



SERMON SERIES, CHAPTER 1  
**“Who’s In Charge?”**

Who’s in Charge? In our day, we tend to think the people in Washington, or the State Capitol are calling the shots -- and we just have to put with and manage as best we can with whatever they decide, right?

Maybe we think of those who decide what we see and hear that influences us so much – they’re the people in charge – the people at FaceBook, or YouTube, Twitter, or at CNN, ABC, Fox, or CBS.

Or maybe, it’s your boss, or the company CEO who is in charge and decides whether you get a profit-sharing bonus, or get laid off. Who’s in charge?

Today we begin a sermon series on the book of Revelation. In chapter 1 of this book, it is made crystal clear who is in charge!

***<sup>4</sup> John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:***

***Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.***

***To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup> and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.***

***<sup>7</sup> “Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen.***

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

*Revelation 1: 4-8*

John, who wrote this book, describes Jesus as the One ***“who is, and who was, and who is to come.”*** John says that Jesus Christ is due ***“glory and power for ever and ever!”*** Jesus Christ ***“is coming with the clouds,”*** and ***“every eye will see him ....”***

These are radical words, treasonous words in the day they were written. John talks about Jesus Christ, He is "the ruler of the kings of the earth."

There are a lot of kings, and Jesus is the ruler of the kings. He is above them all, in charge of them all! Then John uses another very powerful word, "the Almighty." Caesars claimed to be "almighty" and the Caesars demanded to be worshiped as gods. Caesar thought he was the Almighty, but John says, "There is one who is the ruler of the kings of the earth." Even over the Caesar.

Now to get the full impact of this phrase we have to think about this for a minute because in our day we have separate spheres of power -- political power, economic power, cultural power and so on.

So we'll think of political figures as just one kind of power figures. In John's day kings held ALL the power. So when Jesus is said to be the ruler over the kings, what that's saying is he is the ruler over every power source. Think of all the holders of power in our day.

Think of all the movers and shakers and opinion molders, Jesus is ruler over them all whether they know it or not. He is ruler over Joe Biden, and Donald Trump, and Vladimir Putin. Jesus is ruler over the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. He is ruler over Rihanna, and Taylor Swift, and Queen Elizabeth.

But before you get too excited about it, friends, understand that this means Jesus intends to rule over me and He intends to rule over you. And today we're going to unpack what this means.

Now, Revelation is a challenging book for us to study. Very often people get in trouble trying to understand this book because they get hung up on the pictures, and they fail to realize the richness of the meaning behind them. I'll give a real obvious example also from John. In John 10:9 John is quoting Jesus and Jesus says, ***"I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved."*** Now, obviously we

understand that Jesus doesn't mean He's a literal gate with hinges. This is a way of expressing that His words and life and death and resurrection are our path to God, the way through which we enter to God.

Now, in Revelation there's primarily four kinds of imagery, and we'll speak to those as they come up in coming weeks. Real briefly, John uses **objects, numbers, events, and creatures**. We can't read and understand these literally, like we are reading a news paper.

John is exiled onto a little island of Patmos. He is trying to encourage believers who are suffering under the hand of the Romans. John can't come right out and say, "you hang in there. Jesus has you in His hand, and Jesus will see that Rome falls one day." There was no freedom of speech in those days, so to write that would never make it past the Roman censors. So, John writes in symbols with deeper meaning. And with a little study and thought, we can understand the meaning.

I would like to ask you to imagine for a moment what John must feel like living on Patmos.

***"I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."***

*Revelation 1:9*

**What's the forsaken place in your life?**

Who is in charge there?

He ***"was on the island of Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."*** In other words, he had been persecuted. According to church history, he was quite old, perhaps 90 years old when this was written. He is in exile, a prisoner on a rock in the middle of the sea. He couldn't proclaim the Gospel, he could build up the believers he loved in the churches where he shared the truth about Jesus. He was cut off from worship and learning and fellowship. Patmos is the place of disappointment. It's the place where you feel alone.

Every one of us ends up on Patmos sooner or later when you're cut off from what you love most, when you feel confused or disappointed to how things turned out. Some of you are there right now, maybe because of sickness or divorce, or you lost a job, or you have relational heartache, or there's a depression.

I know what it's like to be on Patmos. And I'll tell you my usual prayer is, "God, get me off Patmos. I don't want to be here. Send the boat and get me out of here." I'll try to take charge and figure a way to escape off of Patmos.

Is God in charge of your life so much that you entrust your Patmos to Him. See, God's plan was not to take John off Patmos. Patmos is the place where God was unveiled to John. John discovered that God was sufficient for everything he needed. God alone.

Very often it's in times of suffering or pain or confusion that's when we come to see the power of God like in no other times. So, John goes on to write about an all-sufficient God. God's in charge, He's got you and all of your needs.

John paints a picture of our all-sufficient God. He paints a portrait, not of God's physical looks, but of his character. John describes Jesus who rules in heaven.

***"I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest.***

***"His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze refined as in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.***

***"In His right hand He held seven stars; and from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining with full force. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He placed His right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, the living One; I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and Hades.'***

## WHAT'S THE PLACE IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU NEED WISDOM?

### WHO IS IN CHARGE THERE?

John hears a voice behind him. He turns and looks and sees one like the son of man clothed like a king with a long robe and a golden sash. It's very important to get what John is saying. Remember he's not describing physical appearance, but character.

**"His head and hair were white as wool, white as the snow"** -- white hair. Now, in our day, white hair is generally something to be avoided. It's a sign of aging or weakness. The only thing worse than having white hair is having? ... No hair! (that's right.) And we wonder when we read this couldn't God get some Grecian formula or something? How come he has white hair?

But the Bible has a real different view. Grey hair is a crown of splendor. Old age brings great wisdom, and that is something to be honored and sought after.

This Son of Man has all the wisdom of age, only *so much more* because He's eternal. God is called, **"the Alpha and the Omega."** The significance of that is that in the Greek alphabet, Alpha is the first letter, Omega is the last.

"I am from A to Z," he is saying. "I was there at the beginning, and I know the end. I don't just know how everything got started," God says. "I know how it's all going to end." He knows who won the last election, but he also knows who's going to win the next one. The Father knows when Jesus came the last time, he alone also knows when Jesus is coming back again.

He knows the last time the Indians won the World Series, and the next time. The same for the Cavaliers, and the Browns ... well, ... He knows when Jesus is coming back again.

God has all wisdom. Where is the place in your life where you need wisdom? What decision are you facing? What problem do you face that you've just been stuck because you don't know what to do? God's the God of all wisdom. What's that place in your life where YOU need wisdom? Is God in charge of that place?

***"... His eyes were like blazing fire."*** Revelation 1:14b

**What's the place in your life you want no one to see?**

Who is in charge there?

Then there's the next image. "His eyes," John says, ***"were like a flame of fire."*** The first image is about God offering infallible wisdom. The second one is that God holds and offers reliable correction. He purifies us, eyes of fire.

There are certain pairs of eyes that cause us to behave differently just because they're focused on us. For instance, you're on the road and you see a black and white car nearby, and the eyes of the driver of that car meet your eyes. Do you drive a little differently when that happens?

Mothers have eyes like this. Where does a mother have eyes? (In the back of her head.) Now, when we say that, obviously we're not making a literal statement because that would be repulsive. Instead we mean that moms have a way of knowing what's going on. And when her eyes are on you, it has a way of changing the way that you behave.

John says the eyes of God are constantly watching. They miss nothing. And he says that they're blazing like eyes of fire. And this has to do with fire being an image of that which purifies in the Bible.

Now that it's getting into warm weather, it's barbeque season, and guys like to light up a grill.

Boys reach a developmental stage at about age 6 where they are fascinated by fire, and this stage lasts until they're about 90 or so. It's thrilling to us. I don't know why.

We cook over fire – partly because food tastes better, but also because it purifies. It destroys things that need to be destroyed so that we can eat the food in a healthy way. Sacrifices for sin were burned in fire – purified. Fire is an image of purifying.

So Christ has eyes that blaze. When I do sinful things, I don't want anyone to see them. And I need to remember that the God of Revelation is a god with eyes like fire.

What's the place in your life that you want to keep hidden? You don't want anyone to see? Is there an on-going sin? God has

eyes that purify. Will you allow that part of your life to become under His control?

***“... His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace....” Revelation 1:15a***

**What’s the place of anxiety in your life?**

**Who is in charge there?**

The next image after his eyes are ***“feet like bronze, glowing in a furnace.”***

Some of you will remember from the Old Testament, Daniel had a dream of Nebuchadnezzar. His kingdom was described as a huge statue, made of very powerful metals except for the feet. The feet were made of ... clay. It was a great kingdom of its day, but it had a vulnerable foundation. That’s what the feet of clay was about. And because it had feet of clay, it was destroyed. It was built on shaky ground. And anything that is built on anything other than the kingdom of God is built on shaky ground.

Build your life on money, build your life on success, one day it’s going to be gone. There won’t be any trace of it. But this one like a son of man has feet made of bronze.

Bronze is interesting material. It’s made up of two things: iron and copper. Iron is real strong, but it rusts. Copper does not rust, but it’s pliable, bendable. Bronze combines the strength of iron and the endurance of copper. This means God is an unshakable foundation for your life. There’s an old hymn that we sing -- *“On Christ the Solid Rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.”* The idea of feet of bronze, is that God offers unshakable peace.

Anybody here ever get anxious? Got any nail biters here? Do you ever worry so you can’t sleep at night? Come to the son of man! What’s the place of anxiety in your life today? Will you give that place over to a God with a pair of feet that cannot be shaken, unshakable peace. Wouldn’t you like that?

***“... His voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ... and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. ....”***

***Revelation 1:15b & 16b***

## **What's the place of doubt and uncertainty in your life?**

### **Who is in charge there?**

Then the next image is very striking. ***"His voice was like the sound of many waters."***

Now in those days there were no amplifiers or big speakers. So you don't get more powerful than the sound of many waters.

Have you ever gone to Niagara Falls and tried to shout over the roar? You can't!

All parents know that kids have two kinds of voices. Parents will talk to their kids about when to use which kind of voice. Anybody know what the two kinds of voices are? An ... (inside voice) and an ... (outside voice). Which does every parent like the best? (The inside voice.)

Well, God has an inside voice. He speaks sweet promises of love and forgiveness. But God also has an outside voice, and He knows when to use it. One day everybody will hear it.

The idea here is God offers unchallengeable authority. In times of doubt and uncertainty, He speaks with authority.

Along the same thought, John says the Son of Man talks with a sharp, double-edged sword coming out of His mouth.

Again, to just the casual reader, this seems like an odd picture. What John is NOT saying is that when we see Jesus there will be a blade sticking out between his lips. In John's day, what was a sword? Well, it was the means of exercising authority and power. Whoever held the sword was in charge. This is one who has power.

The question is, whose words will you allow to carry weight or have power in your life? Who's got a sword in his or her mouth to you? Your boss says something negative to you, and you find yourself becoming negative. What if your job is at stake? Does your boss hold the sword?

Or your spouse says, "I no longer love you." Or your children have moved away, and they never call. Do you still matter? Are you still loved? Whose words have authority in your life? Who carries the sword?

Well, John is saying in this beautiful picture, "In Jesus we have someone who has power and authority to back up what he says."

At the beginning of time, God spoke, and it was so. There is power in God's word.

Do you see, friends? Finally, in Jesus Christ, we have someone whose word is absolutely authoritative. His word reigns over creation, over history, over rulers. And that means you do not allow anybody else's words to wield a sword over you -- not your boss, not your parents, not your spouse, not your friends. When you are full of doubt or uncertainty, let HIS WORD be in charge. Trust His Word.

### **What's does His authority mean for me?**

***"When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead."*** Rev. 1:17a

But now here it gets very serious. God is so holy. When human beings come into the presence of God and they see one whose character is like this, a God of such unblemished righteousness, then what we naturally see is our sin. We're filled with fear. In the presence of a holy, holy, holy God, sinful, petty, people like you and me should just fall as though dead. Might as well kill me now, because I don't deserve to be in His presence. He is pure and I am so not pure!

You know that feeling, and I do too. John is so overwhelmed at the sheer holy righteous goodness and majesty and awe of God that he says, ***"When I saw Him, I fell at his feet as though dead."*** God COULD use His power and holiness and authority to reduce you and me to toast -- to send us to hell. He would be fair in doing that. But, But, But .. instead, what does this holy, holy, holy God use His authority for?

### **What does He use His authority for?**

**To calm your fears.**

***Then he placed his right hand on me and said:***

***"Do not be afraid."*** Revelation 1:17b

He uses His authority, not to reduce your sorry sinful self to toast. But instead, this ruler, in charge of all, comes tenderly.

***Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid."*** Imagine to fall dead at Jesus' feet and have Him take that

all-powerful right hand, and touch you on the shoulder, and say “do not be afraid!”

John sees one like the son of man, the Ancient of Days, the Alpha and the Omega, the ruler of the kings of the earth, and falls down at his feet like one dead. And Jesus reaches down and touches him on the shoulder. And he says, "Hey John, don't be afraid. It's me, Jesus. It's the one you knew and loved. It's the one you sailed with and ate with and fished with and laughed with."

John loved Jesus like a big brother. John saw Him do miracles. John was one of the closest 3 disciples to Jesus. He was next to Jesus at the Lord's Supper. All the other disciples abandoned Jesus at His trials, but John stayed. John was the first one to run and check out the tomb on Easter Sunday. He saw him raised from the dead. And now, John is an old man, in his 90's, alone on a rock in the middle of the sea. And John sees the all-powerful God in all His glory, and this God, places His hand on John's shoulder and says, “don't be afraid. It's me. Your friend. It's Jesus.”

One day, friends, you are going to stand before God and all his glory, the son of man, the Ancient of Days, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the ruler of the kings of the earth, most of all, the one who went to the cross. And he's going to say to you, "It's okay. It's me, it's Jesus. Don't be afraid."

***"He placed His right hand on me saying, 'Don't be afraid; I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!'"***

Jesus was dead. He went to the cross. He gave His life to pay for all your sins and mistakes, and guilt. He paid for it all completely. He suffered and bled and died to win your forgiveness. But that wasn't the end. He is the Living One. He rose again. He is alive forever and ever – always to forgive you. Always to welcome you back to Him. There's no need to fall down like dead before Him – you are forgiven fully, freely, forever!

***And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Revelation 1:18b***

So don't be afraid. Not ever. Don't be afraid when you are in a season of life that is your Patmos. Don't be afraid when you face death. Hades (hell) has no power over you. That once was your

only future, but now, (says Jesus) I've got the keys. I got them from my dad.

"And that gate is going to unlock, and no one who follows Me," says Jesus, "is going to be trapped by death. Not one of my friends. I've got the keys."

Death, no big deal. I've been dead, it hasn't slowed me down at all, see? I'm alive forever and ever, nothing to get worked up about."

***"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later."* Revelation 1:19**

Then this last word: Jesus says to him, "So now, John, get to work. You've got a book to write. What did you think, just because you're 90 years old and trapped on a rock, oppressed by the most powerful government in the world you get to take a vacation? Not a chance! I've got work for you to do, so grab a pen. Let's get going."

You too, whatever your Patmos is, it doesn't matter. The son of man, the Ancient of Days says to you -- "Don't be afraid. It's me, Jesus. And I've got work for you to do, people to love, a church to build, lost to save, bold requests to pray, great worship to offer. Don't be afraid. It's Jesus."

Amen.