

To the Seven Churches in Asia

The Vision and the Voice

Revelation 1:9-20

Introduction

1. As challenging as the book of Revelation is, it contains a blessing to all who read it and heed its message.
 2. The Revelation was given to John on the Isle of Patmos (**1:9**) as he suffered for the will of the Lord as brethren all over were.
 3. This Revelation was to be written down, and relayed to seven churches in Asia –
Revelation 1:4
 4. The letters address the conditions of the 7 churches, giving warning of judgment, instruction for repentance and reconciliation, as well as comfort for constancy in faith.
 5. These letters contain a comprehensive spiritual analysis of local churches which is recorded for our admonition even today.
 6. We must **“hear what the Spirit says to the churches!”** First, experiencing the vision and the voice which John saw, and accompanied these letters.
- I. What the Son of Man Said
- A. **“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” (1:19)**
 - B. Write the Things You Have Seen
 - a. What John had seen **“in the Spirit” (1:9-20)** – the vision given him of the Son of Man, as He instructed John to write to the seven churches (**v. 11**).
 - b. **1:11-12** – instructed to write what he saw, and he turned and saw who spoke to Him.
 - c. **The message to give the respective churches was of great importance, but what gave it weight was the One it came from – the churches who read their letter would have this image of the Son of Man who wrote it fresh on their minds. We too must see the vision.**
 - i. **As each church is addressed, certain characteristics displayed in the Son of Man are revisited.**
 - C. Write the Things Which Are
 - a. These are the things which are revealed in **chapters 2-3** – the present circumstances of the seven churches in Asia (**1:4**).
 - b. **The Son of Man commends things which ARE right, condemns things which ARE wrong, and gives counsel for correction, or constancy.**
 - c. He speaks of what they “have” and “have done” or what they “are doing.”

- i. He acknowledges what they have done well, and what they are doing well.
- ii. He knows what they have been guilty of in the past, and what they are guilty of presently.
- iii. He knows what they have gone through, and what they are going through.
- iv. HE KNOWS – and He has expectations, a standard, warnings, and promises.

D. Write the Things Which Will Take Place After This

- a. **“after this” (1:19)** = *meta tauta* = **“After these things” (4:1)**
 - i. **“this”** is the things which ARE, revealed concerning the churches in **chapters 2-3**.
 - ii. **Chapter 4** – opens with a phrase suggesting those things have been disclosed, and the rest deals with matters pertaining to what is future.
 - iii. NOTE: **“things which must shortly take place.” (1:1)** – the major portion of this revelation deals with things which would SOON take place near to the time of writing, not immediately prior to the 2nd coming of Christ. (Pertaining to the ungodliness and persecution of the church by Rome.)
- b. There are warnings and promises given by the Son of Man to these churches concerning how they would respond to these **“things which must shortly take place” (1:1)**.

E. **“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.” (1:3)**

- a. **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** – after each church is addressed.
- b. Not only read and hear, but keep, i.e. do what it says.
- c. The blessing is offered, but the curse is likewise real – **22:18-19**
- d. Included are the real facts presented concerning the seven churches of Asia addressed by the Lord, as well as the lasting application for churches of Christ today.

II. One Like the Son of Man (**vv. 13-16**)

“the Son of Man”

- a. Messianic – **Daniel 7:13-14** – ascending to the Ancient of Days (God) to receive an everlasting kingdom – dominion, demonstrated in the vision of Revelation.
- b. Human – **“Son of Man”** is an idiom for human. (85x in Gospel accounts)

- a. **Cf. Hebrews 2:14** – shared in flesh and blood to bring victory.
 - b. What John sees is Jesus, the **“Son of Man,”** in His glorified, exalted, victorious state, full of dominion and power and control – **“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9).**
1. Clothed to the Feet and a Golden Band Girding His Chest
 - a. The clothing of dignity, high-rank, and office – **Revelation 15:1, 6** – 7 angels with the plagues dressed the same, administering Divine judgment.
 - b. Judicial authority is involved – **Revelation 3:7** – Jesus as the antitype of Eliakim, having the “key” to open and shut – power and authority.
 - i. **Isaiah 22:20-22** – clothed in a robe, strengthened with belt, responsibility or **“authority” (NASB)** committed to his hand.
 - c. The glory of Divine sovereign rule – **Isaiah 6:1** – train of robe filled the temple – **John 12:41** – when He saw the glory of Christ.
 - d. Golden band not girding His waist, as typical, but His **“chest”**:
 - i. **“girt about at the breasts” (ASV)** – *mastos* (3x) – **“breasts which nursed” (Luke 11:27); “breasts which never nursed” (Luke 23:29)**
 - ii. **1 Peter 2:2-3** – desiring spiritual milk, tasting the lord is gracious, coming to Him.
 - iii. His judicial authority is exercised in loving, self-giving, faithful care and nourishment – as reflected in the call to repentance, and time given in the letters.
 2. Head and Hair White Like Wool and Snow
 - a. Like the Ancient of Days – **“the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool” (Daniel 7:9).**
 - i. Wisdom (personified) – **“She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you.” (Proverbs 4:9)**
 - ii. The aged – **“The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness.” (Proverbs 16:31)**
 - iii. “is the mark of age, and yet of age that is not aged.” (Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Works of G. Campbell Morgan*) – ETERNAL AND PERFECT WISDOM.
 - b. Purity – **Isaiah 1:18** – white as snow, like wool.
 - i. **1 John 1:5** – light, no darkness at all.

- ii. ***“For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26)***
3. Eyes Like a Flame of Fire
- a. Piercing and penetrating sight that tests and reveals.
 - b. Speaking of the Messiah – **Malachi 3:2-3** – ***“like a refiners fire...”***
 - i. Fire which tests genuineness – **1 Peter 1:7**
 - c. His eyes demonstrate that nothing in the churches is hidden from His sight – **Hebrews 4:13** – omniscience.
 - i. **This includes knowledge of wrong, but also hardship upon which His eyes look with compassion and love.**
4. Feet Like Fine Brass
- a. Feet are symbolic of procedure – ***“How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news” (Isaiah 52:7).***
 - b. Brass – a type of strength.
 - c. ***“as if refined in a furnace”*** – ***“when it has been made to glow in a furnace” (NASB)***
 - i. I.e. still hot – anything it touches is immediately burned to ash.
 - ii. ***“You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet” (Malachi 4:3)*** – Messianic promise to saints.
 - d. He walks in the midst of the lampstands – **Revelation 2:1**
 - e. **He is coming, and will come in judgment – of the world, but also of these churches.**
 - i. Can be for their victory as He tramples down enemies.
 - ii. But also of condemnation if they are not faithful.
5. Voice as the Sound of Many Waters
- a. Loud and powerful – **Revelation 14:2; 19:6** – combined with sound of thunder.
 - b. “a perfect concord of divers tones; many waters, one voice.” (Morgan, G. Campbell. The Works of G. Campbell Morgan)
 - i. **Hebrews 1:1-2** – the voice of the fathers, the voice of the prophets, the voice of the Son are ONE – God.
 - ii. **2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:2** – inspiration, prophetic word, word of prophets and apostles.
 - iii. **Luke 24:44-45** – revelation from all times and places converge in the Son who is ***“the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).***
 - iv. ***“The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.” (Psalm 119:160)***

- c. This unchanging, united, harmonious truth revealed in piecemeal until fully disclosed in the Son is both comforting and life giving, as well as powerfully destructive – **“the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).**
- 6. A Sharp Two-Edged Sword Out of His Mouth
 - a. Like His eyes are piercing, so are the words of His mouth – **Hebrews 4:12** – discerning the thoughts and intents, cutting through the façade, and rendering judgment in reality.
 - b. Here, primarily a figure of judgment – a sword with which He makes war, and judges.
 - i. **Hebrews 4:1-2, 11-13** – the word preached to the wilderness generation could have been the instrument of destruction raised against their enemies, but instead was judgment against them as they perished.
- 7. Countenance Like the Sun Shining in its Strength
 - a. **“His face was like the sun shining in its strength.” (NASB)**
 - b. Revealing the divine might and majesty of the totality of the **“Son of Man”**:
 - i. **“being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (Hebrews 1:3).**
 - ii. **“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6)**
 - iii. Radiant glory of divine holiness – **“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)**
 - iv. Spiritual life through light – **“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4)**
- III. What the Son of Man Had
 - A. Seven Golden Lampstands – **“the seven churches” (v. 20)**
 - a. These are in His possession – **“in the midst...One like the Son of Man” (v. 13).**
 - b. **(v. 20)** – the mystery is explained, **“the seven churches.”**
 - c. **Golden** – the metal used in the vessels of divine service. (The lampstand outside of the holy of holies in the tabernacle and in the temple.)
 - d. **Lampstand** – not a candlestick self-fueling, but an object which is filled with oil, and can be done so perpetually for continual burning.
 - i. Zechariah’s 5th vision of a golden lampstand – **Zechariah 4:2-3, 11-12** – with two olive trees that drip oil into the receptacles.

1. **Zechariah 4:5-6** – symbolizing the work of the Lord’s Spirit to accomplish His will.
- e. The churches as **“lampstands”** represent instruments of divine service, fueled by God Himself:
 - i. Shining light in darkness – **Matthew 5:14-16; Ephesians 5:8-13**
 - ii. Continuing and carrying out the mission of the **“Son of Man”** – **John 8:12; 9:4-5**
 - iii. Yet, not a brightness that is our own, but that which is fed by **“His countenance like the sun shining in its strength” (v. 16).**
- f. The lampstands are the possession of the **“Son of Man”** for the shining of His light in the world of darkness – this is the FUNCTION of the church.
 - i. **Lampstand in danger of removal** – **Revelation 2:5** – from His midst/fellowship.
 - ii. **If it fails in function, it is good for nothing but to be removed – no longer identified as a church belonging to the Lord.**
- B. Seven Stars in His Right Hand – **“the angels of the seven churches” (v. 20)**
 - a. These are in His right hand.
 - b. **(v. 20)** – the mystery explained, **“the angels of the seven churches.”**
 - c. Angel – Aggelos – a messenger.
 - i. **“messengers of the seven assemblies” (YLT).**
 - ii. The interpretations vary concerning who these messengers are – literal angels, or people, like elderships, etc.
 - d. Letters addressed to the angels, but also the churches themselves – **Revelation 2:1, 7**
 - i. Rather than the angels being a separate entity from the churches themselves, perhaps they are symbolic of the true message of the church.
 - ii. EX: **Revelation 3:1** – a name that you are alive, but you are dead.
 - e. Lampstand = FUNCTION – what the church is meant to be.
 - f. **Stars (messengers of the churches) = CHARACTER – the message of the church’s true state of being – the church as it actually is, not as it is portrayed to be.**
 - i. **(v. 16)** – in His right hand.
 - ii. **The lampstands are in His midst, but the stars are closest to Him, in His very grasp – HE KNOWS WHO THEY ACTUALLY ARE, AND THEY ARE AT HIS MERCY.**
 - iii. “Whatever the stars symbolize, they are under His protection and control.” (Hailey, 111)

- C. The Keys of Hades and of Death (**vv. 17-18**)
- a. The vision struck John with great fear, and he fell down as dead (**v. 17**).
 - b. The vision is terrifying, but also meant to bring comfort to those who are faithful to the **"Son of Man."** – (**v. 18**) – no fear of death for He is master over it.
 - c. He has authority over death and Hades. He is the resurrection and the life (**cf. John 11:25-26**).
 - d. The persecution that the saints were facing should not move them in terror. They should stand in confident assurance knowing their Lord and King is master over death and Hades.
 - e. The figure stands as a warning as well – **Revelation 20:14-15** – He will cast them into the second death, but also any whose names are not written in the Book of Life.
 - i. **Revelation 3:5** – to overcome is to side with the One who has the keys of Hades and Death.

Conclusion

1. We must hear what the Son of Man had to say about these churches through the Spirit.
2. In order for these messages to have their intended effect, we must first experience the vision that John saw.
3. The **"Son of Man"** reigns from the right hand of the throne of God today, in all the glory revealed to John on the Isle of Patmos.
4. We must understand that He has given us the same task that He gave these seven churches, and just like He saw who they truly were, He sees us today.
5. **Our study of the seven churches should be approached with fulness of transparency, humility, and a willingness to respond to the convictions the Spirit gives us through His word.**