

# THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Chapter 1:9-20

Topic

When John sees Jesus in His glory,  
he falls down as dead

Title

***"Drop Dead Glorious"***

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I suppose it was inevitable... And I am relieved that I don't need to hide it anymore. It feels like a weight has been lifted.

**Pam caught me online looking at...**



Pinterest tends to be, let's say... feminine:

- More than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of Pinterest's base are women.
- More than 80% of women in the US ages 18-64 with children are pinners.

Among the top Pinterest searches are DIY Crafts, Home Decor, and Hair & Beauty.

I came to the hard realization that less than 10% of my followers on Pinterest are male.

My Boards *are* somewhat manly:

- Coffee Pics
- Pool-to-Pond Conversion
- Tattoos
- Let's Try Vegan
- Punch Recipes

**So there I was scrolling on Pinterest when a suggested pin appeared:  
Repurposed oil lamps**

How could I resist?

There amongst oil lamps being used as candy jars and vases and candle holders was something sublime: DIY plans for wiring oil lamps to plug into an outlet. (I'll let you know how it goes after I first try the sure-fire home remedy for keeping cats out of your yard).

**Oil lamps figure prominently in our verses**

John sees "seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man" (v12-13).

**This entire passage is about  
light, brilliance, and shining**

- When He was on the earth, Jesus said that He was the "light of the world" (John 8:12).
- The Lord said to us, "**You** are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14 & 16).

I'll organize my comments around two points:

## **#1 Let Your Light Shine And You Will Be Buffeted By Tribulation, and #2 Let Your Light Shine And You Will Be Brightened By Trimming.**

### **#1 - Let Your Light Shine And You Will Be Buffeted By Tribulation (v9)**

Late in the first century, the apostle John was still burning brightly for the Lord. It landed him in hot oil - literally. In what he called *The Second Persecution Under [Roman Emperor] Domitian*, John Foxe (author of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*) wrote,

Among the numerous martyrs that suffered during this persecution was... St. John, who was boiled in oil, and afterward banished to Patmos.

Tertullian, an early church figure, in his *The Prescription Against Heretics*, wrote,

How happy is its church, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood... where the Apostle John was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island-exile.

John's light for Jesus had attracted trouble for him. But in his trouble, he shone all the more brightly.

Rev 1:9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

"Patmos" is some fifty miles off the coast of Ephesus in the Aegean Sea. It has the shape of an hourglass and is small, about 13mi<sup>2</sup> in area. (By way of comparison, the City of Hanford is approximately 16mi<sup>2</sup>).

I've heard it said that John was forced to work either mining salt or quarrying marble. Did I mention he was 90-something?

It is equally possible that John was under house arrest. Patmos was *not* a penal colony like Rura Penthe. It had a harbor, a town, a temple to Artemis, a temple

to Apollo, perhaps a temple to Dionysus, a temple to Aphrodite, a gymnasium, and a stadium.

They couldn't boil him, so they banished him. Little did the Romans know that God would use John's time on Patmos as a working sabbatical to receive and write the Revelation.

Ships could find safe harbor from storms there. We can think of John's banishment as a safe harbor for him during the storms of persecution.

John's crime, the nefarious activity he was sent away for, was "the Word of God and... the testimony of Jesus Christ."

### **John was boiled and banished for being a Christian.**

He was sharing the Gospel and the "testimony" that Jesus was God come in human flesh to die on the Cross; and that He rose from the dead; and that there was salvation only in Him.

John was one of the originals. More than that, he had been invited into the inner circle along with Peter and James. He several times refers to himself as "the disciple Jesus loved." He was an apostle.

Yet, for all that, he calls himself their "brother and companion." He was content to identify with every other Christian as a "brother." No more; no less.

Only among Christians is there a true equality.

We might even say, in Christ, "all men are *recreated* equal" in their new birth. I might have a different office, or function, or talent, or gifting. We are complementarian. But we are on absolutely equal ground when it comes to the love of God that is ours through Jesus Christ.

They were accompanying one another as "companions" on the road to Heaven. It's a road marked with suffering, requiring the sharing burdens.

John described our time on earth journeying heavenward as "the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Here is what I think that trio of phrases might mean:

1. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). I know that this isn't referring to the Great Tribulation because, a little later in this book, Jesus promises us that the church we will not go through it. This tribulation John spoke about refers to the oppression and persecution during the Church Age targeting believers.
2. At the same time that we are promised tribulation, we are assured of "the kingdom." Jesus will return *for* us to then return *with* us to establish the literal kingdom of God on the earth.
3. The time of waiting for the kingdom is to be characterized by "the patience of Jesus Christ." This isn't a big dose of patience we get by asking. In the Bible, we are told that "tribulation produces patience" (Romans 5:3). You might not want to pray for patience.

**L**ight attracts. In John's case, **his light attracted tribulation.** If we shine as the light of the world, distinctly Christian trouble **will** come our way, too.

## **#2 - Let Your Light Shine And You Will Be Brightened By Trimming (v10-20)**

Oil lamps are simple. The oil in a reservoir produces light when a cloth wick is lit.

The wick fails to burn away because it is constantly absorbing fuel, which burns instead of the cloth.

Oil lamps need tending - someone to supply the oil, and to keep the wick trimmed. Jesus presents Himself to John as being in the midst of seven lampstands, tending to them.

Rev 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

"In the Spirit" indicates an enhanced spiritual state in which John received the Revelation.

Is "the Lord's Day" a reference to Sunday? Or is it signifying the Day of the Lord, the day of God's judgment upon the earth, that is prophesied in the Old Testament, and described in this book?

Either John was having an exceptional Sunday "in the Spirit..," or he was transported forward in time *by* God the Holy Spirit to somehow witness the events of the Day of the Lord.

**It doesn't matter if the Lord's Day is Sunday... Or the Day of the Lord... Or something else entirely.**

What matters is that what John saw was written down as Scripture under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit.

"I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet." It wasn't a trumpet. It functioned as a trumpet. Trumpets were sounded to gather the people of God, and to provide instruction for their movements.

Describing Jesus' voice like a trumpet in conjunction with the mention of the seven churches in the next indicates that He was gathering the churches to instruct them.

Rev 1:11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

Once again we're told that Jesus is God's entire alphabet, and every word He wants to say to mankind.

- He was the “first” in that He created all things.
- He is the “last” in that He will bring all things to their prophesied consummation.

John was to write one book to these seven churches. Even though there are individual letters to each of these churches, everything in the Revelation was for all of them. And it's for all of us.

He would have written on a scroll, and by the time he was finished, it would have been approximately 15ft long unrolled.

Rev 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

Maybe it's just me, but I'm stunned by something John *doesn't* see.

### **He doesn't see Jesus - not at first.**

He sees the lampstands, *then* he sees Jesus. Even though in verse sixteen we're told “His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength,” John saw the lampstands first.

As we will see, the lampstands represent the churches on the earth. It is a strong reminder that Jesus is seen - He is unveiled to the world - **as He lights-up His church.**

The “seven golden lampstands” are reminiscent of the one Menorah in the Holy Place in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. It was a particularly beautiful oil lamp, with seven bowls for oil.

The Menorah and these lampstands suggest the same thing: God's people were then, and we are now, to bear witness to nonbelievers. They were, and we are, to be God's spiritual light in the present darkness of the world.

Rev 1:13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

**Jesus in the midst of the church, tending to our light, is a powerful invitation to Christians to regularly meet with Him in a local fellowship**

Jesus is referred to as the "Son of Man" 88 times in the New Testament. "Son of Man" is as a reference to the prophecy of Daniel 7:13, "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of Heaven." It is a Messianic title.

"Son of man" is *also* used of humans. When Jesus used this title of Himself, He was claiming to be a son of man - human - Who was *the unique* Son of Man in Daniel.

Jesus' attire was similar to that of a priest. Just like the Temple priests would tend to the lamp in the Temple, so Jesus tends to His lampstands, **who are His temple.**

Rev 1:14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

Rev 1:15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

Notice John keeps using the word "like," or "as." Jesus does not have "brass" feet.

Rev 1:16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

**Wait a minute, Gene...You're skipping over these descriptive phrases!**

I am, and here is why: When we get to the seven letters to the seven churches, we will see that each of the ways Jesus was described here in chapter one will



be a way He introduces Himself to a particular church. Listen for them as I read the opening to each of the seven letters:

1. Rev 2:1 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:
2. Rev 2:8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:
3. Rev 2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:
4. Rev 2:18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:
5. Rev 3:1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars...
6. Rev 3:7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "HE WHO HAS THE KEY OF DAVID, HE WHO OPENS AND NO ONE SHUTS, AND SHUTS AND NO ONE OPENS":
7. Rev 3:14 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

**We should wait to try to define and understand these images until we see what Jesus intended them to mean as He applies them to His council to each of the churches.**

Overall, John said "His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength."  
*True solar power.*

Rev 1:17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.  
Rev 1:18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

John "Fell at His feet as dead." This wasn't the first time John had fallen before Jesus' glory. He did so when he saw Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. One commentator said,

On that occasion more than sixty-five years earlier Christ's face had "shone like the sun" (Matthew 17:2) as John and two other apostles had witnessed an anticipatory glimpse of the glory to be witnessed in full at Christ's second coming to earth. On this occasion the aged apostle is distinguished as being the only one to be given a second foreview of that glory.

"But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid." Jesus *always* wants to alleviate fear in His followers. It's on us to receive His 'touch' - usually through the Word, but also through fellowship with His people.

Rev 1:19 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

### **This gets the "Most Valuable Verse" award.**

This is Jesus Christ's own commentary on the Revelation. He gives us the outline for studying, and understanding, the entire book.

1. "Write the things which you have seen." What John had seen was the vision of the risen Lord walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks with seven stars in His right hand. Chapter one is the record of the things John had seen.
2. Chapters two and three will contain the second division, "the things which are." The seven churches, representing the entire Church Age, are the things which are.
3. Then from chapters four through the end of the book we read about "the things which will take place after this." We'll see the church resurrected and raptured into Heaven; the seven years of the Great Tribulation; the Battle of Armageddon; the Second Coming of Jesus; the one-thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth (called the Millennium); the final judgment of Satan, the fallen angels, and nonbelieving humanity; the

destruction of this universe; the creation of a new universe; and we'll get a glimpse at our lives in eternity with God.

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

A "mystery," in the Bible, is something previously concealed that is now revealed. Jesus revealed exactly what He meant by this imagery.

The word for "angels" is *messengers*. They can be either *angelic* or *human*. Each of the seven letters to the churches will be addressed, "To the angel of the church" in that town.

It's doubtful, for many reasons, that they are angelic beings. But if men, who are they?

- C.I. Scofield noted that, "The natural explanation of the 'messengers' is that they were men sent by the seven churches to ascertain the state of the aged apostle."
- Other commentators see them as the pastors of each individual church.

There is an interesting verse near the end of the Book of Daniel. Talking about the End Times, Daniel wrote, "Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And **those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars** forever and ever" (12:3).

The "stars" Daniel spoke of were human beings. It's perfectly biblical, therefore, to identify the angel-star of each church as its pastor.

To call any believer a "star" sounds strange to us. We have our own connotation of the word "star," *and no pastor ought to be one*. But if you can get beyond the common usage, it makes more sense that Jesus was addressing the pastor in his function on behalf of the congregation, to read to

them the entire scroll. (I get correspondence all the time, addressed to me, but intended for the church).

In the earthly Temple, the Jewish priest would refill the bowl of the lampstand with oil, and trim the wicks.

In the Church Age, your body is the temple of God on the earth today - the temple of the Holy Spirit; AND the church, the body of Jesus Christ, is His temple on the earth. You are to shine brightly, brilliantly. Nonbelievers see your light, then Jesus comes into view, in His glory.

**T**he oil lamp is a reservoir with a supply of oil and a wick in order to give light, tended by a priest.

Jesus is our Great High Priest. We are His lampstands on the earth. He wants to light us up to unveil Him, to reveal Him, to sinners - even to those who, in their own way, want to *boil* or *banish* us.

- The oil? God the Holy Spirit.
- The trimming? Our tribulations.

One final thought: If Jesus is tending our lamp, and God the Holy Spirit is the oil... **Is it possible for the wick to suffer from burn-out?**