

# How to Face A Fearful Future

*"17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, 'Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.'" Revelation 1:17-18 NLT*

- Do current world conditions worry you? If so, what troubles you most?



Christians living in the first century were facing a fearful future. The book of Revelation was written about AD 95 during the reign of the Roman emperor **Titus Flavius Domitian** (də'mi shən). Emperor Domitian was a cold-blooded murderer. He demanded "emperor worship" which required acknowledging him as "Lord and God." The refusal of the Jews and Christians to worship him resulted in their persecution and execution.

All of the Apostles were martyred, except John. Emperor Domitian banished him to the Isle of Patmos, a rocky penal colony about ten miles long and six miles wide in the Aegean Sea. Under the reign of Domitian, life for a Christ-follower was difficult, fearful, and deadly. John reflects these conditions when he writes: *"I, John, am your brother and your partner in suffering and in God's Kingdom and in the patient endurance to which Jesus calls us. I was exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching the word of God and for my testimony about Jesus."* (1:9) NLT

Life today is difficult and fearful. We face the threat of terrorism, war, the collapse of the economy, increased cost of living, corruption in the government and media, dishonesty and greed in the business world, a growing crime rate, widespread advancement of immorality, the rejection of traditional values and biblical morals, the expulsion of God, prayer, and the Ten Commandments from public property, etc. **In the first chapter of Revelation, John conveys some principles to help his readers face a fearful future.** The same principles will help us today.

**The Central Lesson: In hard times, look HARD at Jesus. Make Him the center of your life.**

## 1. **REALIZE** that you are not the only one facing hard times and a fearful future (1:9).

As already mentioned, when John wrote Revelation, the Roman Empire was persecuting everyone who refused to worship the emperor as "Lord and God." John was suffering (1:9), his readers were suffering (2:9-10, 13), and anyone else refusing emperor worship was suffering. Realizing that others are facing hard times helps us to avoid self-pity, seek to encourage others, and collectively look to God for His intervention.

## 2. **Maintain a life of DEVOTION and worship** (1:10).

Even though John had been banished to the Isle of Patmos and could be tempted to feel forsaken by God and his friends, John is *"in the Spirit"* on

the *"the Lord's Day."* He is having church all by himself. He is still worshipping, trusting, loving, and serving God. His circumstances did not diminish his heart for God. We must maintain a life and heart of devotion and worship of God even when experiencing hardship and a fearful future.

## 3. **We must look hard at the PERSON, power, and tenderness of Jesus Christ who tells us to not be afraid** (1:10-18).

John is given a symbolic vision of Jesus.

- (1) *"seven golden lampstands"* (1:12) = The seven churches in Asia (1:11, 20)
- (2) Jesus is *"in the middle"* of his churches" (1:13) = **Jesus must be in the center of our lives**
- (3) *"like the son of man"* (1:13; Dan 7:13; Mark 14:60-62) = The Messiah
- (4) *"a gold sash across his chest"* (1:13) = Jesus the high priest who goes into God's presence to obtain forgiveness of sin for those who believed in Him (Exodus 28:4; Isaiah 11:5)
- (5) *"His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow."* (1:14) = wisdom, holiness, & eternity (the Ancient of days, cf. Dan. 7:9)
- (6) *"his eyes were like flames of fire"* (1:14) = Jesus is all-seeing & the judge of all evil
- (7) *"feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace"* (1:15) = an exalted person with great power; purity; all-powerful
- (8) *"his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves"* (1:15) = authority
- (9) *"held seven stars in his right hand"* (1:16) = seven angels (Greek text - messengers) or pastors of the seven churches in his care (1:20)
- (10) *"a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth"* (1:16) = authority & convicting power of Christ's word (cf. Isaiah 49:2; Hebrews 4:12)
- (11) *"his face was like the sun in all its brilliance"* (1:16; Matt. 17:2) = deity

John was so overwhelmed with fear at the vision of Christ in His majestic glory that he fell at His feet paralyzed *"as if [he] were dead"* (1:17). Then the tenderness of the all-powerful, majestic Jesus is seen in that He placed His right hand on John. He gave His servant a tender, reassuring, comforting touch. He told him *"Don't be afraid!"* (1:17). He continues by describing His identity (1:17-18). He helps John overcome his fear by reminding him **who He is**. He told John...

- *"I am the First and the Last"* (1:17)
- *"I am the Living One"* (1:18)
- *"I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever!"* (1:18)
- *"And I hold the keys of death and the grave."* (1:18)

We, too, can face hard times and a fearful future by looking hard at the person, power, and tenderness of Jesus Christ who tells us to not be afraid. *The Life Application Study Bible* explains:

"As the Roman government stepped up its persecution of Christians, John must have wondered if the church could survive and stand against the opposition. But Jesus appeared in glory and splendor, reassuring John that he and his fellow believers had access to God's strength to face these trials. If you are facing difficult problems, remember that the power available to John and the early church is also available to you (see 1 John 4:4)."

**Conclusion: In hard times, look hard at Jesus. Make Him the center of your life.**

**Action Steps:** ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.