

John's Vision Of Christ Glorified

Revelation 1:1-20

Intro: In our study last Sunday we learned that John was commissioned by the risen Lord Jesus, through an angel, presumably Gabriel, to record the details surrounding the things to come. Revelation is a book that contains prophecy about the climax of God's plan for the ages, and the sequence of events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ to establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth.

In keeping with this purpose, the book devotes most of its revelation to the future seven year Tribulation in chapters 4–18. The Second Coming of Christ in power and great glory is recorded in chapter 19, followed by Christ's establishment of His Millennial Kingdom in chapter 20. The book closes with a description of the eternal state in chapters 21–22.

While the Book of Revelation contains prophecy about things to come, it becomes clear that it is a book portraying the Person of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the preeminent theme of all prophecy. As we learned from our recent studies in Daniel, Jesus Christ is the Stone that will be hurled from heaven to bring an end to the evil and rebellious Gentile kingdoms of this earth. He is the King of glory, who is going to come on the clouds of heaven; and according to Revelation chapters 19 and 20, when He comes He will defeat Antichrist, the false religious prophet, and the Gentile armies of this world, and establish His glorious Millennial Kingdom in Jerusalem.

Let's return to chapter 1, and focus our attention on John's vision of the glorified Christ, and His revelation of things to come.

I. Introduction: “*The Things You Have Seen*” (Rev. 1:1-20)

A. Prologue (1:1-8)

Revelation 1:1-8 serves as the book's Prologue or preface, which provides a general introduction and summarizes what the book is all about.

1. Superscription (1:1-3)

The first three verses provide a superscription, which reveals the main focus of the book. Look with me at Revelation verses 1-3,

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated *it* by His angel to His bond-servant John, **2** who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, *even* to all that he saw. **3** Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

The main focus of this book is the Revelation or unveiling of Jesus Christ (v. 1). Christ is both the Revealer, and the One revealed. The Book of Revelation unveils the Lord Jesus Christ's future coming in power and great glory.

As we noted last week, God the Father gave this Revelation, to His Son, Jesus Christ, who sent and communicated it by His angel, most likely Gabriel, to His bond-servant John. John was the human instrument who recorded and passed it along to the saints in the seven churches in Asia.

A blessing is promised to those who ***read, hear, and heed*** the words recorded in this final book of the Bible (v. 3). As you well know, God's Word will not profit you unless you commit to read and apply it in your daily life. If you will do this, God promises to bless your life.

2. Salutation (1:4-8)

John issues a greeting to his readers in verses 4-8.

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne; **5** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

According to verse 11, the Lord directed John to write in a book (scroll) all that he saw, and send it to the seven churches of Asia. These seven churches are obviously not the only churches that existed when John wrote. The seven churches were probably chosen for their geographical layout, which formed a rough circle in the midst of which stood the glorified Christ! What is more, they are representative of all the churches in that day, and portray the internal conditions that have prevailed in the

various periods of church history from the apostolic days to the final future apostate church of the Tribulation period.

John ascribes a blessing of grace and peace upon these believers, derived from all three members of the God-head. God the Father is described as “Him who is and who was and who is to come.” The seven Spirits, who are before God’s throne, refers to the Holy Spirit in all His fulness (cf., Isa. 11:1-2). Jesus Christ is described as the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. The title “faithful witness” summarizes Christ’s earthly ministry. He bore faithful witness to the Father, and died for the sins of the world. The title “first-born of the dead,” refers to His historic resurrection from the dead. Christ is “the first fruits” of all believers, who will be resurrected and receive a glorified eternal body. The final title, “the ruler of the kings of the earth,” looks forward to His second coming and ultimate victory over the Gentile kingdoms of this world.

As John contemplates all that Christ has done for us, He breaks forth in vv. 5b-6 with a marvelous doxology of praise and thanksgiving.

5b To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, **6** and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Christ is deserving of our praise for three reasons: (1) He loves us (*present tense*). (2) He loosed us from our sins in His blood (*aorist past tense*). Some texts read, “washed,” the difference in Greek being only one letter. The translation “washed” inspired the lyrics to the old Gospel song, “I’ve been washed in the blood of the Lamb.” Blood is the evidence of Christ’s death, which serves as the basis for our cleansing from sin. (3) He made us a kingdom (not kings) and priests to God. “Kingdom” views believers corporately and anticipates our association with Christ in His Millennial reign (5:9-10), while “priests” describes our individual service to Him.

John records the theme of his book in verse 7,

7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.

John describes Christ's second coming in power and great glory. It is after the Tribulation (Matt. 24:29-30); it will be public; and all shall see Him and grieve over His crucifixion. This is a partial quotation from **Zechariah 12:10**. When Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation, all the peoples of the earth shall see Him.

Jesus affirms John's words in verse 8,

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Jesus is here claiming to be the *Alpha* and *Omega*—"the beginning and the end"—signifying the completeness of God. *Alpha* and *Omega* are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus Christ is the Lord God, eternally existing, and all-powerful. He is, and was, and is the coming One, the Almighty.

B. John's vision of Christ glorified (1:9-20)

1. Circumstances of the Vision (1:9-11)

9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

John writes as a humble brother in the Lord, and fellow partaker in the tribulation directed against those who proclaim the good news about Jesus Christ. He was on the small island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, located some 40 miles southwest of Ephesus. Patmos served as a penal colony, where prisoners spent their days breaking rocks. The gravel from these broken rocks was used to pave the famous Roman roads. **MAP**

John had been banished to Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. History informs us that the Roman Emperor Domitian persecuted John because of His teaching of God's Word, and His unwavering testimony concerning Jesus Christ. John's imprisonment may have been ordained by God so he could receive and record this Revelation of Jesus Christ, which he then passed on to the churches of Asia, and by way of extension, to us!

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, **11** saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

John was in the Spirit, or better, entered into a state of spiritual ecstasy, possibly a trancelike state. The phrase "the Lord's day" could refer to Sunday, the day on which the church of Christ gathered, or it could refer to the Day of the Lord. Charles Ryrie suggests that "the Lord's day" refers to "that imperial day in the future when Christ will take the reigns of earthly government, which is what John saw in his visions" (Rev., 17).

John heard a loud voice behind him *like* the sound of a trumpet. John didn't hear an actual trumpet, but a voice that resonated with stereophonic regality. This reminds me of the time in Exodus 19 and 20 when God spoke to the children of Israel from the top of Mt. Sinai. God's presence was accompanied by thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled (19:16). God's display of glory was so powerful that the people begged Moses to speak to them, and not let God speak to them, lest they die" (Exodus 20:18-19).

The loud voice that John heard was that of Christ, who is identified as the First and the Last in v. 17.

11—John was commanded by the glorified Christ "to write in a book all that he heard and saw, and to send it to the seven churches of Asia: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Dr. Walvoord writes, "Each of these churches was an autonomous local church. The order of mention is geographical in a half-moon circle beginning at Ephesus on the coast, proceeding north to Smyrna and Pergamum, then swinging east and south to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea" ("Revelation," in BKC, 930).

2. Content of the Vision (1:12-16)

12 Hearing the voice behind him, John turned to see who was speaking

with him. “And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; **13** and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle.

Let’s stop hear, and unpack the meaning of the lampstands and the One like a Son of Man described here in verses 12 and 13.

John turned toward the voice that had been speaking with him, and saw a human form, One like a Son of Man, standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands. The lampstands described here were not the regular seven lamp menorahs used in the tabernacle and temple, and Jewish homes. These were individual lampstands, which are explained in verse 20 as representing the seven churches mentioned in verse 11. Just as lampstands are used to bear light, so now we believers in the church are to let the light of Christ shine through us to a world cloaked in darkness.

The description John provides of this One, like a Son of Man, clothed as He was in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle, is that of a priest. John sees the glorified Christ clothed in majesty and righteousness. He is our High Priest, who sits at the right hand of God, always making intercession on our behalf (Heb. 7:17, 25).

“The phrase ‘Son of Man’ is used 70 times in the Bible to describe Jesus Christ, referring to the incarnation of the Son of God. “It speaks of the God-man walking on this earth” (David Jeremiah, *Escape The Coming Night*, vol. 1, 39).

John’s vision here of this “One like a son of man” reminds me of Daniel’s vision in chapter 7, verses 13 and 14. Daniel you recall “saw in the night visions, One like a Son of Man, who came up to the Ancient of Days. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and men of every language might serve Him. “His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

I am encouraged by the fact that Christ is described as dwelling in the midst or center of the seven churches. This presents a wonderful picture of the relationship Christ desires to have with us. He desires to occupy the central place in both our church and in our lives. May God help each of us to surrender to Christ and invite Him to occupy the throne of our hearts.

John next presents a marvelous portrait of the glorified Christ, vv. 14-16

1) Christ's head and hair (v. 14a)

14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow;

The whiteness of Christ's head and hair speaks of His absolute holiness.

2) Christ's fiery eyes (v. 14b)

Christ's eyes are likewise described in v. 14 "like a flame of fire." Just as fire purifies metals, Christ's fiery gaze penetrates into the deepest recesses of our souls. The fiery eyes of Christ will judge every man's works, and consume all the wood, hay, and stubble (1 Cor. 3:13).

3) Christ's feet (v. 15)

15a And His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace.

In the Bible brass always speaks of judgment. The altar of sacrifice was made of brass. This may be a reference to the future judgment when all of Christ's enemies shall be placed beneath His feet (Heb. 10:13).

4) Christ's mouth is described in two ways: ***His voice is like the sound of many of waters*** (v. **15b**). This reminds me of the endless roar of the ocean's waves as they crash into the seashore. Perhaps you have experienced the similar deafening roar produced by the cascading waters of a waterfall. When Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation and pronounces judgment, it will be the most frightening sound ever heard in the universe.

The second thing John describes concerning Christ's mouth is the sharp two-edged sword that comes out of it (v. **16b**). The two-edged sword is an instrument of warfare. It is used symbolically for the Word of God, which serves as the basis for all judgment (Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:13-15).

5) Christ's right hand held seven stars (v. 16a)

16a And in His right hand He held seven stars.

The right hand always refers to the place of honor and authority. We learn in verse 20 that the seven stars represent the angels of the seven churches. Most commentators understand this not to be a reference to angelic beings, but to the ministers or pastors serving in the seven churches.

6) Christ's countenance (v. 16c)

16c His face was like the sun shining in its full strength.

Christ radiated a glory that could only be described like the sun shining in full strength.

3. Consequences of the vision (vv. 17-18)

17a And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man.

John response to Christ's revelation of His glory, was to fall down before Him as a dead man. Paul was likewise struck to the ground when he saw Christ in His glory (Acts 9:4).

Christ provided John with a threefold word of comfort (vv. 17b-18)

And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Jesus laid His right hand on John's shoulder, and told him to not be afraid. He assured him that He was the eternal God, the first and the last, 18 and the living or resurrected One, who though once dead, is alive forevermore. As the Conqueror over death, Christ holds the keys of death and of Hades. Every person who comes to faith in Christ is released from death. Hades is the place that holds the immaterial soul of man after physical death.

4. Command to write (vv. 19-20)

19 "Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things.

Verse 19 provides the divine outline for the book. The subject of Christ's command has three tenses: (a) what John had already experienced: **what**

you have seen (b) the present experiences: **the things which are**; and (c) the future: **what will take place after these things**. John was told to first write a record of his experience (chap. 1), now history. Then he was to write the present message of Christ to seven churches (chaps. 2-3). Finally, the main purpose of the book being prophetic, he was to introduce the events preceding, culminating in, and following the second coming of Jesus Christ (chaps. 4-22).

This opening section concludes in verse 20 with Christ's explanation of two features of the vision He gave to John.

20 "As for the mystery of the seven stars which 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."

As noted above, the right hand always refers to the place of honor and authority. The seven stars represent the ministers or pastors serving in the seven churches.

Applications:

1. John's vision of the glorified Christ is intended to give us hope and assurance.
2. We need to recommit ourselves to letting our light shine in this dark world.
3. How brightly do you shine? Are you leading people to faith in Christ?
4. Have you allowed Jesus Christ to be at the center of your life?
5. We can take comfort in the fact that Christ's victory over death is our living hope of victory over death through the resurrection.

Closing prayer:

Closing song: Amazing Grace Live!