

Study	Gamma 16 – Study 2
Topic	Prologue
Reference	Revelations 1:4-20
Date	30 September 2020
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Good evening. People in Gamma, very sorry, today everybody has to be locked down because of the increasing number of COVID cases. So, we can easily learn all this at home just as well. So let's commit this time to Lord in prayer. Lord, we ask that you speak to us this night, help us to understand what you would want us to learn and have this vision of you in chapter one transform us. We ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

So last week we went through an introduction of how we are to read this particular letter or prophecy. Let's go back. If you look here at the screen, we've got the prologue, the letter of the churches then we are go into the majesty of God, seven seals, seven trumpets, deeper conflict, seven bowls, final judgment, the millennium, new creation and the epilogue. This is the kind of plan for the entire book, right? So today we're up to here, the prologue, the starting point of the message that Jesus gives. Now, there are three points I want to summarize the passage under.

1. Jesus speaks to the church under pressure. These are churches under pressure at that time. First of all, he reminds us who he is and what he has done.
2. He shows us who he is and why does he is matter
3. He tells us how we will overcome.

So these are basically tree sections of the way we divide chapter one, verses 4 to 20.

HE REMINDS US WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

Now here is a map of the modern Turkey and we can see the seven churches. As John writes to the seven judges, it goes round in a circle, starting off from Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamon, Thyatira and he ends up in Laodicea. And this is a picture of the seven churches that we have. We're going to be spending the next three weeks after that going through probably two or three churches at a time taking our time, because these are the most important parts of revelation. Now seven churches. Now, Revelation 2:7 says

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

Although he writes to each church, in particular, he also ends off say to the churches. So we know that when he writes to each church, he is actually writing to all seven churches and he is also writing to all churches, including us today. Why seven? Well, seven we've really discussed last week is a number of our completion. Seven days of creation, seven days of sprinkling of blood before you are actually clean, March around Jericho or seven days. The length of time from cleansing from uncleanness is seven days. Then you've got ordination service among the Jews that is also seven days. Now, the churches are under pressure during this time and the purpose of this letter is basically to encourage them, to show them a picture of what is important.

Now, if you look at each of the particular churches, they all have problems, well they all have problems where they are good churches or bad churches. You start off with Ephesus and their problem was the lost of first

love. Then you go on to Smyrna, small church, but persecuted, then you go the Pergamon compromised beliefs, starting to give in and follow society. You go to Thyatira, they actually tolerate false prophets. Go to Sardis, it gets worse, spiritually dead. Then you've got Philadelphia, small church, patiently enduring despite weakness. Lastly, Laodicea, probably the richest church of all and totally lukewarm. This is the famous church where Jesus says you're neither hot, nor cold. I will spit you from my mouth.

And the same problem face all of us today. If you look at Western churches, this is a poll taken of the judges in the United States and the major number one concern of pastors there is that we have watered down gospel teaching, which is 72%. We are given into culture, a culture shift to a secular age, 66%. Then you look at poor discipleship models, 63%. Then you've got prosperity gospel teachings in 56%. So by and what large, our churches in today's modern Western church is also in trouble. The problem of compromise. So it's relevant.

Church of England, recently there is an article 2016 October. They say that they already drop legal requirements for Sunday services. So some churches may not have Sunday services. And in fact, if you're looking at the Church of England, they reckon the Church of England will disappear completely by the time of 2067. So you've got dead churches, which are going to disappear off the face of the map in the Western areas. Now in China, the problem in China is persecution. And recently the Bible is to be translated by the Chinese communist party and all the verses that talk about end times, especially Revelations will be banned. All children would be banned from churches. If you ban children from churches, what will happen to the next generation of Christians, they will be struck off. And parents are not even allowed to encourage the children to go full time for God. So this is the church today. This is the church, the day being beleaguered by compromise, secular values and also persecution.

What is life about for the church in the business of life? Jesus Christ, our faith gets marginalized. How does God address this? He reminds us who He is and what he has done. He says grace to you and peace. This is a typical introduction to the letter. And who is it from, is from him, who is who was and who is to come. And from the seven spirits who are before his throne and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first born of the dead and the ruler of the Kings of the earth. You look very carefully. This is the Trinity. It starts off with God, the father. Then you go off to the spirit and you've got Jesus Christ. So it address from all of the true God, from him who was and is, and who is to come. And this is the same formulation as God had actually revealed himself to Moses. When he said to Moses during a time of severe suffering and enslavement in Egypt, God said to Moses, I am who I am the pre-existing God. And he said to him, say this to these people I AM has sent you.

Similar concepts are found in Isaiah. If you look at Isaiah 41:4

Who has performed and done this. calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and with the last I am he....12 Listen to me, O Jacob and Israel, whom I called! I am he, I am the first, and I am the last.

So here we are talking about the father, who is always described as the pre-existent God. Rev 1:8

I am the Alpha and Omega says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come.

So therefore in times, which are difficult in Egypt, enslavement, persecution from Rome, the father tells us that he is eternal, is beyond time, his sovereign God of all history who is able to fulfil prophecy and guide his people. That is the message he sends. And then he says from the seven spirits, why? Because the fullness of spirit is required to empower his people to be able to withstand persecution. Luke chapter 12 verse 11.

11 And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

And it just brings to mind that when you are under persecution, like the people in China, for example, it is the Holy spirit that will give you the strength. This was true, particularly for Martin Luther when the time when he at the reformation, when he actually rebelled against the Roman church, they actually brought him to a huge council called the diet of worms and he was able to stand there, unflinching in his faith and allegiance to the Bible as the word of God. And he says,

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen."

So this is with the power of the spirit. Then he describes the father, son, and then he describes Jesus Christ and see how Jesus Christ is described. He is described as the faithful witness, the first born of the dead and the ruler of the Kings of earth. Very important for us to note this of Jesus Christ, because faithful witness, the word witness is basically *martus*, and actually by the time the New Testament came about the word witness actually transform in this meaning. Meaning not only witness, but witness who is willing to die for the faith. *Martus* is now martyr, which is a person who is willing to die for the faith and here it is Jesus willing to suffer for his testimony about God and through his suffering he is resurrected and through his resurrection, he has got authority and power and this becomes the most important template for which the church and all of us need in order to overcome the pressures to compromise, the pressures to renounce our faith in a very difficult world. We suffer because we look forward to in our suffering we overcome by resurrecting and then we have authority and power.

So who are we? We talk about who God is, who was, and is, and is to come, fullness of the spirit then Jesus Christ who basically suffered, was first one from the dead and also who is authorized to rule, to who we are.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Notice the word here, To him who loves us and freed us. He didn't free us because we were righteous. He loved us first and because he loves us he then frees us from our sin. Sometimes we get things wrong and think that we've got to be good enough. A lot of Christians when we talk to them in Alpha, and many of them will tell us that I'm not good enough to become a Christian. That's not how it works. God loved us in that while we were yet sinners he died for us. So here notice the sequence, who loves us and then freed us from our sins. And then made us a kingdom of priests. And if you look ethnic Israel were the chosen people to be priests. And here we have concept Kings and priests, Kings and priests are basically separate. You don't have the same person being King and priest, you can't have the same person, but in the New Testament you find that we are now all of us, basically Kings and priests together.

So ethnic Israel was supposed to mediate God's light to the gentiles, but time and time again they have failed. But now we take over their vision. This is Exodus. When God says,

19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

Notice here, you shall be to me a kingdom of priest and a holy nation. Revelation says to him who loved us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and has made us a kingdom, priests to his God the father. Here the tenses have changed instead of a future tense it has now happened. We are a kingdom. We are a kingdom of priests who will minister to God. This is what he has done. And so therefore when you take in all that, what God is and all that he has done for us and then we take that information and we look at our suffering,

we can therefore begin to see our suffering in perspective. Suffering brings confusion. You feel like you are alone, overwhelmed and you are anxious, but what happens when Jesus tells us all these things, he's basically showing us where we fit in the trajectory of history. In the trajectory of history, we start off with creation, Abraham, Israel, then Jesus, Jerusalem. We are actually here, we are just before the eternal kingdom. This is where we fit in the trajectory of history. This is where our purpose is. I mean, if you look all over the world, we read the news. We often want to find out who are the most important people in the world. Why because they have the most power. They have the most purpose as it were, we look and read the top 50 and the more influential people, The Tzars of the world. But I was looking at this documentary about the Wuhan, the coronavirus started in Wuhan and there was this Chinese mother who was looking after a son.

The son was disabled. He had kidney disease. He was also autistic. And he was the only son she had. And even though he had COVID-19, she would spend the whole time, she broke all the quarantine rules. She stayed in the hospital with the son willing to risk catching the coronavirus and dying. And here you can see a picture of him having dialysis. And he was in a very, very bad way. And she then says, I'm going to follow him wherever he goes and bear whatever the risk. And she says, I can't live if anything happens to him, to my son, I have nothing to fear.

And the reason why she has got nothing to fear, her whole life is caught up in the life of a son. If her son dies, she will have no reason to live. She sees her life in the perspective of history. She sees it only to fulfill her role as a mother, if she's not a mother and she has no son, she has no reason to live. This is how human beings are actually configured.

In August 19, 2017 on the floor of the Philippines sea there was an expedition. They actually found a sunken ship called the USS Indiana. Hadn't been for 70 years, after it was sunk by a couple of torpedoes in 1945 by the Japanese. Many sailors died. There were 1,200 sailors but only 300 were left alive. And they actually prosecuted, the only captain that was ever prosecuted in World War Two was Charles Macvay III because at night he didn't get his vessel to zigzag. And so therefore they argued that because of that, he was actually torpedoed. They found him guilty, but they didn't jail him at all because they realized war is tough. And what this captain Macvay did, he couldn't take the stress because his own whole reason for existing was being the captain of ship. And because of his mistake as it were, three quarter of the ship died and so therefore what he did was after the trial he got a gun, layout for a front porch and the he actually shot himself.

We all need to see our lives in the perspective history, why are we alive? What is the purpose of our lives? If we have no purpose of a life then life becomes meaningless. So therefore revelations chapter one tells us of our value. We matter because Christ loved us, he cleansed us. He made it the kingdom and made us priests. We are precious in the eyes of God, and that is important.

One of the sailors that actually was in the water that particular time was Dick Feelin and one of the reasons he actually survived other than 300 of them was actually saved my life.

When I enlisted, my dad said to me, Dick, I want you to come home. The land recalled every time I was ready to give up there was my dad's face. There was his dad's face, which you remember. And that actually brought him up home. Verse 7 says,

7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

The fact that Jesus Christ is coming just like that sailor who was floundering around. The flounder around the Philippine sea for five days. Many of them had given up hope. When you give up hope you the slip under the water, go to sleep and they die but Dick Thielen was kept alive because he kept seeing his face of his father says, I want you home. We need hope to go through our sufferings. Second of all, if you look at Revelations

chapter one, Jesus shows us, it is not enough to tell us who he is. And basically tell us what he has done for us. He has to show us who he is and why it matters. In verse 9 it says,

9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Notice the description of John. John is described in a threefold manner. He is described as a person who has gone through a partner in tribulation in the kingdom and in patient endurance. So what he is trying to tell us, the disciple is just like Jesus, you go through tribulation, you are part of a kingdom and the only way you're going to achieve victory in the end is basically patient endurance. You cannot exercise kingdom rule except through tribulation and endurance. We all think we can win, who has got the most strength who has got the most money who has got the most power. But what Jesus is saying is that the character of a disciple is the one that goes through tribulation. The one is part of the kingdom and who will get there by patient endurance.

9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus,

How can I endure? How can I go through tribulation? Brothers and sisters, if you think you can do it on your own, I think you fail, I fail and it's scary if the church is undergoing persecution, we can never do it. But John tells us he's in the middle of the Island of Patmos. Patmos is a godforsaken Island. It's like the end of the world. Nobody cares. Nobody goes there. He's virtually in prison and he is able to endure why because he is in Christ Jesus. The power, the endurance, the ability to stay faithful is in our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ and then the vision comes. The vision is golden lampstand and actually a picture Jesus Christ coming out. In fact, if you look back the landscape of all the 12 churches would be different from the landscape of Kuala Lumpur. If you go to Kuala Lumpur landscape, you are going to see Twin Towers. You're going to see Merdeka stadium, you are going to see all sorts of things, But if you were to go to an ancient city you will see temples. And the first thing about temples is that the temples are temples to not only the gods, but the temples to their emperors.

And you got a big temple to the emperor Domitian who really started persecution of Christians in industrial scale. Nero started persecution of Christians around Rome. It was only located there, didn't really spread very much, but Domitian is the one who started persecution on an industrial scale. If you were to enter the temple in those times, the first day, you'll see a huge statue of Domitian who will tower over you. And you either submit to Domitian or you would be actually executed or you would be marginalized. And in fact, Domitian gave himself titles. He called himself Lord, Savior, God, Son of man, the very titles that we actually give to God. So you actually are faced whenever you come into town and every aspect of life there is fear and awe, you either compromised or renounce your faith because there is no halfway.

Now Christ, therefore presented to alternative vision. Because every day they go, they walk around they see temple, see the statue, they are frightened, they are coward because of power of the kingdom. Christ gives John a vision to convey to us as an alternative vision.

12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

Now, if you look back to chapter 1:7,

7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds,

Why is he describing Jesus coming with the clouds, because if you look in Daniel chapter seven, you remember last week we talk about, during the introduction revelation, much of the imagery of Revelation comes from Daniel. In Daniel it talks about the four beasts, one after another it is going to come. And then Daniel chapter 2 is actually about a statue, which is made of the different metals and each meta like each beast corresponds to each empire, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and then Rome.

And then chapter seven, verse 17,

17 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.'

So although there will be kingdoms of the world, they'll come, Greece, Persia, and then Rome, one by one they will come up, but the kingdom of the most high, the kingdom of which the Christians are to be priests and Kings in this will be forever and then this speaks of what happens to the beast. He shall speak words against the most high and shall wear out the saints of the most high, which means he will persecute the saints and shall think to change the times and the law, he will control the times and the law. They shall be given into his hands for a time, a timed and half of times. Same kind of formula as you see in revelation time, time, half the time. Whenever John writes this, he goes back to the time of Daniel because this indicates a time of persecution and suffering. Not a long time, but a short time, time, time, and half the time.

26 But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, 27 And the kingdom and the dominion to be consumed and destroyed to the end. and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

So although a series of kingdoms will come upon the political stage of the world through war, power and devastation, they may change the law, they change the rules, but eventually God's kingdom will come and Jesus' kingdom will come and rule forever. So therefore you go back to Daniel chapter seven, when will this happen?

Daniel 7:13 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

These are the same words in Daniel chapter seven now apply to Jesus Christ. He is like the son of man. And he comes in the clouds and to actually confirm this, look

14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Daniel describes this one coming in the clouds. And just to make sure you don't miss it, Revelations says,

7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.

Again, who is this who have pierced him. This actually comes from Zachariah chapter 12, verse 10. This is a prophecy of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

So here in Zachariah, he actually prophesies that a Messiah will come, but when the Messiah comes, they are going to pierce him and they did take a spear and pierce the side of Jesus Christ. So therefore we're clear. The one coming in the cloud, the one like a son of man, the one whom they pierced, this is Jesus Christ. He is the one in the vision and what is Jesus Christ doing? He is walking around the seven golden lampstands and the golden lampstand is picture of God's people.

If you were to go to the temple or the tabernacle, you know, we've got the Holy of Holies, which is that cube, and you've got the temple itself and in that temple itself you have very few things. And one of the things that is actually in the temple is basically this actual lampstand. It's got seven lamp stands there and they represent the church, the people of God. The light that comes from the lamp represents the presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that keeps this light lit up.

Now let's look at the description of who Jesus is?

14 The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow.

I mean, you ask me the only person who has got so much white hair in this church is Yee Dian but that doesn't mean he is God. The reason why you say it is white wool like snow is because this phrase is taken from Daniel again.

Daniel 7:9 "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool;

This is a description of God. So when you say the son of man is walking among the lampstands and he has got white hair like wool, like snow, he's saying this is actually God.

13... clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.... His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

If you look at this description, you compare with Daniel chapter 10, Daniel chapter 10, Daniel has a vision and his vision is of a divine figure standing on the banks of the Tigris river and he looked up.

Daniel 10:5 I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. 6 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.

This is a description of a divine figure in Daniel and look at how it is very, very similar to the picture of Jesus Christ, which tells us Jesus Christ is divine. All right. His eyes were like a flame of fire, which means when he looks at you it indicates judgment. His feet were like burnished bronze, which is basically, it's like molten bronze, just coming out of a furnace and basically it is pure. When you actually take a metal out of a furnace is pure and glowing, it is nothing dirty about it. And when it looks at you, it has got piercing eyes. The fire that comes eyes comes with judgment, moral purity, and judgment. And then you've got a description of the sound. In Ezekiel, there is a picture of that says,

1:24 And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the Almighty,

That means God's sound, God's voice sounds like a thunder. It's like going through the Niagara Falls and you hear this huge thunderous sound and that is the sound of God.

16In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

No time to go into this, it is taken from Isaiah and Judges, but basically he holds the seven stars and out of his mouth comes a two edge sword. This sword is God's word and God's word will perform judgment, it will cut between truth and unrighteousness and it will judge. And his face was like a sun shining in full strength, which is the shining face is an indicator of victory.

Now, why does this matter? Why does Jesus Christ reveal himself to John? It affects our response to him. When John saw Jesus, what happened? The first thing he did was he fell to the ground as if he was dead and the church has been affected because every time they go into the temple, they go walk past the temple. They see the huge beautiful statue of Domitian or Trajan or Nero. And they are cowering in fear because of the magnificence of these statues. And now Jesus provides them an alternative vision. This is a vision of himself.

17... But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

You see Jesus described, I'm the first and last. God is described, I'm the Alpha and Omega. Jesus is described as the living one, and God is described as the one who is and who was and who is to come the almighty. So, Jesus again is described as God. Now our path mirrors Christ, it says I died and behold I am alive forever more. You realize when Jesus actually puts his hands and his hands comfort John, he is telling him don't fear. You know why Jesus is saying that I'm the first of the last, I am the living one and of all the Godhead, father, son, and Holy spirit only Jesus has died.

God the father doesn't die, never die, neither the spirit. Jesus Christ died and because he died, he now is alive forevermore and have the keys of death and Hades. So what is happening is that you are now, if you're in the church at that time, fearful cowering under the magnificent statue of Domitian, Tragan or Nero, you're confronted with two images. The image one is the emperor who has got all the earthly powers that he can wield. And on your hand, you have this vision and you've got a vision of Jesus Christ and his power lies. The fact that he died, it just like we will die but the difference is he is now alive forevermore. He died and through his death comes victory of which will be alive forevermore. You have got two pictures in front of you. Why does it matter? Verse 19 says,

19 Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

Why does he ask John to write the things that you have seen? Because it affects how we actually become faithful to God. Every time, there are only several times in the New Testament where Jesus actually appears to his disciples. One Steven AD80 Acts 22, just before Stephen was martyred Jesus Christ appeared in the right hand of father and it gave him the strength to undergo his execution. Then he appears to Paul and Ananias actually twice, one to convert Paul and two to warn Paul of persecution to come. And Paul has been the greatest apostle to write all the 13 epistles and then only in John. At each critical juncture in the history of the church, Jesus appears personally because his image personally comforts, strengthens and emboldens his disciples. Too often today we have watered down the image of God. God is basically our pal. Jesus is my friend. We treat him not with a huge reverence, we treat him with a kind of flippant casualness like we would treat our friends. He is awesome because he says we are awesome, we love him because he loves us as it were, and we're all looking at ourselves. And in that sense, if we continue to do that, the picture of Jesus is actually very, very small. The picture of Tragan or Domitian or Mohuidin or Anwar become very big.

And so therefore our faith is constantly pushed further and further to the side and further and further marginalized. The wisdom and power of men looms large across all aspects of life and our Christian lives are pushed to the side. Luke says,

Luke 12:4 “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. 5But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

See, there are two kinds of fear. You either fear man who basically can only kill your physical self. There's a second death, in revelations you will read where you will be forever condemned away from God. That is the person whom you should fear. Oswald Chambers, a very famous spiritual leader writes,

The remarkable thing about God is that when you fear God, you will fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.

And then I think part of our fears in society. Anxieties when we get up in the morning, go to work and the things that assail us and take our confidence away is basically because the things of the world look much more larger and ominous and more powerful than our God, and this is a reality check. When Jesus gives the vision to John, suddenly Jesus becomes big. He is there with eyes flaming, the mouth the sword coming out in judgment in victory and if we actually cast our eyes on God, focusing on Revelation chapter 1 and seeing the magnificence of our Lord Jesus Christ, who overcame because of being a faithful a witness, then the things that are world become much, much smaller.

The church prevails because the secret to prevailing is the fear of the Lord. This is acts chapter nine. Now Acts chapter 9 tells of a time where the church was doing very well and this is a secret of success. You see the last it, it multiplied. See the multiplication. If you want your church to multiply, these are the ingredients.

Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

These are the ingredients put in the church, it grew, it had peace, instead of fighting among themselves because it was walking in the fear of God, which means the picture of Jesus, the vision of Jesus, the majesty of Jesus, the power of Jesus looms large in their lives and when Jesus looms large in our lives then the influence of the world becomes smaller and smaller and smaller and then we become obedient. That's why we need a vision, a fresh vision of who Jesus is in our lives in order to grow.

Lastly, the third part is that he tells us how we shall overcome. So he tells us who he is, what he has done. He shows us who he is, so that we are then in awe and we walk in the fear of the lord and lastly, he tells us how we shall overcome the difficulties in life. And he writes,

19 Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

So Revelations is also not only a letter, it is also a prophecy. He's saying, look to the future. Why is looking to the future important? Looking to the future is important, because the thing that actually defines all our existence is that we are trapped in time. Whatever happened yesterday, you can't go back and change. Whatever's going to happen tomorrow, you can't go forward either because we are trap. We didn't time itself. Why do you think, we live in a society, we've got elections coming in United States and have every day ahead have polls. What are the polls? The polls are trying to gauge public opinion to predict the future, right?

That's what they want to do. Well, what about if some people wake up in the morning, they look at the horoscope or they buy Toto Magnum, all these things are an attempt to predict the future because the future is so uncertain. So you want some kind of certainty. You want some kind of control of the future. Therefore you look at Gemini, Taurus, Cancer and by looking at your stars, perhaps you could have some idea what's going to happen in the future. So we are all interested in breaking through this time which traps us. I remember that famous movie growing up in 1970s, back to the future where Michael J Fox goes into a car and that car can go back in time, go to the past in order to change the future. And we have the modern equivalent,

remember the Avengers End Game. When the Thanos actually takes up the gemstones and with snap of his finger one half of the world population dies, and it is all very sad and then the avengers have to go back in time to get those gemstones to try to change history and alter the future.

He is going to tell you what is going to happen? How are we going to overcome? We are going to overcome because he is going to tell you about things that are to take place after this. So Revelations is a book of prophecy. It will tell you what is going to happen in the future. When you are armed with the knowledge of the future, whatever comes we will not be taken by surprise. We will not be frightened. We will be not be shocked and we will be able to say, Hey, I have a God who knows the future. I have a God who told me what's going to happen. I have a God who's got this in the palm of his hands.

8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

If you're not, I'm the first and the last

Jesus transcends time. Domitian doesn't transcend time. Marcus Aurelius transcend time. Mahathir does not transcend time. Each of them within a specific time period, but Jesus is saying, I am the one who is and who was, and who is to come. There is present, his past and is also future and that is a person on whom we must place our trust. You know, about 700 sailors in the USS Indianapolis were thrown into the sea when their ship was actually torpedoed. Half of them succumb, sharks had a feeding frenzy and for the many of them, they actually gave up hope. You know why they gave up hope because the USS Indianapolis was a ship that actually was the ship that transported the parts for the nuclear atom bomb, so that it could be assembled and flown to be drop in Hiroshima. Because it's such a secret trip, nobody knew what they were doing. Nobody knew the Navy didn't know where they were going. And so therefore, many of the sailors floundering in the ocean about 700 of them, many of them knew that nobody knew where they were, the Navy wasn't going to look for them, even though they came late and they didn't arrive because nobody's expecting them to drive. And it was so simple for four to five days, it was so simple to say, I give up and to slip under the waters and they disappeared. If they didn't have a hope.

We are not alone at sea, the most important vision given to John is at the beginning in Revelations chapter one. It's like taking a selfie, isn't it. All of us take selfies, right? We go to important places, we go to Tokyo, we go to Eiffel tower, you visit a friend, you have a great meal, and you want to memorialize that time by taking a picture. And that picture goes viral in Facebook and your friends or your mothers and your relatives or brothers is a season and say, wow, you know, this is a really important thing he's doing. He is actually having a great meal where in Japan or somewhere, you know, in revelation chapter one, Jesus took a selfie.

You know what he was doing in the selfie, he was walking. And what was he walking? He was walking among seven lampstands. And what was he holding in his hand? Seven stars. And what were the seven stars? The seven stars were the seven angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands with the seven churches.

If Jesus gave you a selfie today, his selfie would be him among all the churches and he holds in his hand seven angels. Those angels are the one specifically assigned. Every single church has a specific angel and that angel will carry out the instructions of Jesus. You know what the priest does when he walks around the lampstand. The priests go in the temple, they're walking around with them. They're not walking around a little lampstand, seeing you know, that one looks good. They are not watching. What he's doing is tending to the flame. If the flame goes out, he puts it back on. If it needs a little bit of oil, it needs a little bit of tending, he is tending to the flame. He is making sure that the flame continues to burn brightly and the selfie of Jesus in heaven today, he says, walking among all of us, he is walking among the most important thing in the universe to him, the church, and you know what he is doing. He is tending to the flame. Why is he tending to the flame? Because we each our lampstand, we each are witness and the most important thing, why do we have this great image of Jesus as the one who would protect us because you will protect us because we are his witnesses, so that we

continue to shine in the dark world that has only one beacon of light and that's a church. So I hope, you have gained some encouragement from the selfie of Jesus given to you in Revelation chapter 1. And we'll take this in mind, go home and think about it, pray about it, do the discussion in your groups. And we'll meet again next week as we will go through the individual churches. Next week we'll do Ephesus and Smyrna.

Let's end with a word of prayer, Lord, we thank you that you have given us a picture of what you are doing and you are walking in our midst and you hold in your hand, each angel that looks after us, your church. And we pray that we will be faithful, that we will overcome and we know we will overcome, you know, is because we are all in Christ, help us cling onto you and continue to trust you and move and live in you. We ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.