

# KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Revelation 1:9-20**  
“A Glorious Service in a Tiny Church”

Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Interestingly enough, we will see a glorious church service today where there was only *one* human participant! It may not be the same as real church, but even if we are by ourselves, I think we can still have our own little worship service. The *loneliest* worship service in history was when a Pharisee prayed "with himself" (Luke 18:11-12); God didn't even bother to show up, nor was the Holy Spirit there. But if you're truly saved, then at a minimum, there are *four* people—you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (John 14:23); and in John's case, there was also a delivery angel. Let's notice a few things about John's worship service.

**1: The place (v9).** John, the writer of Revelation, is the second-most prolific New Testament writer. Since he was apparently exiled to the island of Patmos at this time, he probably felt alone like Elijah (I Kings 19:18); yet he reminds us Christians that he is **our brother**. Maybe you feel alone; perhaps you spend so much time in a hospital room or going through something no one else quite understands; but if you love Jesus, you have brothers and sisters all over the world. John is our **companion in tribulation**; if we want friends in Jesus Christ, we need to be willing to suffer with Jesus. Those who sweat and ache with each other on the basketball court have a special comradery that those who remained on the bench can't share; and likewise, Christians have special and unique comradery through their tribulations for Jesus.

Maybe on this **island that is called Patmos**, John saw migratory birds, reptiles, or foxes; it is 13 square miles, smaller than a four-by-four mile square. Bats live nearby today; who knows what other animals, like snakes or dolphins, might have been nearby, assuming John was outside. It's interesting that John was persecuted **for the word of God, and for the**

**testimony of Jesus Christ**; missing is the phrase from earlier "all things that he saw" (1:2), perhaps alluding that persecution is really against Jesus Christ, not so much us personally (II Samuel 8:7).

Are we too wrapped up in our *place* of worship—with the organs, stained glass, or modern and trendy construction? Do we look at these things to the exclusion of asking the Spirit of God to show up? A small church with the Spirit of God is more powerful than a large one without Him.

**2: The congregation (v10a).** Who was in this service? John says, "**I**"—just one human member! It may have been a bit depressing for him at first; he didn't even have the two or three Jesus referenced (Matthew 18:20); yet *still*, Jesus was there. Maybe you're in a house with quiet darkness when you can't sleep; Jesus is with His saints even in the most lonely times. Let's make sure we're **in the Spirit**; and I've felt convicted about this. Our culture profanes Sunday; but it is still the Lord's day. Do we replace the Lord's day with sports, secular activities, or work? Let us be in the Spirit, focusing on Jesus Christ on this special day of the week. And **the Lord's day** is not the Old Testament sabbath, but the New Testament Sunday—the *first* day of the week (Matthew 28:1, Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2).

Are we too numbers-oriented when it comes to church? Numbers are great where possible; but purity is more important. God *reduced* Gideon's army from 32,000 to 10,000, then to 300! Let's be concerned in the most important Member showing up, not in getting more people to come at the price of godliness. Pour a bottle of good ink into a five-gallon bucket of clean water, and now you have something fit neither for writing nor for drinking. Sometimes, the church is most powerful when it is most condensed, with the highest ratio of true believers to hypocrites.

**3: The music (v10b).** Let's step into John's sandals for a moment. He's trying to have church the best way he can, and he's lonely on the island, but he has the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ in his heart. Maybe he's reciting some verses, humming a hymn, when all of the sudden, he hears a sound **like a trumpet!** It was **a great voice**, probably complex, diverse, and beautiful; more so than any pipe organ or trumpeter we've ever heard. I don't think we can imagine how God's voice must

sound; but I'm sure it dances with complexity and glory that sort of sparkles as He speaks, overwhelming and startling John.

Is *our* music glorifying to God? Or are we trying to draw attention to ourselves? I don't think many people would sing the same way if they saw Jesus sitting on the front pew. I'm sure a lot of our modern sensual-sounding, showy, worldly music makes Jesus sigh and makes Him sad.

**4: The Savior (v11-16).** Jesus is **Alpha and Omega**; not just infinite, but total; He is **the first and the last** (John 8:58, cf. Exodus 3:13-14), existing before the world began. John literally **saw** all of these things, simply **writing in a book** his eyewitness testimony. Let's engage our imaginations and try to visualize what he saw, difficult as it may be for him to describe and for us to imagine.

**(v12)** Picture John's shock as he **turned to see** this voice! Certainly this great sound was no bird or lizard. Notice the order: **being turned, I saw**; sometimes people don't see God because they're not turning toward Him—they're running away from Him. **(v13)** Jesus Christ is **in the midst** of our churches. Workers "shape up" when the boss is around; we'd better "shape up" too—Jesus is in our midst. And John saw Jesus' glorified body, **like unto the Son of man**; recognizable yet transfigured.

**(v14)** His **head and his hairs** being **white like wool** may represent His infinite wisdom (Proverbs 20:29); and being **as white as snow**, His purity (Isaiah 1:18). If we saw Jesus as we are today, we would feel so disgusting and vile (Daniel 10:8). **His eyes were as a flame of fire**; I think Jesus has a holy, sweet, yet all-knowing and piercing gaze which sees through to our inner motives and heart. Cf. Daniel 10:1-8.

**(v15)** Perhaps Jesus' **feet like unto fine brass** represent His toughness when treading the winepress (Isaiah 63:3), **as if they burned in a furnace**, showing His purity and immunity to germs and dirt, even when treading in a sinful world (cmp. John 13:10). And **his voice as the sound of many waters** must have had many simultaneous aural themes woven throughout, intriguing and complex.

**(v16)** The angels of the churches are in the **right hand** of Jesus, not His left! And His spoken word is a **sharp twoedged sword**, able

to create the universe and destroy the rebel. And imagine **His countenance—as the sun shineth in his strength**; this isn't like the sun in the early morning, or during sunset; it isn't the pale sun of Antarctica. This is the brightness of the blazing midday sun of summer (Psalm 19:5).

Do we *really* want Jesus Christ in our worship services? Are we willing to ask Him what music offends Him, and then to get rid of it? Are we willing to speak the truth in love, even rebuking the hypocrisy of unrepentant and impure church members claiming to be Christians? Are we willing to wash our minds and garments in preparation of worshipping Him?

**5: The humility (v17-18).** Moody said, "Be humble or you'll stumble." John certainly was humble; he **fell at Jesus' feet as dead**. And yet Jesus **laid his right hand** upon John reassuringly, this same hand which holds the churches safely, and said to **Fear not**. Perhaps He is reminding John that He willingly took on a mortal body while on earth, being **the first and the last**.

**(v18)** Jesus **liveth, and was dead**, and so He conquered death from the *inside*, having been there and defeated it. Since He has **the keys of hell and of death**, He can determine who goes to heaven and hell—not the devil. Like John, let's be humble in church, not trying to show off.

**6: The command (v19-20).** John was commanded to write what he saw; and he was given greater access than any news reporter!

**(v20)** Revelation is full of **mystery** and excitement. And as a church, we are to be **candlesticks** which merely hold the light of Jesus Christ, shining in a dark world. While a candle provides light on earth, a **star** provides light in heaven. I think churches play a vital role not just in this lost world, but in the heavenly battle also.

In summary, how are we in church? Are we like a candlestick, shining the light of Jesus Christ? Or do we love the darkness rather than the light? Let's ask God for bright, godly church services, and let's live in a way that pleases God.