

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPT 8TH-9TH, 2018 // REVELATION

"HE'S COMING WITH THE CLOUDS..." (1:4-8)

This book is a letter written to seven actual churches in the Roman province of Asia.

- "Grace and peace to you" was the traditional Christian greeting, but John wants his readers to know that this only comes from God (vs. 4).
- The source of these blessings is from the Father ("the one who is, ...was, ...is to come"), the Spirit ("seven spirits before the throne"), and the Son ("...from Jesus Christ").

For each person of the trinity (1 God, 3 persons) mentioned, John highlights certain aspects.

- God the Father as the God of the present, the past, and the future.
- God the Spirit as the God of fullness and perfection.
- God the Son as a Prophet ("faithful witness"), the resurrected one ("firstborn from the dead"), and as sovereign king ("ruler of the kings of the earth").

While all persons of the Trinity send grace and peace, Jesus in particular is named as the one to "receive glory and dominion for ever and ever" (vs. 6).

- Jesus is worthy of praise for three specific deeds: he loves us, he freed us from our sins by his blood, and he made us to be a kingdom and priests.
- The verb love could be translated, "keeps on loving"

In the OT, Israel was "set free" from death by the blood of the Passover lamb.

- God commissioned Israel to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6).
- For God's people, we're invited to be part of a Kingdom as we rule and reign with Christ.
- But we're also priests- we can go straight to God because of the blood of Jesus!

Vs. 7 is the main idea of the book of Revelation- "He's coming with the clouds"

- The 1st coming of Christ was marked by humility, lowliness, & anonymity- but the 2nd coming will be public, glorious, & "every eye will see him".
- Those who "pierced him will wail" is a reference to Zech. 12:10, and is a reference to Christ's return being an awful and horrible thing for His enemies.

Those who have rejected Christ in every age, beginning with those who pierced him, will realize their terrible error when they see Him return & they'll mourn, but not unto repentance.

- They'll mourn because they'll realize all is lost and now judgment has come.
- "Alpha & Omega" means that God is in control from the beginning to the end of time.

GRACE & PEACE

What every person on earth is looking for is grace (the favor of God) and peace (freedom from disturbance or stress).

- Through Christ, we have a relationship with a God that "keeps on loving us".
- We're "free from our sins" because of His blood.
- We're invited into a new identity as "priests" and royalty!

"ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN" (1:9-16)

John describes himself as a man of the people- he's a brother and companion to the believers in the 7 churches (vs. 9).

- He understood their suffering and he knew the importance of endurance.
- On the "Lord's day" (the 1st day of the week, a Sunday), John received a vision by the Spirit of God (vs. 10).

John heard a loud voice behind him like a trumpet that commanded him to write what he saw in a scroll.

- In John's day, scrolls were made from strips of paper from the papyrus plant about a foot wide that were glued together as long as 30 feet and rolled up.
- The writing on scrolls were handwritten in even columns only a few inches wide.

When John turns around to see the voice that's speaking to him, he sees a vision that he's probably not expecting.

- The first thing he sees is "7 golden lampstands", each of them most likely being a 7-branched candelabrum like those in the Jewish temple.
- In Zech. 4:2, Israel was described as a lampstand, but now each lampstand represents each of the 7 churches (1:20) shining light into darkness.

But then "among" the lampstands, John sees Jesus- but much differently than how he'd seen him before.

- This Jesus was resurrected and glorified, and John struggles to find the words to describe exactly what he saw.
- Notice how many times the word, "like" is used- some of what John describes is symbolic, not literal and speaks of Jesus's character.

John sees Jesus "among" the lampstands- He's present in His churches even in their suffering.

- Jesus is "like the son of man" - He has maintained His essential humanity (shape) even in His exalted state (that phrase also connects Jesus to the apocalyptic figure in Dan. 7:13).
- Jesus was wearing a robe- He was dressed in the garments of the High Priest of Israel as He represents His people before the Father.

His hair was like white, like wool or snow to symbolize age-old wisdom & knowledge, and His eyes were like blazing fire to symbolize Him seeing everything.

- Jesus's feet were like "bronze glowing in a furnace" - a picture of a powerful king who subdued his enemies and made them a footstool
- His voice was like "the sound of rushing waters" - it was powerful and overwhelming.

In the right hand of Jesus, John saw 7 stars. Vs. 20 explains that these are the "angels" of the 7 churches (either guardian angels or God's messengers).

- Out of His mouth came a "sword" - representing Jesus's power to judge his enemies.
- His face was "like the sun" - the glory of full deity was seen in Jesus like on the day of transfiguration.

SEEING JESUS AS HE ACTUALLY IS...

- As Jesus's close friend, John had become familiar with a version or concept of Jesus.

- But when he encounters Jesus in Rev. 1, he sees Jesus in the fullness of glory.
- What's the version or concept of Jesus that you're most familiar or comfortable with?
- Are you willing to SEE who He actually is- the risen, glorified King?

THE FIRST AND THE LAST (1:17-20)

What's John's reaction? He either faints, passes out, or collapses in fear & worship.

- Anytime in Scripture when God visibly manifests Himself, this is how people respond.
- John's fear & worship were met by Jesus touching and blessing him (vs. 17).
- Jesus tells John not to fear because he is the "first & the last" - Jesus holds ultimate power of time.

Jesus also reveals that as the "Living One", He has ultimate power over life as the Creator & sustainer- He also extends eternal life to us through Himself.

- Jesus has ultimate power over sin and its wages (Rom. 6:23), as He says, "I died, and behold I'm alive..."
- Jesus has power over Death & Hades as He says He, "holds the keys" over them.

Keys are for opening or locking doors, and those who are key holders have authority over doors & limit their power.

- As the Final Judge, Jesus is able to "open the doors of death" and judge all those who have died.
- He also has the power to send into eternal death ("the lake of fire") those whose names aren't in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:14-15)

Jesus commands John to write "what you have seen" (vs. 19)- some of which are near events ("those that are") and others concerning the future ("those that are to take place after this").

- This is why a blend of the preterist & futurist interpretive methods works.
- Jesus Himself interprets for John the mystery of the 7 stars & lampstands.

The 7 lampstands are the 7 churches in Asia, and the 7 stars are their "angels"

- Both the congregations and their spiritual leaders are symbolized as light-bearing bodies that shine in the midst of darkness.
- Not only that, Jesus is in the midst of the churches, and He holds the leaders of His church in His hand.

- Jesus loves His Church!

- **Sometimes we forget just how awe-inspiring and magnificent God is. Sometimes we forget just how intensely personal and loving God is. How can we NOT serve, honor, love, & worship Him as the King & Savior that He is?**