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# 1. MY LORD IS RISEN

“**17** When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, **18** and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’” (Revelation 1.17,18)

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On the island of Patmos and on the first day of the week, the resurrected Lord appeared to me in glory and spoke to me, commanding me to write all that I would see and hear.

I have been exiled on Patmos for over three years. My exile happened shortly before emperor Nero committed suicide, bringing an end to the rule of the Julio-Claudians over Rome and the Empire. At the time of my exile on Patmos, the Romans were at war with our people in the land of Israel. The rulers and even inhabitants of the Empire do not really understand the differences between Jews and Christians. My exile is

part of this anti-Jewish policy that started under Claudius and has continued.

From the only hill of Patmos and watching over the bleak Aegean Sea, I have spent many days in great loneliness — a loneliness growing deeper in my heart when the weather was clement and the sun shining, when I could distinguish the coast of Anatolia about sixty-five millium passa away.

I have been able to have food delivered to me and even a few letters thanks to the devotion of our brethren. But this is not always possible, and often I feel great hunger. But the greatest hunger has been the hunger in my heart to see and hear again my resurrected Lord.

I have learned that the world is now under the power of a new ruler by the name of Vespasian, who conquered Rome after the civil wars following Nero's death. Vespasian is one of the heads of the beast from the sea shown to me in the Revelation.

I have also read through letters from the brethren that life under Vespasian is not so harsh for the disciples in Rome. However, I also know the brutality and pagan ways of the local leaders in Ephesus and the other cities of Anatolia and beyond, even to the ends of the vast empire built by Rome.

In his book of Acts, written after his Gospel, our brother Luke recalls the travels of Paul and how many came to the faith in Ephesus; how others burned their books of magic arts and how the word of the Lord increased in that city. Luke also tells us how Demetrius of Ephesus, who made and sold shrines of the goddess Artemis, attempted to have Paul and his co-workers arrested and beaten.

All the cities of the Empire are full of idols and especially patron gods and goddesses. These deities are seen as special protectors of cities and different trades in these cities and regions. Not worshipping or honoring these patron gods produces

outrage and violence on the part of the local populations against the Church everywhere. Thus, the disciples of the Lord are nowhere able to live at peace and without threats to their lives and families.

When the Lord appeared in glory on that day, the first day of the week, it had been over thirty years since our Lord Jesus had been crucified and rose from the dead after three days in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. I did not know if I would ever see him or hear his voice again in my life on this earth. The last time I heard his voice, when I was still a young man, it was at his ascension after spending forty days with us his apostles in teaching and beautiful fellowship. He had just been telling us that we would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. He was suddenly lifted up, a cloud taking him out of our sight.

On other occasions, he later appeared in his glorious resurrected body, once to five hundred brethren at once. He also appeared to the persecutor of the Church, Saul, on the road to Damascus. Saul was called Paul by our Lord and made by him his apostle to the gentiles.

After preaching and teaching with Peter and other apostles in Judea, we all were scattered throughout the nations of the earth to bear witness to our Lord. On the cross, Jesus had given me the care of his mother. After years of service in Judea and the land of Israel, Mary and I came to Ephesus to minister to the large and growing body of believers in that city. After many years of service to the Church in Ephesus, opposition grew against those who preached and taught the brethren.

When the Lord appeared in glory on that first day of the week, the joy of seeing him in his glory and hearing his loving voice filled my heart. I overcame the sense of loneliness living alone in exile, and I completely recovered my hope. I knew that the Lord was completely in charge of all the events of my

life, the events in the life of His Church and the events of the world.

“Surely, I am coming soon.” These last words of my Lord in the Revelation are now engravened upon my heart, never to be forgotten”. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

## 2. THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

“**1** The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, **2** who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.” (Revelation 1.1,2)

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*John, the Revelation has been given to God's people over two thousand years ago. Many generations have passed from this life and the world is still a place where we so often find hatred instead of love, unrighteousness instead of righteousness. It is often the case that believers become discouraged. This Revelation was given to you on Patmos and for the entire Church of our Lord as a word of comfort. Many today are still preaching or teaching from the Revelation to encourage their brethren.*

*But some are doing so in ways that bring about confusion and doubt.*

Tell me a little more about that. What is being preached from the Revelation in this distant future you talk about?

*A lot of this preaching we hear today focuses on the disasters and calamities described in the Revelation, such as plagues or wars. This preaching is used by many to convince people that we are at the time of Christ's return, that these great tragedies are signs of his coming soon for judgment and the resurrection of the dead.*

Well, Yann it is clear that the Lord will return in glory to judge the world and for the resurrection of the dead, "when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at among all who have believed" as the apostle Paul wrote to the brethren in Thessalonica. (2 Thessalonians 1.10). There would be no comfort and no hope from any portion of the Scriptures if that were not the case.

*What I mean is that there is a lot of preaching today especially from the Revelation concerning signs that would show the Lord soon returning in his glory. Is the message of the Revelation about the "last days", the time preceding the return of our Lord?*

Are you living in the last days? Yes, unless the Lord has already returned. Not only that but myself here in Patmos and all our brethren in the world today are living in the last days.

*But are not the "last days" in the Scriptures those times when the Lord returns in glory?*

In the Scriptures the last days are the times that extend from the incarnation of our Lord until his return in glory, not the immediate time that precedes his return. Thus, the writer to the Hebrews for example writes that "in these last days" God has

spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the heir of all things. (Hebrews 1.1). Today as I live in exile on Patmos and as our Lord is warning us of terrible persecutions coming upon the Church, we are in the last days. Our brother Peter preaching on Pentecost declared that the signs that occurred on that day and the speaking in foreign tongues were in “the last days” as prophesied by the prophet Joel. (Acts 2.14-21). And the “last days” will extend in time until our Lord returns in glory.

*Many today do not understand how the Revelation can be helpful to them, especially if it is describing great times of persecution of the early Church.*

The Scriptures, for the most part, are teaching us about the actions and teachings from God in the past and which are a source of comfort for all generations. However, as our brother Paul wrote to the brothers and sisters in Rome, “Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15.4)

But suppose that the Revelation was written mostly about events in the future how would it be a source of encouragement for us, for our churches today in this terrible persecution we are about to endure? The Revelation given to us today will one day become a word of God concerning the past, but this is the case with most of the Scriptures which are still a great source of encouragement and hope.

*Is some of the misunderstanding about Revelation not due to the fact that over two thousand years have passed, and the Lord has not returned yet?*

This would not be surprising. Even today while I am exiled on Patmos there are those who are teaching that the Lord has already come or will return soon in his glory. This was the case

not too long ago with some teachers among the brethren in Thessalonica. The apostle Paul needed to warn these brethren and teachers that such teaching was not in agreement with God's revealed will. Writing to the Church in Thessalonica, Paul mentions the resurrection of the dead and how those still alive being caught up together with the resurrected saints to meet the Lord. However, the apostle at once warns these brethren not to speculate about "the times and seasons" when these events would occur. He explains this with the image of the thief who comes in the night, unannounced to rob people, when they least expect him:

**“5** Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. **2** For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** While people are saying, ‘There is peace and security’ then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **4** But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. **5** For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. **6** So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.” (1 Thessalonians 5.1-4).

In his second letter to these brethren our brother Paul warned them about teachers claiming the Lord had already returned,

**“2** Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, **2** not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a

letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.” (2 Thessalonians 2.1,2).

In the same letter our brother Paul exhorts these brethren to “stand firm and hold firm to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (2 Thessalonians 2.15).

*Did not the apostle Peter also respond to those who were impatient about the Lord’s return and wanted to know about the exact time of his return?*

Peter teaches that some will mock the faith saying “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation?” (2 Peter 3.3).

Peter warned these mockers reminding them of the truth already found in our Psalms:

- “**1** Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
in all generations.
- 2** Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- 3** You return man to dust  
and say, “Return, O children of man!”
- 4** For a thousand years in your sight  
are but as yesterday when it is past,  
or as a watch in the night.” (Psalm 90.1-4; 2 Peter  
3.8).

*I now remember that the great lesson the Lord conveys to us is that with Him “one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”. God’s timing and our timing are different!*

*God does not always reveal to us everything we would like to know.*

Remember also how our brother Peter preached on the first Pentecost as recorded by Luke, saying that the Lord was received into heaven “until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago” (Acts 3.21). This was mentioned for example by Isaiah the prophet. (Isaiah 65.17; 66.22).

*Is the time of restoring all things spoken by the prophets still future?*

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that the Creator has a plan to renew all things in his creation as well as the life of the faithful, as already taught in the Psalms:

**10**“You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands;  
**11** they will perish, but you remain;  
they will all wear out like a garment,  
**12** like a robe you will roll them up,  
like a garment they will be changed.  
But you are the same, and your years will have no end.” (Hebrews 1.11,12; Psalms 102. 25-27).

*All of this has to do with the Lord’s return in glory!*

Yes, and at the same time we need to understand that we are already partakers of these promises. The Kingdom of God’s Son is the glorious Kingdom of which David’s rule was only a vague shadow. In Christ we have been introduced into this kingdom of light and perfect joy and peace. The Lord has already brought about a “new creation” through those who have come to him and have already been raised with him to a new life. (Colossians 2.8-3.11). Those who have been born anew,

born from above, who have been born “of water and the Spirit” are in the Lord’s eyes “a new creation”:

“**16** From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18** All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;” (2 Corinthians 5.16-18; John 3.1-7)

*Did not the apostle Paul write that our brothers and sisters in the Lord have already been raised with him because of their faith, in the waters of baptism?*

The wonderful truth about our baptism in the name of our Lord is that it is stamped with God’s promise of forgiveness, the gift of his Holy Spirit and eternal life, as preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2.37-41). Our brother Paul confirms this preaching of Peter in a number of his letters, as in his letters to Rome or Colossae. (Romans 6.1-4; Colossians 2.6-15)

*Does the Revelation also not teach about a resurrection found in this life through our faith in the Lord?*

Yes, it does. And it is one of the central truths of the Revelation from the Lord Jesus the Christ.

The believer has already passed from death to life, from darkness to light through the work of our Lord Jesus as well as faith in him and repentance. The new life in Christ is a present reality but is also full of promises for the future; we should not separate those two as the apostle Peter preached in the temple before being arrested by the priests and Sadducees:

**17** “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. **18** But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. **19** Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, **20** that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, **21** whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. **22** Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. **23** And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ **24** And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. **25** You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ **26** God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.” (Acts 3.17-26)

*How does the Revelation teach about the present blessing and hope for those who have been raised with Christ?*

As I said it is a central truth given to us in the Revelation. The glorious visions of the reign of our Lord and praises given to him are about the reign of Christ since his glorious ascension. The Lord Jesus has been proclaimed king and rules at the right hand of God. He is our great high priest of the order of “Melchizedek” who is “king” and also “priest”. In fact, his

name in the book of Genesis means “king of justice”. As written in the letter to the Hebrews Melchizedek was a prefiguration of the King and High priest Jesus who rules today and will return in glory, the one who is “the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead and the ruler of kings on earth” (1.5). This Lord also made us a “kingdom and priests to his God and Father” (1.6). Our glorious Lord “is coming with the clouds and everyone will see him” (1.7).

*I remember that the Lord is the one of whom the Psalms said, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalm 110.4; Hebrews 7.17). So, tell me more how the Revelation portrays the glory already given to the saints, to the Church of our Lord?*

The Revelation provides many pictures of the glory already given to the saints. The living creatures around God’s throne proclaim this truth when the lamb takes the scroll to open it:

“**8** And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. **9** And they sang a new song, saying,

‘Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed  
people for God, and you have made them a kingdom  
and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on the earth.’” (Revelation  
5.8-10)

The saints who come out of the great tribulation have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb:

**15** “Therefore they are before the throne of God,  
and serve him day and night in his temple;  
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with  
his presence.

**16** They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;  
the sun shall not strike them,  
nor any scorching heat.

**17** For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their  
shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of living water,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes  
(Revelation 7.16,17)

*These words remind me of the teachings of our Lord to the Samaritan woman as he was speaking about the salvation and gift of God’s Holy Spirit that would be poured on God’s people:*

“**13** Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ **15** The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.’” (John 4.13,15)

Similar words were preached by our Lord in the temple on the last day of the feast:

“**37** On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come

to me and drink. **38** Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7.37,38). Our Lord Jesus said these words about the Spirit, “whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7.39)

*Is this not also found at the end of the Revelation about the “water of life”, when the Lord calls all who are thirsty for righteousness and eternal life?*

Yann, these are some of the last words of the Revelation when the Lord calls all to himself:

**16** “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” **17** The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” (Revelation 22.16,17)