

## ***Session 05 Jesus: Faithful Witness, Firstborn, and Ruler (Rev. 1:5)***

### **I. REVIEW: JESUS AS THE FIRST AND THE LAST**

- A. In Revelation 1-3, John shares a vision highlighting 30 descriptions of Jesus and 18 eternal rewards. Each communicates a specific insight about Jesus that is necessary in equipping the Church to overcome compromise, endure persecution, and engage in partnership with Him.
- B. The First and the Last is the title that Jesus used most often in Revelation. He spoke of it four times (Rev. 1:11, 17; 2:8; 22:13). This title refers to Jesus' destiny, power, and exaltation as a Man. He used this title in the context of His suffering, death, and resurrection (Rev. 1:17; 2:8).  
***<sup>8</sup>These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life...<sup>10</sup>“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life...<sup>11</sup>He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” (Rev. 2:8-11)***
- C. Jesus, the First and the Last, emphasizes His ***sovereignty*** and ***preeminence*** over all as a man. He is the ultimate purpose for all things. Our highest purpose is to love and partner with Him as His eternal companion. This title connects Him to giving rewards to the faithful. He endured all that we go through, including death and the receiving back of all that we “lose” by obeying Him.
- D. Jesus the Man has the first place of authority and honor over all things—He is preeminent. He is the first source of all things related to our salvation and destiny. He is the source of our money, ministry, and honor. He can give anything to us and return all that we lose through obedience.  
***<sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body...that in all things He may have the preeminence***. (Col. 1:18)

### **II. THREE TITLES CONNECTED WITH JESUS, THE FIRST AND THE LAST (REV. 1:5)**

- A. Revelation 1:5 summarizes Jesus' preeminence in His human destiny as the First and the Last. He is the First and Last in the ***realm of truth***, the ***resurrection***, and the ***government of the earth***. This verse brings together His earthly ministry (faithful witness, in the past), His heavenly ministry (firstborn, in the present), and His millennial ministry (ruler, in the future). We see the ***preeminence of Jesus*** in truth, in the resurrection, and in government (v. 5) in making a way for the ***destiny of the redeemed*** (priests and kings) and the ***dominion of the Father*** on earth (v. 6).  
***<sup>5</sup>Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, <sup>6</sup>and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion... (Rev. 1:5-6)***
- B. John referred to Jesus by three messianic titles in Psalm 89 (faithful witness, firstborn, and ruler of kings). These titles point to Jesus' messianic roles as prophet (witness), priest (firstborn), and king, in His mediatorial office. His reign as a faithful witness before God will continue forever like the sun. These roles will all be fully expressed on the earth in Jesus' millennial reign.  
***<sup>27</sup>I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth...<sup>35</sup>I have sworn...<sup>37</sup>It shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky. (Ps. 89:27-37)***

### III. PREEMINENCE OF JESUS: THE FAITHFUL WITNESS (REV. 1:5)

- A. Jesus, the First and Last, is the faithful witness in the realm of all truth. He is completely true in all that He is, says, and does. Jesus does not hold back negative truths (rebukes or judgments) nor exaggerate positive truths (affirmations and promises); He never flatters, nor rebukes in bitterness. This is one of the most challenging aspects of Jesus' leadership to obey. Often, we only say positive things to please people so that we do not lose position, honor, or financial opportunity.

<sup>5</sup>*Jesus Christ, the faithful witness... (Rev. 1:5)*

- B. He was a faithful witness in His ministry—He stood for the truth regardless of the cost (Jn 3:11; 5:31-32; 8:13-14; 8:18, 23; 18:37). A faithful witness speaks what they have seen firsthand.

<sup>37</sup>*For this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. (Jn. 18:37)*

### IV. PREEMINENCE OF JESUS: THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD (REV. 1:5)

- A. Jesus, the First and Last, is the firstborn from the dead in the realm of the resurrection. He is the leader over all that pertains to the resurrection, including the destiny of glorified humanity and the New Jerusalem. He is God's firstborn, the preeminent heir of the promises that God gave to David. John expanded the promise in Psalm 89:27 by calling Jesus the firstborn "from the dead."

<sup>5</sup>*Jesus Christ...the firstborn from the dead... (Rev. 1:5)*

<sup>27</sup>*I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth... (Ps. 89:27)*

- B. Jesus occupies the first place of authority and honor as the firstborn of creation (Eph. 1:20-22). As the firstborn, Jesus is the heir of all creation (not the first one created); He is the first cause and has the first place of authority over creation. The power over all creation "begins" with Him.

<sup>15</sup>*He is...the firstborn over all creation.* <sup>16</sup>*By Him all things were created...* <sup>18</sup>*He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Col. 1:15-18)*

- C. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead and the firstfruits of those who have died physically. He was the first man to receive a resurrected body as the first human to conquer all the enemies of the human race, including death (1 Cor. 15:24-28). As the firstfruits, Jesus belongs especially to God and is the pledge (1 Cor. 15:20) and source (1 Cor. 15:21) for those who receive a body like His.

<sup>20</sup>*Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [died physically]...* <sup>21</sup>*For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead...* <sup>26</sup>*The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:20-26)*

- D. Jesus is the firstfruits—the pledge and guarantee that all believers will receive a resurrected body like His (Phil. 3:21). Jesus has a resurrected physical body that consists of "supernatural" flesh and bones. Natural flesh with its blood will not inherit the eternal kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50).

<sup>21</sup>*...who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (Phil. 3:21)*

<sup>39</sup>*Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have. (Lk. 24:39)*

- E. As the firstborn from the dead, Jesus is the source of the resurrection for all who will receive a resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:21).  
*<sup>21</sup>Since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead... (1 Cor. 15:21)*  
*<sup>28</sup>All who are in the graves will hear His voice <sup>29</sup>and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (Jn. 5:28-29)*
- F. All three Persons of the Godhead participated in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Jesus had the power to take up His life or to raise Himself from the dead (Jn. 10:18). The Father raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24; Eph. 1:20) in full partnership with the Spirit and the Son (Rom. 8:11). Jesus is equal to the Father with regard to His Godhead, but inferior to the Father with regard to His manhood. Each Person's work is unified, inseparable, and interdependent on the other's work. They are fully involved with every work of God (creation, atonement, resurrection, etc.)  
*<sup>18</sup>I have power to lay it down [physical life], and I have power to take it again. (Jn. 10:18)*
- G. Jesus, the firstborn, made a way for the eternal destiny of the redeemed as priests and kings.  
*<sup>5</sup>Jesus...the firstborn from the dead...<sup>6</sup>made us kings and priests to God... (Rev. 1:5-6)*
1. The saints will live forever as priests, worshiping God in nearness to Him and filling the earth with the knowledge of God. The pinnacle of Christian experience forever is to know or experience God. This is the essence of eternal life (Jn. 17:3; Rev. 22:4).  
*<sup>3</sup>This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ... (Jn. 17:3)*  
*<sup>9</sup>The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9)*
  2. Jesus will govern the earth in partnership with resurrected saints (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5; Mt. 19:28; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30).  
*<sup>6</sup>They shall be priests of God...and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:6)*

## V. PREEMINENCE OF JESUS: THE RULER OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH (REV. 1:5)

- A. Jesus, as the ruler of the kings of the earth, is the First and Last in the realm of the government of the earth (v. 5). As King, Jesus will make way for the dominion of the Father on earth (Rev. 1:6; 21:3). Jesus will be seen by all as the ***highest of the kings***, the most exalted king on earth (Ps. 89:27). John expands this promise to include Jesus ruling over all the kings of earth (1:5).  
*<sup>5</sup>Jesus...the ruler over the kings of the earth...<sup>6</sup>made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him [the Father] be glory and dominion... (Rev. 1:5-6)*  
*<sup>27</sup>I will make him [the Messiah] My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. (Ps. 89:27)*  
*<sup>3</sup>Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them... (Rev. 21:3)*

- B. The theme of the book of Revelation is that Jesus is returning to earth to rule all nations as King.  
<sup>16</sup>*On His robe...a name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.** (Rev. 19:16)*  
<sup>9</sup>*And the LORD shall be **King over all the earth.** (Zech. 14:9)*
- C. The Father decreed that Jesus, the son of David, be given all nations as His inheritance.  
<sup>8</sup>*I [the Father] will give You the **nations for Your inheritance...** (Ps. 2:8)*
- D. In the Millennium, all the kings of the earth will be saved, will worship Jesus (Ps. 72:11; 102:15; 138:4; 148:11; Isa. 62:2; Rev. 21:24), and will base their national government on God's Word.  
<sup>11</sup>***All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him.** (Ps. 72:11)*
- E. Daniel saw a vision of God as the Ancient of Days giving one Man authority over all nations.  
<sup>13</sup>*One like the **Son of Man...came to the Ancient of Days...** <sup>14</sup>*To Him was given **dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all...nations, and languages should serve Him.** (Dan. 7:13-14)**
- F. Jesus quoted Daniel 7:27 concerning His rule over all the nations of the earth.  
<sup>31</sup>*When the **Son of Man comes in His glory...then He will sit on the throne of His glory.***  
<sup>32</sup>***All the nations will be gathered before Him...** (Mt. 25:31-32)*
- G. The Father has given Jesus an unprecedented measure of favor in His leadership over the earth. In the Millennium, Jesus will receive all the **power** (governmental authority); **riches** (money and natural resources); **wisdom** (insight and intellectual property); **strength** (physical strength, including the labor force and human resources); **glory** (praise and love); **honor** (all will esteem and obey Him); and **blessing** (agreement with His policies with unified cooperation).  
<sup>11</sup>*The voice of many angels...<sup>12</sup>saying..., "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive **power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing.**" (Rev. 5:11-12)*

## VI. RESPONDING TO THE REVELATION OF JESUS

- A. **A-R-K:** I encourage people to apply the truths about Jesus in Revelation in three ways:
- B. **Agreement:** Pray, "Jesus, You are the faithful witness. You took a courageous stand for truth. Jesus, You are the firstborn. I rejoice in Your preeminence. You are the ruler of the kings of the earth. All the kings on earth will bow before You. I love Your greatness."
- C. **Revelation:** "Reveal Yourself to me as the faithful witness; show me Your glory as the firstborn and as the King over all the kings on earth."
- D. **Keep the prophecy:** Respond in faith and obedience to Jesus, the faithful witness. Pray, "I will stand for truth, regardless of what it costs me. Help me. I commit to proclaim You as the King who is over all. I will obey Your leadership. Help me to walk in this."