


REVELATION 1:12-20

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LIVING CHRIST

“I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.’”¹

 ur Lord is alive. He is here. He dwells with His people. This is the testimony of the Faith. Too often, we who are Christians have permitted the unbelieving world to define our Faith. We imagine that because our eyes do not see the Risen Saviour standing in our midst, He is not present. However, the testimony of the Word is that the Master is among us.

The world cannot recognise His presence. Earth dwellers are accurately described by a story that I once heard. The children had been instructed to bring to class a report describing what they had done in the summer just past. Johnny, raised in a godly environment, was first to read his story. He told how his family had taken a vacation to the mountains. There, he had witnessed the beauty of God’s creation. He concluded by saying how thrilled he was to witness all that God had made.

The teacher—one of those modern, faithless individuals who imagined that she was the sole arbiter of wisdom appointed to destroy the faith of her charges— rebuked the lad. “Johnny, do you really believe God made the mountains?”

“Yes, teacher,” Johnny replied confidently.

Then, the teacher asked, “Johnny, have you ever seen God?”

“No, teacher, I’ve never seen God,” Johnny replied.

“Have you ever smelled God, heard God or touched God?” the teacher continued.

Again, Johnny admitted that he had never smelled, heard or touched God, at which point the teacher confidently asserted, “Then, if you can’t see God, smell God, hear God or touch God, God must not exist.”

Johnny was devastated by this crass assault against the values taught by his parents. However, little Sally spoke up. “I understand what you are saying, teacher.” Then, turning to the class, she asked, “Do you believe our teacher has a brain,” she asked? Of course the students laughed at such an absurd question. However, Sally quickly followed that question with this assertion, “None of us have ever seen the teacher’s brain; none of us have smelled, touched or heard the teacher’s brain. Therefore, our teacher does not have a brain!”

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Class was dismissed for the remainder of the day.

The world cannot be the arbiter of this most holy Faith because the world is unable to recognise the reality of the True and Living God; the world neither hears God nor acknowledges His authority. It is a tragic fact that those of this world are spiritually dead; they cannot know God because they are not known by God! However, the individual who knows God, or rather who is known by God, does not need evidence that He exists—they are confident that He is! Underscore in your mind the vital difference between knowing about God and knowing God. There are multitudes that know about God. Our seminaries and religious institutions are filled with people who know about God; like the Athenians whom Paul met, these learned people are “in every way ... very religious” [see ACTS 17:22]. However, what they worship is unknown.

As Christians, we are oft-times challenged to defend why we believe in Christ the Lord. The simple answer to such challenge is that the Spirit of God lives within our hearts, and we are possessed of certainty of the Risen Son of God. He lives within us and resides among us. Whenever we gather to worship as the Community of Faith, the Risen Saviour is with us, walking up and down in the midst of His churches. Whenever we bow in prayer, the Son of God bends down to hear our plea; and He delights to give us an answer. In the midst of our various trials, the Son of God is ever with us, standing with us and giving us strength to endure.

In the opening paragraphs of the Book of the Apocalypse, John writes of a day that was unlike any day he had ever experienced; the day was unlike any day he would ever experience. The apostle had been exiled to the Isle of Patmos. It was “the Lord’s Day,” a Sunday, the first day of the week; John was worshipping, as was the custom among the earliest followers of the Christ. As he worshipped, he heard a voice, the sound of which can only be described as awesome. The voice commanded him to write an account of what he was about to see, addressing the seven churches of the Roman province of Asia. It is here that we pick up the account, focusing in particular on the presence of the Living Saviour, the Risen Son of God.

Turning to see the source of the voice that he heard, John saw “seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength” [REVELATION 1:12a-16]. Little wonder that he fell at the feet of this awesome personage, his strength fleeing from his body as darkness flees before the rising sun!

Awesome as this personage was, John nevertheless absorbed numerous details about this individual. In particular, John noted that this One was standing in the midst of “seven golden lampstands,” and that in His hand He “held seven stars.” Momentarily, this awesome Individual would speak of the stars and the lampstands as mysteries, identifying what John actually saw. Understand that in biblical parlance, a mystery is not some frightening incident or situation; a mystery is a truth that could not be known until God reveals it to His people.

For instance, Paul, writing the Roman Christians, speaks of the fact that the Jews refused to believe the Messiah at His presentation as a *mystery*. “Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” [ROMANS 11:25]. Drawing that letter to a conclusion, he speaks of Christ Jesus presenting His life as a sacrifice as a *mystery*. “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages” [ROMANS 16:25].

Paul writes in a similar vein to the Church at Colossae as he identifies the revelation of Jesus Christ as a *mystery*. “I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” [COLOSSIANS 2:1-3].

In his first missive to the Corinthian Christians, the Apostle speaks of the transformation of believers at the return of Jesus Christ as a *mystery*. “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” [1 CORINTHIANS 15:51].

Let me give two other instances to demonstrate this truth. Paul speaks of the progress of lawlessness—rejection of godliness and exaltation of man’s will over God’s will—as a *mystery*. “The mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way” [2 THESSALONIANS 2:7].

The growth of wickedness is a mystery, and so it is only appropriate that we should know there is “the mystery of godliness” that is now provided to this dying world. The Apostle writes, “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.”

[1 TIMOTHY 3:16]²

Therefore, a mystery is a truth that would not be apparent without divine revelation. In the text before us, the Risen Son of God speaks of the seven stars as a mystery, and of the seven golden lampstands as a mystery. He identifies the seven stars as the angels—the messengers or the pastors—of the seven churches; and the seven golden lampstands are the churches. What I ask you to focus on for this time together is the revelation that the Risen Saviour stands in the midst of His churches, and He holds His messengers in His hands.

In particular, I want to focus on the presence of the Son of God with His people; but I ask you to indulge me for a brief moment to say that He holds in His hand those whom He appoints to Holy Office. There are boards—power brokers, mere mortals who politic to be elected as elders or deacons whether possessing divine appointment or not—that imagine they control God’s messenger. They think they will hire, and thus they can fire. However, the one appointed by the Master need never fear such despicable power brokers. The man of God is not a hireling, cringing because some delicate soul had her or his feelings hurt. Appointed by the Son of God to declare the mysteries of the Faith, the messenger of Christ can rest confident in Him who holds His servant in His own hand.

The unbowed Apostle gives a charge to every servant of the Living Saviour to stand firm when instructs Timothy, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” [1 TIMOTHY 4:1, 2].

² New King James Version (Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN 1979, 1980, 1982)

The reason such a charge is vital, especially in these days marking the end of this present dispensation, is that the Apostle warned of the times that would come and which are now here. The Apostle wrote, “the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” [1 TIMOTHY 4:3-5].

However, where the Word of God is faithfully declared and where the people adhere to that revealed Word, Christ is with His people. Whenever we gather to worship, the Risen Son of God is with us. He walks among us, observing our hearts as we worship, watching us as we serve Him by serving one another. He stands in the midst of His churches; and He stands among us we gather. The Son of God is with us, even today. What is the testimony of that He lives and that He is with us? Pondering this question, I see multiple evidences of the presence of the Son of God with us. What are these testimonies?

THERE IS THE TESTIMONY OF HEALING TO PROVE THE MASTER LIVES. Our Lord was dead, was resurrected, and ascended back into glory. Yet, afterward, John and Simon Peter at the Temple Gate known as “the Beautiful Gate,” commanded a crippled man, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” [ACTS 3:6]. That lame man rose and walked. God never works in part; His grace is always complete. The man was not only able to walk, but his feet and ankles were sufficiently strengthened that he jumped.

Years after this gracious demonstration of divine healing, at Lystra, Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles, looked upon a man that was crippled from his mother’s womb and in the same name of the Risen, Living Lord commanded, “‘Stand upright on your feet.’ And he sprang up and began walking” [ACTS 14:10]. Through the ages since and to this day, there is power in the Name of Jesus to heal. “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

Did ever Jesus meet one who was blind but that He restored sight? Did ever Jesus fail to give speech to those who were dumb? He restored withered hands and gave strength to weakened legs. Demons trembled before Him, begging Him to permit them to live in hogs rather than experiencing His mighty wrath. When He sent His disciples out to declare His presence in Judea, He commanded them to declare, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” [MATTHEW 10:7]. The verification for that message was evidenced in the charge He delivered to His disciples, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons” [MATTHEW 10:8]. Moreover, those whom He charged with this holy task were to reveal this compassion without charge.

The Christian Faith has been distinguished by acts of compassion since the days the Master walked the dusty roads of Galilee. Hospitals and hospices, orphanages and homeless shelters are found wherever the Faith has penetrated. The Master is compassionate toward the vulnerable, and those filled with His Spirit cannot help but be compassionate.

In this vein, we do well to recall a parable Jesus told in response to a lawyer who sought to justify himself before God. The lawyer asked, “Who is my neighbour?” Jesus responded with a parable. He told of a man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho who was beaten and stripped by robbers. A priest passing by saw him and hurried past. Likewise, a Levite encountered the beaten man and avoided him. “But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back’” [LUKE 10:29-35].

Jesus used this parable to instruct the lawyer to be merciful if he truly wanted to reflect the reality of God's presence. Just so, the people of God are compassionate, and will always be generous toward the vulnerable of society. I do not believe in paid divine healers, but I believe in divine healing. The Master heals today—both directly and through His people.

A SECOND TESTIMONY TO OUR LORD'S LIFE IS FOUND IN ANSWERED PRAYER. Did you ever try to pray to McKenzie King? Did you ever try to pray to Queen Victoria? Get down on your knees and try praying to some great character that is dead. Then get on your knees and pray to Jesus. When you seek Jesus, there will be an ear that will bend low to hear. There will be a voice that will speak to your heart. There will be an answer from heaven.

Throughout the world, people perform multiplied complex rituals in hope of inducing some god or an idol to heed their plea. Cries to Allah, to Krishna or to Shiva are met with silence and end in frustration. However, for all who look to God through Christ Jesus, we may assume that He not only hears but answers when we cry. Throughout the Word of God are promises that if unfulfilled expose the Faith as fraudulent. However, if those promises are honoured, it is folly-wide-the-mark to deny the reality of God who hears and answers prayer.

Through Isaiah, the LORD spoke of His response to the cries of His people:

“Before they call I will answer;
while they are yet speaking I will hear.”

[ISAIAH 65:24]

I realise that there are people who relegate this promise to another dispensation or argue that it does not apply to believers. However, God is delighted to reveal His mercy and goodness to those who look to Him. How many of the saints of God can testify, as did David:

“I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.”

[PSALM 32:5]

How precious are the multiple promises Jesus gives to encourage His people to pray! “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it” [JOHN 14:12-14].

Again, the Master promised those who look to Him and who are called by His Name, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you” [JOHN 15:16].

Is that not a wonderful promise that He gave to His disciples as He prepared them for His passion? “Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” [JOHN 16:23, 24].

What I would have you see is that either the Master has spoken the truth, and anyone may test the reality of these promises, or He is a liar. Standing outside the Faith and ridiculing these promises will not do. Doubting that He will answer will not do. Either Christ is with His people, or He has lied to us. All one need do to verify His presence is to look to Him. Jesus has said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” [MATTHEW 7:7].

A THIRD TESTIMONY TO CHRIST LIFE IS IN THE SALVATION OF SOULS. The Lord saved Matthew; He saved Simon Peter; He saved the Apostle Paul; but He also saved Polycarp, and Chrysostom, and Savonarola, and John Wesley, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and me. God saved many of you. He is saving today.

Week-by-week, I remind people of the truth of God’s salvation as I cite the words of the Apostle penned to believers in Rome. The Apostle testified, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” He clarified the import of what he wrote by citing from the teaching of the Old Covenant. “For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.” Then, in order to ensure that no one could say that they did not understand, he cited an ancient promise from Joel: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” [ROMANS 10:9-13].

A jailer in the city of Philippi pleaded with the missionaries, asking what was necessary to be saved, and he was told, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” [ACTS 16:31]. This is the same promise delivered by Peter and John when they were haled before the Sanhedrin. You will recall Peter’s bold declaration that, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” [ACTS 4:12].

Those who labour, straining to fulfil their religious duties, have no peace. They cannot know whether they are saved or lost; they cannot know if their efforts will succeed in assuaging God’s righteous anger. However, for all who look to Him in faith through Christ Jesus the Lord, the promise of God holds: “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” [ROMANS 5:1]. We Christians are not peddlers of religion; we offer peace with God—freedom from condemnation and life in the Beloved Son.

In the Fourth Gospel, we read the words the Master spoke of Himself: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” [JOHN 5:24].

Of this salvation, we read the promises God has given in His Word. “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” [JOHN 3:18]. Again, we see the promise, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life” [JOHN 3:36a].

This is God’s offer to all who are willing to accept it: believe in Jesus as Master over your life. If He has spoken truthfully, you will be forgiven every sin against the Living God. You will be born from above and into the Family of God. As His child, you will have His life, peace with Him and joy in His Spirit. To ensure that you know the reality of this offer, God will give you His Holy Spirit as a down payment on the promise of the resurrection and transformation [see 2 CORINTHIANS 1:22; 5:5; EPHESIANS 13, 14].

A FOURTH TESTIMONY OF JESUS' LIFE IS FOUND IN OUR LORD'S PRESENT KINGDOM. The Risen Saviour has a kingdom. When Alexander the Great died, his kingdom ended. He no longer had any subjects. But our Lord reigns in heaven and He reigns on earth in the hearts of His disciples. Even in this present age, every Christian is a witness to the reigning Lord Christ.

Pilate was unimpressed by the Master's testimony of His Kingdom. Listen again to the exchange between the Roman governor and the Son of Man. "Pilate ... called Jesus and said to him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.' Then Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.' Pilate said to him, 'What is truth'" [JOHN 18:33-38a]?

The Kingdom established for the Master is that which Daniel foresaw when he wrote of the last days when a mighty earthly kingdom shall arise to persecute the people of God. At that time, "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever" [DANIEL 2:44].

His vision penetrated far beyond this present day; he wrote, "I saw in the night visions,

and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed."

[DANIEL 7:13, 14]

Of that Kingdom, Daniel testified:

"The kingdom and the dominion
and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,
and all dominions shall serve and obey them."

[DANIEL 7:27]

The Kingdom Daniel foretold is the Kingdom of Christ the Lord.

A FIFTH TESTIMONY TO THE SAVIOUR'S LIFE IS WITNESSED IN HIS PROMISED RETURN FOR US.

"Behold, he is coming with the clouds" [REVELATION 1:7]. If He is alive, then He is coming again. Do you look for Apollos to come back to this earth? Do you look for Jupiter or Juno or Jove or Neptune to come back to their ancient temples? Does anyone expect Mohammed to return? However, millions of us lift up our hearts and our faces, looking expectantly for that day to come when our Lord shall return to this earth.

Jesus not only conquered death by rising from the dead, but He has promised to come again to receive those who look for Him. This is the testimony that sustained the early believers in the face of terrible persecutions. It is written in the Word, "Just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" [HEBREWS 9:27, 28].

The Apostle encouraged the Corinthian believers with a promise that still encourages us. "I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’
‘O death, where is your victory?’
O death, where is your sting?’

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This information is not merely academic, as though it were some esoteric information to be filed away and forgotten by believers in the Saviour. Paul continued with this practical information, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain" [1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-58]. Living in anticipation of the return of Christ the Lord, looking for the resurrection of our loved ones, knowing that our labours shall yield a mighty harvest in due time, we rejoice. Not only do we rejoice, but we stand firm in the face of every opposition, knowing that we are on the winning side. I read the end of the Book; we win. Hallelujah! Hallelujah, indeed.

I dare not mention His return without referring you to these words that the Apostle wrote. "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words" [1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18].

I remember an incident that occurred when I was speaking with a Muslim man in the Lower Mainland on one occasion. He was very aggressive in presenting his claims for Islam. However, he grew silent when I pressed the claim for faith in the Living Son of God, “You have the prophet’s tomb in Medina where, were his remains disinterred you could verify that he died and he remains in the tomb. Gautama Buddha was cremated at death, his ashes divided into eight parts and buried under mounds—reliquaries, known as Stupas. However, come with me to Jerusalem and I will show you an empty tomb. Despite a Roman guard and despite the hostility and scorn of religious leaders, that tomb is empty—Jesus is not there.”

He not only rose from the grave, but He ascended into Heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father. In the account of the early days of the Faith we read that the Master arose to receive Stephan’s spirit when He sealed His testimony with His own blood, so Jesus stands to receive His beloved people as each passes from this life.

The Master has promised, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” [JOHN 14:1-3].

A SIXTH TESTIMONY OF LIFE IS FOUND IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST AMONG HIS CHURCHES.

Walking, walking, walking in the midst of His churches. Walking in the midst of the seven lampstands that represent our churches. Walking in the midst of His people. Walking in the congregation. His presence felt in His churches. Convicting, wooing, inviting, saving, directing, blessing. Oh! Our Living Lord! Our living Christ! Oh, the depths of the unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus! They are past finding out. They are unfathomable, unspeakable and inexpressible. I never felt so much in my life like bowing down in reverential worship before our great God and Saviour as I do this very moment. “How awesome,” said Jacob, “is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” [GENESIS 28:17]. How awesome, how dreadful is this place. Christ standing in the midst of His people!

We think of the congregation as an organisation. We carefully draft a constitution, being careful to meet the standards demanded by governmental bureaucrats and lawyers. Then, we elect officers, being careful to act by democratic principles. Then we meet in deliberation and argue our points much like any political body in our world. Almost never do we ask the Christ, the Head of the congregation [see EPHESIANS 5:23; COLOSSIANS 1:18], what His will is. We can vote, and through that means get things done! However, the Living Saviour is with us, dwelling among us, and we do well to consider what His will is in any matter that comes before us.

Though we who are believers would not deliberately offend anyone, we must never forget that as a community of faith, we are the Body of Christ. Each congregation can say with conviction, “We are the Body of Christ.” The Risen Saviour is the head of each congregation. This statement does not speak of some amorphous monstrosity with multiple arms, each acting in an uncoordinated fashion to do its own thing; rather, it is a statement that testifies to the reality of the Body of Christ and recognises His presence among us. It is a statement that appeals to each member of the Body to submit himself or herself to the mind of the Master as we seek unity in the Faith and harmony in our service.

The Master’s gracious healing of His people, His answers in response to the pleas of His people, the salvation of those who look to Him in faith, the growth of His Kingdom, the hope of His return for His people and His presence among His churches, all testify to Christ among us.

Is Christ real to you? Do you know Him? Can you testify to the reality of His life? Is your testimony from experience? If you are merely religious, without faith in Him, you have deceived yourself. The Living Son of God calls you to faith, inviting you to experience the life that only He can give. His invitation is, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Master,’ believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. It is with the heart that one believes, resulting in a right standing with the Father, and with the mouth that one confesses, resulting in freedom.” That invitation concludes by reminding each individual that “Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved” [**ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**].³

³ Free translation