He is giving John the method of interpretation and understanding of symbols. He does not explain in detail the whole vision, but he does explain part of it, and this is invaluable as it shows us that the descriptions are not designed to be taken literally.

Moreover he shows how the interpretation is possible, by going back to the Old Testament and seeing how those symbols were deployed. Indeed, the light in the tabernacle was seven lampstands coming from a central stem, and the light was not permitted to go out, without the light none of the redemptive work within the tabernacle was possible. The oil came from the congregation which was described as the ecclesia in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) Thus the lampstand was ineffective without the ecclesia. It <u>was</u> the ecclesia in the wilderness, as Israel were chosen to radiate light to all the nations. Without that light, the redemptive work for the Gentiles was not possible. That light was of course – John 8:12 *I am the light of the world* – Jesus Christ. Such a simple steps to understanding Jesus expects those who would be LIKE him, to follow, and therefore appreciate that symbols in the Revelation need to be broken down in the Old Testament, analysed and the lessons appreciated, this approach will in turn give the accurate interpretation of the Revelation every time.

As we read earlier in this first chapter, these seven ecclesias spoken of were literal ecclesias, all located on the western seaboard of what is known today as Turkey, but called Asia by the Romans. They existed in John's day. They were the present. The lampstands Jesus said represented these seven ecclesias – the present. (Later we will see that they also represent all ecclesias in all ages, but we will leave that for a later discussion) But the certain man, who was Like the Son

of Man was a vision of the future – Jesus and the saints in glory a multitudinous man.

So, the vision was the future standing amongst the present.

That might seem difficult to comprehend, but that is exactly how True Ecclesias should operate. Today we comprise 12 ecclesias: Baraka, Bukavu, Busitema, Butacho, Dartford, Kimukungi, Kitodha, Kiungani, Malindi, Miluki, Mwangwei and Nalondo. Though many ecclesias, they are One Ecclesia, One Body. Branches of the same lampstand. They are trying to live as citizens of the Kingdom in Waiting. That kingdom of God, that country is not yet here, we are waiting for it, but that does not stop us living as if it were here. Therefore, though we are in the present we are living as if in the future – at least that is what we are supposed to be doing!! The future then as a vision becomes a reality in the midst of the lampstands.

That is what John saw in Patmos nearly 2000 years ago. The vision is therefore as uplifting to us now, as it was to him and those seven ecclesias back then.

But wait, this is impossible we think! Look at the way we fail fall away, look at the flaws, mistakes, weaknesses and bad decisions. The light isn't very bright, and the pure light of the word looks even more dim compared to the artificial lights and glitter of the false churches. Such a vision cannot be, how can we reach such heights?? We are so unworthy of such glory!

John thought the same. *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:*

When we are feeling low and rubbish with ourselves, how nice is it to have that hand on the shoulder, how much more knowing it is the angel of God walking with us – that is what John was told. He fell at his feet as dead. The rightful place, we are condemned by our nature and our own sins. Death is what we deserve. But those who are Like

the son of man, who try, and try again to be like him, he will raise us up, and does so in this life now, when we get revitalised by the word, and will at the last trump, bring us up reconstituted from the soil from the pit of death. He symbolically lays his hand on our shoulder through the words of the prophets, which teach us that the Lord Jesus is with his beloved, every step of the way. I am the first and the Last. Using Jesus' example we return to look in the Old Testament for when this phrase is used. It is actually found in Isaiah. Three times it appears:

Isaiah 41:4: *Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he.*

Isaiah 44:6: *Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.*

Isaiah 48:12: *Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.*

The prophet applies the title to God Himself. Because of course God was the first, but God does not intend to remain alone, for He is calling out people for His name. He divested and delegated some of His power to His Son, to operate with Him in glory. No Longer alone, but God manifestation is not complete until all who are Like the Son of man are in glory also.

Not only has God been with his servants from the first to the last, always there, but From the First to the Last , he is Sovereign and his Will will be done there is nothing to therefore to fear –

Isaiah 41:4 is interesting, as commentators point out, it should read *I the Lord, the first, and with the last ONES* see the Online Tanakh for confirmation it reads *literally I, the Lord, am first, and with the last ones I am He.*

What do we learn from the Old Testament about this symbolic phrase the First and the Last. That God although started as One, He

intends to end with the Multitudinous, with many. One Light, many Lampstands. First God, then manifest in Christ, and then a multitude – the Last ones. The kindly hand on the shoulder was telling John, don't worry, you will be there!

BECAUSE

18 *I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

That is the proof, the true consolation, the reassurance, the evidence to our faith. *I am he that lives* Jesus Christ lived. Even atheist historians today will testify to that. *and was dead* He died. No one denies that. *, behold, I am alive for evermore* He lives again, he rose to eternal life. The book of Revelation itself, this **message from the dead** is proof he lived again.

How is it proof? Well, it isn't a message from the dead, it was a message from the living. Because Jesus was alive again when he delivered the book to John. In fact, he was only dead for 3 days and 3 nights in the tomb. The disciples and apostles and hundreds more testify to that. But if this message was a fake, then it can be proved it was no message from Christ Jesus. But it is not a fake, as so much of this book has been fulfilled, as we will go on to see in our studies, in remarkable detail for 2000 years of proof, and fulfilment. This is why this book is so vital, it proves the resurrection of the dead, it is a rock and bulwark to our faith.

He lives for evermore… AMEN – so let it be. It is a unassailable Truth. Jesus Lives. But he lives as a Priest for Ever, *the keys of hell and of death* are with him, as the intercessor between God and man, that it through him that sins can be forgiven, that through him an individual is called, is chosen by him, and faithful because of him. By him all things consist.

Brother Terry