

REVELATION 1:4-20

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Revelation chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we will finish looking at Revelation chapter 1 this evening.

In our last study we saw that the book of Revelation is about – ***THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST!***

Jesus is coming back to set up His Kingdom and to fulfill His promise to the Jewish people that the Messiah would sit upon the throne of David and rule and reign.

So the Jewish people are the focus as well as the unsaved as God is going to pour out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world!

But again, this is all in preparation for the setting up of His Kingdom where He will rule and reign from Jerusalem for 1,000 years!

Also keep in mind that what the book of Revelation does for us is it puts together the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Day of the Lord so we can see how this is going to play out.

Mark Hitchcock summed it up like this. He wrote, “The . . . key to unlocking the meaning of Revelation is to realize that most of what is in the book is not new information. There’s an old saying that Revelation is the Grand Central Station of the Bible because it’s where - all the ‘trains of thought throughout the whole Bible’ come in. While it is certainly true that Revelation looks ahead and reveals the future - it also looks back and brings together all the threads running through the first 65 books of the Bible. Revelation contains 404 verses and 278 of them allude back to the Old Testament. Revelation has no direct quotations from the Old Testament, but it contains a total of 550 allusions or references (which appear in 278 verses) back to the Old Testament . . .”

I think this is why so many people have such a hard time with the book of Revelation. They don't know the Old Testament and thus, they make the text say what they want it to say instead of what God wants it to say.

Again, Mark Hitchcock reminds us, "When properly interpreting a symbol in Revelation [the reader must] recognize that all the symbols in the book are explained either in Revelation itself or in other parts of the Bible - ***WE CANNOT MAKE THEM MEAN WHATEVER WE WANT THEM TO MEAN.*** When symbols are employed - they refer to something that is literal. Symbols are not just symbols of nothing. They aren't meaningless. They aren't just symbols of symbols. They refer to something that is literal. No interpreter has the freedom to make a symbol mean whatever he wants. Scripture sets the parameters for our interpretation of symbols. The infallible guide to the meaning of these symbols is - God's Word!"

Exactly!

We have a lot of ground to cover this evening, so let's begin reading in Revelation chapter 1, beginning in verse 4 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

REVELATION 1

VERSES 4-6

John is writing *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* to the seven churches in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey! And as we get to Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we will see Jesus write specifically to these seven churches.

Now why only seven because there were many more than seven churches located in this area?

There was Colosse, Colossians 1:2.

There was Miletus, Acts 20:17.

There was Hierapolis, Colossians 4:13.

There was Troas, Acts 20:5, II Corinthians 2:12.

There was Galatia and others.

So why did the Holy Spirit only use these seven?

Keep in mind that numbers are important in the Scriptures.

We see the number 40 representing judgment.

We see the number 6 represent man and his incompleteness.

We see that the number 8 represent new beginnings.

And the number 7 represents completeness and in this book of Revelation, that number is mentioned some 54 times!

What is my point?

My point is this. The book of Revelation is summing up everything for us and thus, it is complete!

That means that these seven letters to these seven churches give to us the complete picture of church history and we will see that as we go through those letters in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

But you need to understand that these were not just random churches that were picked out, but there are specific reasons for each of these churches, as we will see in the coming weeks in our study.

Then John speaks of *grace* and *peace* and in the New Testament it is always in that order. The reason being is that you will never experience the peace of God in your life until you first experience the grace of God!

And I want you to see that this grace and peace is from the Triune God. In other words, One God manifested in three distinct persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The greeting of grace and peace is as Walvoord puts it, “***Grace represents standing; peace represents experience.***”

Again, we make peace *with* God through Jesus Christ, His unmerited favor towards us, or His grace and then we experience the peace *of* God in our lives.

Without Christ we will never experience the peace of God in our lives, that is just the way it is!

And now John is going to speak of each person of the Godhead.

He starts out with God the Father and notice how John describes God the Father – “**Who is and was and who is to come.**”

In other words, he describes God the Father as the eternal one. It doesn't matter how far back in time you go; God the Father has existed. And that is true of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as well. But here John is speaking of God the Father.

Then John moves to God the Holy Spirit and describes Him as “**the seven Spirits.**”

What does that mean?

John is not talking about seven Spirits of God but keep in mind what the number seven means, completeness. Thus, I believe John is speaking of the complete working of the Holy Spirit. This refers to God the Holy Spirit in His fullness, again, seven being the number of perfection and completeness.

And John concludes by looking at Jesus and he speaks a lot about Jesus, why?

Because this book is the *Revelation of Jesus Christ* or the unveiling of Jesus in all of His glory, it is all about Him and His establishment of the Kingdom here on the earth for 1,000 years!

And John makes three points regarding Jesus.

First of all, John tells us that Jesus is - ***THE FAITHFUL WITNESS!***

Think about that one for a minute. How can we know God, what He is about? We need a witness to tell us, to show us. As one person wrote, *“We can’t expect the bug in the bottle to understand the little boy that put it there anymore than we can expect the natural man with his natural capacities to understand the supernatural God - unless that God chose to condescend and reveal Himself to man.”*

Exactly and that is what Jesus has done, He is the faithful witness of God the Father.

Jesus said in John 10:30, **“I and My Father are one.”**

Also, in John 14:9-11 Jesus is speaking to Philip regarding Philip asking Jesus to show him the Father, what He is like and **“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”**

And in Hebrews 1:1-3 Paul tells us, **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”**

Jesus is a faithful witness in His life and in His death of the Father!

The second point regarding Jesus is that He is - ***THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD!***

That word **“firstborn”** comes from the Greek word, PROTOTOKOS and it speaks of being first in priority, pre-eminent in importance or the greatest, the top!

Now Jesus wasn't the first to be raised from the dead, Lazarus was raised from the dead, and we see a few people in the Old Testament and in the New Testament who were raised from the dead, but Jesus was pre-eminent among all who have been or will be resurrected, He conquered death and thus, so will all who believe in Him. He rose never to die again!

It is as Paul put it in I Corinthians 15:20-22, **“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”**

So Jesus was the firstborn from the dead!

The third point regarding Jesus is that He is - ***THE RULER OVER THE KINGS OF THE EARTH!***

For the most part man lives independent from God, at least he thinks he does. But one day the Lord is coming back to establish His Kingdom on this earth and then, as Paul tells us in Philippians 2:9-11, **“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

Also, in Hebrews 2:8 we are told, **“‘You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’ For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.”**

Right now, not everyone is bowing the knee to Jesus but one day that will take place out of love for Him or out of constraint if you have rejected Him!

But one day all will acknowledge Him as King of kings and Lord of lords!

And then John speaks of what Jesus has done for us, and as you read this it is the heart of the Gospel.

Notice what John says in Revelation 1:5, **“... To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”**

What I find interesting is God first loved us and then He washed us as white as snow by the shedding of His blood.

We see in the book of Revelation that Jesus is mentioned as **“the Lamb”** some 28 times, why?

Because He is the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world and as we shall see in verse 7, He is coming back but this time not as a Lamb but as the Lion from the tribe of Judah to pour out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world!

Of our salvation Peter tells us, “**knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**”

Our sins are cast as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more, “**It is finished!**”

And as wonderful as that is, Jesus has also “**. . . made us kings and priests to His God and Father . . .**” Revelation 1:6.

Because of our position in Christ, we have been made kings and priests.

It is as Peter tells us in I Peter 2:9-10, “**But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.**”

And John concludes this with praises unto God for all He has done!

That is how it should be folks, not praise unto ourselves but unto our God – *AMEN* or let it be!

VERSE 7

Look at how John opens this verse up. He says “**Behold**” or come and see, take a look. But what are we looking at?

If you think about this, it is the theme of the book, the revelation or coming of Jesus Christ and John wants us to pay attention to this fact.

What is interesting to me is that when John uses the word “**coming,**” ERCHOMAI, (er'-khom-ah-ee) in the Greek, it is in the present tense, which tells me this is a certain fact, He is on His way!

Now what is John speaking of here? Is he speaking of the Rapture of the church or the second coming of Jesus?

This is not speaking of the Rapture of the church prior to the start of the Tribulation Period where we meet the Lord in the air.

How can I be so sure?

Simple. We are told that every eye will see Him. That is not something that happens with the Rapture of the church where we are caught up to be with the Lord in the air. The Rapture is instantaneous!

And we see this spoken of in Matthew chapter 24 where Jesus tells us, “**Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. . . . Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**” Matthew 24:26-27, 30.

The wording is very similar to what John is saying here and in Matthew it is definitely speaking of the Second Coming of Jesus!

Now what does this phrase “**He is coming with clouds**” mean?

Let me share some Scriptures with you and I think you will clearly see what John is speaking of.

First of all, we see this in Daniel 7:13 where we are told, **“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.”**

Nothing specific here but now look at Matthew 25:31, where we are told, **“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.”**

Here we see that when the Lord returns, He is coming with His **“holy angels.”** But there is more.

In Jude 1:14 we are told, **“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints.’”**

Here we see Jesus coming back with you and me. When He returns we will be with Him.

And we see that spoken of in I Thessalonians 3:13 as well. We are told, **“so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”**

And we see this played out for us in Revelation 19:14, **“And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.”**

So as you look at these Scriptures I think you can see that when Jesus comes back to finish the rebellion against Him and establish His Kingdom on this earth, that the saints of God along with the holy angels will be with Him!

We also see John speak of **“... they also who pierced Him ...”** Who is John speaking of here?

I believe John is speaking of the Jewish people who will turn to Jesus during the Tribulation Period.

In Zechariah 12:10 we are told, “**And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.**”

And in Zechariah 13:6 we are told, “**And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’**”

God is not done with the Jewish people, even though blindness has come upon the nation for a time. God will complete that seventieth week of Daniel and it is during this time we see the nation saved.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 23:39, “**for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’**”

You see, they will acknowledge Him as their Lord, and they will be saved. They will see Jesus once again when the call upon His Name!

Paul speaks of this time in Romans 11:25-27 where he tells us, “**For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’**”

Not only that, but all who reject Jesus will mourn at His coming because they will face His judgment.

It is as Jude tells us regarding the Lord's return and what will happen, “. . . **Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.**”

Jude 14-15.

And John concludes here by saying “**Amen**” or “*Bring it on*” or “*Let it be!*”

He is looking forward to the Lord's return and so am I!

VERSE 8

John said that the King is coming and now the King speaks with authority.

He says that He is “**the Alpha and Omega**” speaking of the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. And by doing this He is showing us that He is omniscient or that He knows all.

This can also be speaking of that whatever Jesus starts, He will finish, and that is very true. The good work He began in us, He will finish!

Think of it like this, “*If Jesus is both the Beginning and the End, then He also has authority over everything in-between. This means that Jesus has a plan for history, and He directs the path of human events toward His designed fulfillment. Our lives are not given over to blind fate, to random meaninglessness, or to endless cycles with no resolution. Instead, Jesus Christ who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End directs all of human history and even our individual lives.*”

He is also speaking of His eternal existence, “**who is and who was and who is to come.**”

The eternal God has authority over all.

In fact, that word “**almighty**” in the Greek is PANTOKRATOR, (pan-tok-rat’-ore) and it literally means “*the one who has his hand on everything.*”

In other words, He is Sovereign, and He is coming back!

That is God the Son, yes, He is Almighty God no matter what the Jehovah Witnesses try to tell us, the Scriptures are very clear!

I like the way John Phillips put it. He wrote,

One of the most stirring pages in English history tells of the conquests and crusades of Richard I, the Lionhearted.

While Richard was away trouncing Saladin, his kingdom fell on bad times. His sly and graceless brother, John, usurped all the prerogatives [rights] of the king and misruled the realm.

The people of England suffered, longing for the return of the king, and praying that it might be soon.

Then one day Richard came. He landed in England and marched straight for his throne.

Around that glittering coming, many tales are told, woven into the legends of England. (One of them is the story of Robin Hood.)

John’s castles tumbled like ninepins. Great Richard laid claim to his throne, and none dared [to] stand in the path.

The people shouted their delight. They rang peal after peal on the bells. The Lion was back!

Long live the king!

- John Phillips

Satan is called the prince of the power of the air, the king of this world. He received it from Adam when Adam sinned, but one day the Lord is coming back to take back what is His because He paid for it with His blood. And all those who have rejected Him will be removed as the King, Jesus Christ sits on His throne to rule and reign for 1,000 years from Jerusalem!

And we shout – ***THE LION IS BACK! LONG LIVE THE KING!***

VERSE 9

Please understand that when John speaks of “**tribulation**” he is not speaking of the Great Tribulation. He is talking about the tribulation, the persecution that Christians were facing at the hands of Emperor Domitian. And just as they were suffering, so was John.

And notice that John speaks of the “**patience of Jesus Christ.**” That is interesting because the Greek word for “**patience**” is *HUPOMONE* and it comes from two Greek words.

HUPO speaks of being “*under*” and *MENO* speaks of “*abiding, to stay, or remain.*” And we can think of this word like this, “*to remain under.*”

And here is the point that is being made. John, along with these other Christians were facing tribulation, a heavy load of persecution and they are choosing to stay where they are at instead of trying to escape the circumstances that they were facing! They would remain in Christ especially during these difficult times! Jesus is helping them to endure just as He does us!

William Barclay, in his commentary feels that “**patience**” is too passive a word to use when they translated *HUPOMONE*!

This is what he wrote, *“Hupomonē does not simply accept and endure; there is always a forward look in it. It is said of Jesus . . . that for the joy that was set before him, he endured the Cross, despising the shame (Hebrews 12:2). That is hupomone - Christian steadfastness. It is the courageous acceptance of everything that life can do to us and the transmuting of even the worst event into another step on the way upward.”*

As persecution increases in our day, we too are to have that steadfast endurance and not run away from what is before us, but to choose to say where we are at and shine for Christ.

Which leads us to the reason that John was banished to the island of Patmos by Emperor Domitian!

The Reason John was banished to the island of Patmos was because of his testimony of Jesus Christ. Domitian thought he was in control but God allowed it so John could receive this Revelation of Jesus.

John stayed steadfast in the middle of this tribulation, this persecution and God used that to speak to him with these powerful words we find in the book of Revelation!

And keep in mind that this island was not Fantasy Island or some paradise resort. It was a penal colony that was located on a volcanic outcropping in the Aegean Sea only some 10 miles long and 5 or 6 miles wide.

It was a death sentence for John, but God used it mightily and after the reign of Domitian, John was released by Nerva and lived out the remainder of his life in Ephesus where he died at the age of around 100!

Seiss gives us this description, *“John was at the time in exile, upon a lonely and desolate island. But neither seas, nor Alps, nor ages, can sever the bonds by which Christians are united to each other, or to Christ, their Lord. Less than a year ago I passed that island. It is a mere mass of barren rocks, dark in colour and cheerless in form. It lies out in the open sea, near the coast of Western Asian Minor. It has neither trees nor rivers, nor any land for cultivation, except some little nooks between the ledges of rocks. There is still a dingy grotto remaining, in which the aged Apostle is said to have lived, and in which he is said to have had this vision. A chapel covers it, hung with lamps kept burning by the monks.”*

I think it is important for us to identify with other believers who are being persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. Why is that important?

Because we see that as they are persecuted so are we and thus, we should not run but stay strong in the Lord. Paul reminded us in II Timothy 3:12, **“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”**

And Peter reminds us in I Peter 4:12-14, **“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.”**

In America, we don’t see it that way. But folks, if you are going to live for the Lord, you will suffer, not might!

Are you willing to take a stand for what you believe at any cost?

John did and look at the Revelation he received!

VERSES 10-11

Some feel that this phrase, “**the Lord’s day**” is speaking of the Day of the Lord or the seven-year Tribulation Period. I don’t think that is John’s point.

I think that this phrase “**the Lord’s day**” is speaking of a Sunday, the day that the early church gathered to worship the Lord, the same day that Jesus rose from the grave!

And this is a spiritual revelation and as we will see, John is going to get a panoramic view of the Great Tribulation.

And John tells us that the omniscient, eternal, all-powerful God spoke to him these words to give to these seven churches in Asia Minor or the western part of Modern Turkey and for all who have ears to hear and obey!

Like I have said, there were many more churches than just these seven. The reason the Holy Spirit gave John these seven churches is that they speak symbolically to the complete church or the church throughout the history of the church age, from Pentecost to the Rapture. And you will see how this plays out as we get to Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

Also, like I have said, the number seven speaks of completeness. For example, we have seven days in a week, seven notes in a scale, seven colors in a rainbow and-so-on.

As we read on, we are going to get an amazing picture of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

VERSES 12-16

I am not a big fan of pictures of Jesus, unless the picture comes from the Scriptures. But what we usually see in pictures of Jesus is that man puts together something that they have pictured in their own heart and is not of God. We are not to make pictures of Jesus and the reason being is that people end up worshiping the picture instead of Jesus.

And the description that is given to us here is symbolic, and yet, some try to paint this picture and it doesn't work.

Years ago, there was a picture in the hospital I worked at of Jesus, I called it the Clint Eastwood Jesus, poncho and all! No kidding.

There is the Spanish Jesus, the Afro-American Jesus and the list goes on-and-on.

Again, we fashion Jesus out of the imagination of our own heart and not according to what the Scriptures say.

And, like I have said, there are not many descriptions of what Jesus looked like in the Bible.

In the Old Testament book of Isaiah, we have a picture of Jesus before His crucifixion where His beard is plucked out, His face is so badly beaten that it does not resemble that of a man.

We don't see too many pictures of Jesus like that, we don't like to think of Him like that, but He endured the punishment as He went to the cross to pay in full the penalty for our sins!

In the New Testament, this is the only picture of Jesus we have and once again, we don't see many pictures like this.

Look at what is transpiring here.

As John turns to look at the voice like a trumpet he saw seven golden lampstands or oil burning lamps.

Now what or who does this represent?

We don't have to guess because Revelation 1:20 tells us that they represent the seven churches, which are symbolic of the churches that have existed throughout church history, as I have said.

Now let me ask you this question. ***“Who is in the midst of these churches?”***

We are told that **“One like the Son of man”** is in the midst of these seven churches or that Jesus stands in the midst of these churches! I like that and take great comfort in that; Jesus is with us! And thus, we shine brightly for Him!

The problem comes when a church removes Christ, they deny who He is, His deity and thus, when that happens, when He is no longer in their midst, their light goes out!

It is what happened to the church in Ephesus, they left their first love and the Lord warned them and they refused to listen, and their light went out, they no longer shined for Christ!

Let me add this. This vision of Jesus that John saw in Revelation 1:13-18 is very important and the reason is simple. When Jesus dictates the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor, He is going to begin each letter with something from this vision of Himself that pertains to something going on in that church.

Let me give you a couple of examples.

In Revelation 2:1 we are told, **“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.’”**

The picture here is that Jesus is holding in His hands these pastors, the seven stars, securely and He is walking in the midst of these churches that are to be light bearers. And for Ephesus, their light went out because they left their first love!

We also see in Revelation 2:8, **“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life.’”**

This was the persecuted church and thus, the description of Jesus is the Almighty God, the One who has power over death, and to this persecuted church in Smyrna, even though they are being put to death for their faith, death will not have power to destroy them!

So let’s look at this picture of Christ that John is painting for us – Jesus in all of His glory!

The first description of Jesus is that He is - ***LIKE THE SON OF MAN CLOTHED WITH A GARMENT DOWN TO HIS FEET!***

We see this title in Daniel 9:13-14 where we are told, **“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then 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 the one Which shall not be destroyed.”**

Also, in Daniel 7:9, in a description of God the Father, we are told, **“I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow . . .”**

That should not surprise us that God the Father and Jesus are similar in their appearance here. We see the purity of God! But there is something more in this description of Jesus!

The Son of Man is clothed with a garment down to His feet, with a gold band around His chest. I believe specifically here, the picture is of Jesus as our Great High Priest, (Exodus 28:4, 29:5, Leviticus 16:4).

We see this in Hebrews 2:17-18 where we are told, **“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”**

Also, in Hebrews 4:14-16 we are told, **“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**

As our Great High Priest Jesus represents the Father to us and us before the Father!

Now here is one of those amazing things about Jesus being our Great High Priest. One of the duties of the Old Testament priests was to tend the golden lampstand or oil-burning lamp in the Tabernacle. Here we see Jesus, our Great High Priest, carefully tending to us so that we might burn brightly before Him!

The second description of Jesus is this - ***HIS HAIR WAS WHITE LIKE WOOL, AS WHITE AS SNOW!***

This speaks of His holiness, His purity, wisdom.

In I Peter 1:18-19 we are told, “**knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**”

Also, in Isaiah 1:18 we are told of this purity that God wants to give to us, “**‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.’**”

And in II Corinthians 5:21 Paul once again speaks of the righteousness of Christ coming into our life. He tells us, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**”

Now here’s the thing. If Jesus was not pure, if He had a spot or blemish upon His life, He could not be the sacrificial lamb to die for our sins.

But Jesus is holy, He is pure, He is righteous and thus, He did pay in full the penalty for our sins as the Lamb of God who has come and taken away the sins of the world and His righteousness He has imputed into our lives by faith!

The third description of Jesus is this - ***HIS EYES WERE LIKE A FLAME OF FIRE!***

This speaks of not being able to hide anything from Him.

Paul put it this way in Hebrews 4:13, “**And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**”

You see, the righteous Judge, the all-seeing, all-knowing God will judge this world, nothing will be hidden from Him!

You can’t pull the wool over His eyes, “**For our God is a consuming fire.**” Hebrews 12:29.

The fourth description of Jesus is that - ***HIS FEET WERE LIKE FINE BRASS!***

Brass is the metal that speaks of judgment.

Remember the brazen altar in the Temple; it was the place where the fire consumed the sin offering.

The picture here is that those who are outside of Christ, those that are not believers, will be consumed by the fire of God and sent to the Lake of Fire for eternal punishment.

You see, sin will either be judged on the cross of Calvary or upon you!

The fifth description of Jesus is that - ***HIS VOICE WAS AS THE SOUND OF MANY WATERS!***

This speaks of power, authority.

If you have ever heard David Hocking teach you know the powerful voice he has, but it is nothing compared to the thunderous sound of the Lord!

If you have ever been to Niagara Falls and heard the tremendous sound as the water comes crashing down over the falls, that is the idea here.

It is as Psalm 29:3-9 tells us, **“The voice of the LORD is over the waters; The God of glory thunders; The LORD is over many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; The voice of the LORD is full of majesty. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars, Yes, the LORD splinters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the LORD divides the flames of fire. The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; The LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth, And strips the forests bare; And in His temple everyone says, ‘Glory!’”**

The fifth description of Jesus is that - ***HE HAD THE SEVEN STARS IN HIS RIGHT HAND!***

The right hand spoke of power, authority and in this hand were seven stars, which are, according to Revelation 1:20, the pastors or leaders of these churches, God holds them in His hand, and I am thankful for that!

Yes, Jesus has given to pastors the authority to oversee the flock that He has entrusted to us, but we must never forget that He is the head of the church!

And the sixth description of Jesus is this - ***OUT OF HIS MOUTH WENT A SHARP TWO-EDGED SWORD!***

John is not speaking of the MACHARIA or a small dagger that was used in hand-to-hand combat but the RHOMPHAIA or the broad sword that you would swing to cut down your opponents, and this sword could be upwards of four feet long!

In Revelation 19:15 we are told of Jesus coming back to judge this earth during the battle of Armageddon and, **“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”**

I believe this is the sword of judgment and the words that Jesus speaks will cut down those who are in rebellion against Him!

It is as Jesus said in John 12:46-48, **“I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him - the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”**

When Jesus speaks, you better listen!

And the seventh and last description of Jesus is - ***HIS COUNTENANCE WAS LIKE THE SUN!***

Have you ever tried to look directly into the sun – it hurts!

The glory of Jesus will be like He was on the Mount of Transfiguration where we are told, **“and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.”**

And in Mark 9:3 we read, **“His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.”**

Thus, we can’t approach Him in our own righteousness but the righteousness that Christ has imputed into our lives by faith allows us to stand before Him!

What a picture of Christ we have here, as He stands there in all of His glory!

Now what happened to John when he saw Jesus?

Let’s read on and see.

VERSE 17a

John was overwhelmed by this awesome vision, even though he was an apostle who knew Jesus on this earth. Even the three years John spent with Jesus on this earth did not really prepare him to see Jesus in His heavenly glory.

This is very different than what we hear today of people going to heaven and walking with Jesus. You see, as John approached Jesus, as he turned to look at Jesus, the holiness of God brought him to his knees; he could not approach Him in all of His glory.

Notice though what happens next.

VERSES 17b-18

Our God is not some impersonal force or distant God, He cares for us deeply, He loves us and here, look at the comfort He brings to John.

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

The touch of Jesus upon our lives!

Also, for those who like to deny the deity of Jesus, that He is God, Jesus begins by speaking of His eternal existence, which is an attribute of God alone! **“I am the First and the Last!”** Revelation 1:17.

We see this in Isaiah 44:6, **“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’”**

Jesus is our Redeemer, and He is the Yahweh of hosts! He is God.

And in Isaiah 48:12-13 we are told, **“Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, They stand up together.”**

Jesus is God; He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the eternal God!

Why is this so important and why do we think that this is speaking of Jesus?

It is important because cults, like the Jehovah Witnesses, will tell you that this is speaking of God the Father and not Jesus because Jesus is not eternal, He is not almighty God!

If you feel that way, then let me ask you this. *“When did God die?”*

You see, in Revelation 1:18 we are told, **“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. . . .”**

God, who became flesh and dwelt among us also died for our sins and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures and is alive forevermore!

Jesus is God and He holds the keys to Hades and death.

This speaks of His authority over Hades in the Greek and Sheol in Hebrew, which is a temporary holding place for those who have rejected Jesus and they will remain there until the Great White Throne Judgment and then they will be cast into the Lake of Fire, Gehenna for eternity apart from God!

VERSE 19

This is the only book in the Bible that gives us a divine outline and in using this outline it will help us to understand this book. And keep in mind that this is not the outline that John has given to us, it is the outline that Jesus has given to us and thus, we need to use it. If we don't, then we are going to get things messed up as we look at when certain events are going to take place.

Look at this outline:

Jesus starts out speaking of - ***THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE SEEN!***

These are the things that are spoken of here in Revelation chapter 1, what John is seeing now, the glorious vision of Jesus, the things that John has seen! That should just make sense.

Next, Jesus says that the second point in the outline of the book of Revelation is - ***THE THINGS WHICH ARE!***

These are the things that are spoken of in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, the seven letters to the seven churches located in Asia Minor or the western part of modern-day Turkey. These were literal churches in John's day, "**which are**" and it will also speak of the Church Age, as we will see.

And the last part of this outline for this book, given to us by Jesus, are - ***THE THINGS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER THIS!***

These are the things that will take place after the church age closes and it covers Revelation chapters 4 through 22.

That phrase, "**after these things**" or META TAUTA in the Greek, is what chapter 4 opens up with and we will deal with that more as we come to Revelation chapter 4.

But I believe it is a picture of the Rapture of the church as John is caught up into heaven after the church age comes to an end, after Revelation chapters 2 and 3!

VERSE 20

We have spoken about this verse already, but again I believe those angels or messengers are the pastors of these churches that Jesus holds in His right hand and the church is to be the lampstand from which the light of Jesus can shine brightly!

Remember where John received this Revelation – on the island of Patmos imprisoned for his faith in Christ.

I truly believe that we get to know Jesus more intimately as we are going through these difficult times.

It is as Seiss wrote, *“The wrath of the wicked does but bring saints the nearer to the choice favours of God.”*

May we draw close to Jesus as we study His Word, as we go through the book of Revelation or the unveiling of Jesus in all of His glory!

Let me leave you with these words from Paul in II Corinthians 3:18, **“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”**

Why start the book with this vision of Jesus?

Because He ***MUST BE*** the focus of our lives, our marriages, our churches and our nation!