

“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. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks...and the candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” Rev. 1:9-12,20.

Notice here, Beloved, that right off the bat the Holy Spirit employs the figure of speech known as an ELLIPSIS to make a powerful point. Most expositors seem to have missed this point of emphasis, but Bro. William Jones expounds it as follows; to wit: *“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.”* We cannot wonder, that when John heard such an articulation, he should turn to see who it was that spake to him; but THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS IS EXPRESSED, may strike some with surprise; I turned to see the voice that spake with me, says the apostle; in which he has recourse to what rhetoricians term an ELLIPSIS – that is, a figure of speech whereby something is implied which is omitted, or not expressed; and the meaning is, that he turned to see WHO IT WAS THAT SPOKE TO HIM; for sounds and articulations are not objects of sight, but of hearing” – *“And being turned, I saw,”* etc. such a sight – especially with Patmos’ barren isle as a lonely background for the wonderful drama of the ages – I say, such a sight might well have surprised the strongest physical constitution. Pay attention here, Beloved. This is a blessed phenomenon that exhibits a wonderful description of Christ and His church. Put it this way: If you hear a commanding voice, *“a great voice as of a trumpet,”* speaking behind you of eternal Alpha and Omega things, and giving you orders about writing holy visions in a book and sending it to seven churches in Asia – I say, if you hear such a voice, I submit that the urge to see the Holy Speaker will be overwhelming. And when you turn to see Him, the first thing you see will be His churches; to wit:

“And I turned to see Him. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks...and the seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches.”(Rev. 1:12,20)

The importance of this point cannot be overstated. The Lord Jesus Christ functions in and through His church, which He terms, the Pillar and Ground of the truth – (*“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the CHURCH of the living God, the PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH.”* 1 Tim. 3:15). – *“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory IN THE CHURCH by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”* Eph. 3:20,21. The dear Lord Jesus has a special relationship with His churches, no matter how small and insignificant from the silly world’s viewpoint; to wit:

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”(Mat. 18:20)

John here beholds the Lord Jesus Christ in his resurrected and glorified body *“in the midst of the seven candlesticks which are the seven churches.”* There stands our mighty Savior, the Captain of our salvation, holding the pastors of those seven churches in His right hand. Does not this picture suggest the nearness of Christ to his churches in all matters, and the deep interest that He takes in them? Before he left this earth, He promised His peculiar presence to his churches while they were engaged in preaching and teaching His blessed word.

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There is something about the juxtaposition of the words that suggests that the Lord Jesus was pledging His power and omnipotence to protecting and delivering His people when they faithfully and boldly published His message to the filthy populations to come; to wit: ***“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. GO YE THEREFORE, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*** Matt. 28:18-20. And, it is certainly and altogether appropriate that the churches of Christ – and ALL OF THEM – should be represented by candlesticks. For, their end or design is that they should ***“hold forth the word of life, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation;”*** to wit:

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings; That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, AMONG WHOM YE SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD; Holding forth the word of life.”(Phil. 2:13-16)

Beloved, the church is the repository of all divine truth in the earth at this time. Has not the Holy Ghost called it ***“the pillar and ground (foundation) of the truth?”*** 1 Tim. 3:15. What was said of the Jew in the former dispensation, is now true of the church, until the times of the Gentiles be come in; to wit: ***“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; CHIEFLY, BECAUSE THAT UNTO THEM WERE COMMITTED THE ORACLES”*** – (I.E., THE UTTERANCES) – ***“OF GOD.”*** Rom. 3:1,2.

What a glorious thing (!)(!)(!). Transpose the words that the Holy Ghost used on the Jews THEN to us NOW; to wit: What advantage then hath the lively member of the New Testament church? Much in every way. CHIEFLY, BECAUSE UNTO US AT WESTBORO BAPTIST CHURCH HAS BEEN COMMITTED THE WORD OF GOD, THE UTTERANCES OF GOD, FOR THIS DISPENSATION (!)(!)(!). Is there another such church as WBC in the world today? Does not the paucity of the utterances of God harbinge the end of the world? To wit: ***“Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage; there is NO CLUSTER”*** – (i.e., no groupings of grapes together, as a church, or gatherings of a few people together, even as few as two or three, as where the Savior said, ***“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*** Mat. 18:20) – I say, ***“there is NO CLUSTER to eat; my soul desired the firstripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the earth.”*** Micah 7:1,2.

In my humble opinion, the old Scotch-Baptist Jones writing in 1829, comes the closest to the point I am striving to make; to wit: ***“And this they (His churches) are called to do, by the reading of the Holy Scriptures – by the preaching of the gospel – by the administration of the ordinances of Christ’s house – by their prayers and their praises – all of which when conducted agreeably to divine appointment have the truth stamped upon them, and so are divinely calculated to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of men. IF THERE SHOULD BE AN INDIVIDUAL NOW PRESENT who has been accustomed to think lightly of a Christian church, and the privileges of church fellowship, let the subject before us correct that mistake.”*** (“The subject before us,” referred to by Bro. Jones, ***“was the vision of our blessed Lord Jesus in His glorified and exalted state in Rev., ch.1, as Lord and Heir of all things. He now appeared to John, as a triumphant conqueror displaying and exercising all the perfections of Deity.”***) To all which Jones adds the famous ***“conclusion”*** of Rolin’s Ancient History; apparently believing as I do that mankind for the most part has not the foggiest conception of Christ as the Eternal Hero whose garments are soaked in blood and who comes from Edom conquering and to conquer; to wit:

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.” (Isa. 63:1-4)

This is our Lord Jesus Christ as He walks amidst His churches comforting and educating his people. The world knows nothing of the Christ of **Rev., ch. 1**; and when He *“sprinkles many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.”* Isa. 52:15. I say, according to Jones, *“IF THERE SHOULD BE AN INDIVIDUAL NOW PRESENT WHO HAS BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO THINK LIGHTLY OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AND THE PRIVILEGES OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP, LET THE SUBJECT OF THE ALMIGHTY AVENGER OF HER ENEMIES CORRECT THAT MISTAKE. Imperfection and evil will be found in all Christian churches in this world; and for a very obvious reason – because the members of them are not angels, but human beings, renewed only in part – men encompassed with infirmity; yet, after all, they are of divine appointment – the schools of Christ, designed by Him to train up His disciples in knowledge, faith, and divine love, so as to make them meet for a higher state of holiness and bliss, when the days of their pilgrimage are ended.”*

Beloved, I give you the following for your prayerful consideration of this weighty matter of your souls' highest interest; to wit: **THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE THE NEAREST THING TO HEAVEN OF ANY INSTITUTION THAT IS TO BE FOUND IN THIS LOWER WORLD**; and the professor who thinks lightly of His churches as a means for preparing him for that holy State, gives sad proof of his want of regard for the end, viz. **THE SALVATION OF HIS SOUL**. In other words, the man who lightly esteems – or, who does not highly esteem – the church, is on his way to Hell (!). (*“I love thy kingdom, Lord! The house of thine abode, The Church our blest Redeemer saved with His own precious blood. I love thy Church, O God! Her walls before Thee stand; Dear as the apple of Thine eye, And graven on Thy hand. For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend, To her my cares and toils be giv'n, Till cares and toils shall end. Beyond my highest joy, I prize her heav'nly ways, Her sweet communion, solemn vows, Her hymns of love and praise. Sure as Thy truth shall last, To Zion shall be giv'n, The brightest glories earth can yield, And brighter bliss of heav'n.”*)

The wonderful exhibition of the risen and glorified Son of man is described by his Human nature and His visible glory. He is represented to John and described by him, as ***“One like unto the Son of man.”*** This was a humble title the dear Lord Jesus condescended to wear while he tabernacled among us, and one which the Spirit of prophesy gave him in Daniel's writings; to wit:

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN CAME WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.” (Dan. 7:13)

John was the disciple Jesus especially loved, leaning on His breast at the Last Supper; – (*“Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?”* Jn. 21:20.); – and therefore John knew the Man Christ Jesus very, very well. But now, listen to the description of the glorified Jesus as John beholds Him in **Rev., ch. 1**, the very sight of Whom causes John to fall at His feet as dead; to wit:

“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. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 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. 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; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; 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.” (Rev. 1:13-20)

Thus John did not immediately recognize Christ, because an amazing change has taken place; but while he now perceived him, in human form, and with SOME RESEMBLANCE of his former appearance (which is intimated by the expression, *“like unto,”*), He now appears in resplendent glory in what is called *“a spiritual body”* – that which had been sown in dishonor, when laid in the tomb, was raised in glory – spiritual, heavenly, immortal. Such was the glorified body of Jesus in which he now appeared to his servant John. And, Beloved, our own new bodies will be *“like unto”* this beautiful, powerful, agile, impassible, and spiritual body of Jesus; and, indeed, the Savior’s amazing body is herein revealed to John as a sort of divine pledge of our own amazing bodies to come; to wit:

“For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.” (Phil. 3:20,21)

And, *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”* 1 Jn. 3:1-3. Beloved, consider the HOPE that is here said to be IN US; to wit: ***“WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM; FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.”*** What a beautiful and mysterious turn of a phrase. We have been like Him, and we have seen Him as He was in His despised and rejected state, when there was no beauty in Him that we should desire Him, when He had neither form nor comeliness, and when He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Isa. 53:1-3. Now we have seen Him through the eyes and testimony of John as He appears in Rev. 1:13-17; which fearsome sight caused John to fall at His feet as dead; and which sight will one day soon cause all kindreds of the earth to wail when:

“Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.” (Rev. 1:7)

Beloved, here let me cut to the chase, as they say. Our new bodies will be like unto His glorious resurrected body in Rev. 1, and we will be with Him when He returns on a white horse to smite the nations with a sharp sword and treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God; to wit: *“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful & True, and in righteousness he doth judge and MAKE WAR... And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in white linen, white and clean.”* Rev. 19:11-16. That’s us, Beloved. I love you. Amen.