

Study 36: Revelation 18:1-8

1 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.

- This angel doesn't speak with a loud voice as the others have. But once again, it would be hard for John to miss what heaven was doing and saying. This angel was bright and had great authority. As I have said many times already, a person must work hard to *ignore* what heaven is doing, for God makes it plain for anyone who is interested to see.
- Could this angel be Jesus? Let's look at another passage to determine if this is possible.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:1-14)

- I would conclude that this angel (the Greek word for angel simply means "messenger") *is* Jesus because the Word gives me a clue that it is. Hebrews states that He is the "radiance of God's glory" and is far superior in authority to the angels. My point is that you must interpret Scripture using Scripture whenever possible and

avoid insight that falls into “the Lord showed me” category. You are on safe interpretation grounds when you let the Bible interpret itself.

- Peter gave us this principle for biblical interpretation when he wrote:

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:16-21).

- Peter was referring to his presence at what we call The Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1-7). At that time, he heard the voice of the Father from heaven. Yet he said above that we have the “word more certain” in the written word of God! No voice, impression, opinion or idea is superior to the written Word. The Bible is not open to my opinions or impressions. I must be open to the Word, but the Word must not be open to me and my interpretations.
- The more I become familiar with God’s Word, the more restricted I feel in that I must be true to the meaning the Holy Spirit intended and not try to make the Word say what I want it to, think it should say, or hope it would say.
- I want to walk in the light of heaven, don’t you? I don’t mean when I get to heaven, but right now. I can do that by following Jesus and obeying His Word. Jesus Himself said that he was the light.

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it (John 1:4-5).

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

- 2 **With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.**

3 For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."

- There it is: another mighty, loud voice speaking heaven's perspective. What is this loud voice from heaven saying to you? Can you tell someone in a sentence or two?
- Old Testament Babylon had literally fallen as verse two described: it was desolate and deserted, never to be rebuilt or re-inhabited. This is the same fate for the antichrist system that has tried by various means to establish itself in opposition to God and His Christ.
- Whole people groups along with their governments have tried and will try to establish a government and worldview that opposes God's Kingdom. They have failed and will continue to fail. Their economic systems were assisted in the short run by their alliance with the antichrist spirit, all to no avail.

4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;

- It is difficult not to be affected by the prevailing culture. Every generation can look back at previous generations and things that they have done and wonder, "How could they have participated in that?" or "How could they have thought that?" Yet often "that" (racism, materialism, greed) was the dominant thinking of the age and most people, even believers, went along with it or did not actively oppose it, because it is difficult to break out of cultural norms in which we live. That is why Paul wrote:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

- We must have our minds renewed so that we can be transformed and therefore not conform to the pattern of this world. I find God challenging my way of thinking more often than anything else. I don't see things from His perspective, and that could lead me to be His while at the same time follow the prevailing mindset of my generation.
- Ask the Lord to examine your heart and mind to see where you need renewal and transformation. Have you "bought into" any prevailing mindset of the age? What is the answer if you have? Renewal and repentance!

5 for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.

- God may seem like He doesn't see or remember, but He does! I think the psalmists effectively expressed this fear of God's forgetfulness on several occasion. Here is one of them:

For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" This is what the wicked are like-- always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand (Psalm 73:3-23).

- Have you envied or do you envy the wicked? Have you considered being more like them while maintaining your relationship with the Lord? Remember, God doesn't forget their wickedness and He will repay them, in due time. You must be patient and remember what is written to you:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:7-10).

- Don't give up trusting the Lord and doing what He wants you to do. He is watching, although it may not seem like it at the time.

6 Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup.

- 7 Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.'
- 8 Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.

- Another psalm addressed the apparent rewards of the wicked:

I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree in its native soil, but he soon passed away and was no more; though I looked for him, he could not be found. Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace. But all sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be cut off. The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him (Psalm 37:35-40).

- Remember, the early Church was living under terrible conditions. They feared for their lives and lived in constant danger because they did not worship the emperor. The conditions described in Hebrews applied to them:

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved (Hebrews 10:32-39).

- Does this apply to you in any way? Are you suffering or being persecuted for your faith? Then be encouraged! God hasn't forgotten your suffering or the misdeeds of your persecutors. He will give everyone their just reward, especially you, His child and servant!