

Revelation 1:17-18 – “Man of Salvation”

Resurrection Sunday is really no different than any other Sunday. We worship a risen Saviour who has given us life 365 days a year. On this Sunday though we celebrate the anniversary of when Jesus broke through the grave clothes and changed the course of history and eternity. He is alive and because He is, we have the promise of life today!

Now we've been looking at this wonderful reality the past few Sundays of Jesus coming back. We're awaiting a returning Saviour because we believe (and know) that He died and rose again. He is alive today, seated at the right hand of the Father. And He is awaiting the call to come and receive us to Him again someday soon. What a hope we have! What a living hope we have!

So, as we've been looking at the coming of Jesus, we've seen again that He is coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He is returning as majestic, conquering, King Jesus.

- This was very different than how He came the first time. That was our subject in our Good Friday Service. He was the suffering Servant. He was the Man of Sorrows. He stepped in and took what we deserved. He died the death that we owed because of sin. He suffered, enduring the cross and because of that He defeated death and sin. He is now our Man of Salvation. He rose again securing life for all and He will return again as the triumphal Saviour and Lord.

So, today I want to focus on a couple of verses that has caught my attention regarding Jesus' resurrection and victory. I've been looking at the book of Revelation in its relation to the conquering King Jesus we've been seeing at His second coming through our study of the Olivet Discourse these past few Sundays. And the book of Revelation certainly details the victory Jesus holds over death.

The book of Revelation opens with John receiving the revelation of Jesus. Again, it's not gentle and meek Jesus, it's strong and wild Jesus. So much so that when John sees Jesus, remember, he's the disciple whom Jesus loved, John knows Jesus, but when he sees Jesus in this resurrected, glorified, judge and king way, John falls at his feet as dead.

- John has the wind taken out of Him. He's startled at what he's seeing. He's seeing Jesus as He's never seen Him before. This is not just the Lamb of God, this is the Lion of Judah, hear me roar!

But I love what we read Jesus' response to John to be. It's what I want to focus on today.

Revelation 1:17–18, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

Jesus says that He is the First and the Last. That means there was nothing before Him and there's nothing after Him. He's the starting point and the end point. Life for Jesus didn't begin at Bethlehem. He's the author of Life. Life for Him didn't end at Calvary, He is the end point. He is the Life.

He says to John, ***I am He who lives***. Jesus is not just some historical figure that lived a good life, or was a good teacher that we can learn some good moralistic values from. He is God who is alive today. He's the only figure in history who can say I ***was dead***, but I am now alive. And ***I am alive forevermore!*** This truth and reality will never change.

- There are a lot of skeptics and doubters today that would attempt to disprove the resurrection of Jesus. They say He never really died. He just fainted on the cross. And when they placed Him in the tomb He resuscitated. But then you have to figure out how He survived the spear thrust through His side by which the Roman soldier was to ensure His death and the death of every crucified person? If Jesus did resuscitate, how did He get out of the tomb with a heavy stone rolled in front and Roman guards guarding the tomb?
- And now you have the fact of Jesus saying, I was dead. If this was all some misunderstanding and people only thought He died, He would not be able to say this. Jesus assures us, I was dead. Like really dead, toes up, pushing up daisies. He died!
- But He is alive forevermore. Never will death have any hold of Him again. It's not just the reality for Jesus, it's the promise for all who have put their trust in Christ.

Throughout the book of Revelation, we see this repeated phrase that the Lord lives forever and ever.

- **Revelation 4:9–10**, *"Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:"*
- **Revelation 5:14**, *"Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever."*
- **Revelation 10:6**, *"and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,"*
- **Revelation 11:15**, *"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!""*

So Jesus is alive, He is alive forevermore, and He gives life forever and ever.

And I love the last part of **Revelation 1:18**, ***And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.***

Keys are very important. If you've ever lost your keys, you break into a cold sweat. Your keys become quite vital for you.

I want to look at 3 things that these keys speak of for us today.

1. Authority

Keys certainly speak of authority. Those who are holders of keys have been given special privileges that are earned and where authority is now entrusted to them.

For instance, we don't just go hand out keys to the church to every person that attends. It's not that we don't trust everybody here, it's just that we don't... ok, it's absolutely because we don't trust everybody here 😊.

- But if you're locked out and trying to get in the church, and you see someone come with a key, you know that's someone that has authority. They have the stamp of approval to come into the church. They have been given the authority to open and close this place.

Remember Jesus gave Peter (and all the disciples) the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19). It was a way of stating that they now had the authority to open the way of salvation. They can proclaim with all the authority of heaven behind them that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God who alone saves!

And speaking of authority, Jesus was given authority over all flesh to give eternal life.

- **John 17:1–3**, *"Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ² as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

I remember a story from when I was a young adult. We often attended Jesus Northwest, a Christian music festival you would go and camp at. It was like a Christian Woodstock only the people wore clothes and were high only on Jesus. But you would have all these people from different church groups camping out in an open field, and there would be some fun and pranks. Primarily from our group. One year we thought we'd go throw some water balloons in people's tents. Only we thought it would be better if we drove around in the church van so we could have a quick getaway. The problem was, none of us had the keys. We weren't authorized to drive this van. We were hooped until from out of the shadows, my friend Clive appeared saying, I have the keys! And though he was a leader, he was always up for some adventure. So he took us around as we launched water balloons at night at unsuspecting campers. Now you may say, that doesn't sound very Christian. But we had put Living water in the balloons. We were actually endorsing this wonderful life in Jesus.

So, keys bring authority.

Keys also give access.

2. Access

When something is locked, you're not going to get very far without a key. A key gets you in. It provides access to that which is otherwise closed up.

But what’s interesting in the verse we’re looking at today is that it’s not a key to heaven, it’s the keys of Hades and of Death. That seems like the wrong place to be opening up.

But you see, this is where all people went before Jesus went to the cross and paid for our sins and provided our ransom. Without Jesus we were all imprisoned and on death row.

He’s provided our release. He’s given us access to freedom. We no longer have to be under the hold of death.

But you need to walk out of that prison. The doors have been opened, but there are some that don’t want to leave or feel they can. Will you step out of death and into life?

- **Psalm 68:20**, *"Our God is the God of salvation; And to God the Lord belong escapes from death."*

We read **1 Peter 3:18–19**, *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,"*

- Now that’s an unusual verse. What does it mean He preached to the spirits in prison? Different interpretations have been given. But I believe after He died He went to Hades, which was divided into two compartments before Jesus. And He preached to those who died in faith of God’s promise and He revealed that this promise is now here. Their salvation is now complete.

That gives understanding to this passage:

Ephesians 4:7–10, *"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ⁸ Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.” ⁹ (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)"*

Jesus went and emptied the side of Hades where believers were. And He led them to heaven with Him. That’s what is meant when it says He led captivity captive. It’s more so, He led the captives free!

- **Hebrews 2:14–15**, *"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

The keys of Hades and Death has unlocked the doors of death and given us freedom. We have been given life in and through Jesus by which we now have access to Him.

Romans 5:1–2, *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."*

Lastly, keys give assurance:

3. Assurance

Because Jesus holds the keys of Hades and of Death, we have the assurance that this will never be the outcome for us when we are in Christ. Jesus has given us the promise of eternal life.

1 Corinthians 15:20, *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*

- Firstfruits mean there is more to come. With Jesus rising from the dead, He sets the pattern now for all that believe in Him. Just as He said to Martha when her brother Lazarus died: *"Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?""* (John 11:25-26).

1 Corinthians 15:55–57, *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Our assurance that death is not the end for us is seen in the fact that Jesus holds the keys to death. So as Jesus said to John, he says to us: "Do not be afraid." It's not wishful thinking—it's a declaration backed by resurrection power.

Because He lives, the grave has no grip on us. Because He lives, your story doesn't end in a tomb. Because He lives, the keys are no longer in the hands of fear—they're in the hands of your Savior.

On this day, we don't just celebrate an empty tomb—we celebrate a living King who holds the keys. AMEN!!