

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

John, Jesus, and The Candlesticks
Revelation 1:7-20

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PowerPoint Presentation included: None

SermonAudio Blurb: John writes of his first revelation where he is called to write to the seven churches in Asia. In this revelation what stands out is that Jesus is the Lord over the churches and that He is not unaware of both their strengths and their weaknesses. The imagery of Jesus is both powerful and frightening. This is not some gentle, kind God; this is the King.

I. Introduction.

- A. John ends vs 6 with a declaration that glory and dominion be Jesus' for all time.
 - 1. vss 1-3 is the preface of the book.
 - 2. Vss 4-6 is the introduction to the book.
 - 3. vss 7-8 give us the theme of this book

II. The Theme (7-8).

- A. vs 7 is a testimony of the fact that Jesus shall return. It is drawing from two key Old Testament passages:
 - 1. (One of the best ways to help you understand this book is to know your Old Testament well. For those of you who are diligent to repeatedly read through you bible, you will find your mind connecting over and over to what you read here in Revelation simply because it will be familiar in some way.)
 - 2. Dan 7:13-14, "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, 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." So here John is drawing a key connection right up front with the prophet Daniel.
 - 3. The second is Zechariah 12:10, "'And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so

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that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.”

4. It is worth noting how Jesus makes essentially the same statement to his disciples in Matthew 24:30. There he connects it to taking place after what is called the “tribulation.”
 5. These are not merely passages of prophetic interests. They exist to encourage, to strengthen and to warn.
 6. Two facts about the return of Jesus:
 - a. First, all shall see Him (including those who were there at His crucifixion).
 - b. Second, it will be a time of terror and horror.
 7. And again we have “Amen” that gives solemnity to this event. It is that moment when the patience of God is done. There is a lot of hope and a lot of terror built into that little sentence, “So it is to be.”
- B. Vs 8 here God simply gives his divine stamp of approval and authentication of what is said in vs 7.
1. The choice of words describing him captures the idea that all of history is encompassed by him. He is the one bringing all things ultimately to fruition.
 2. Bullinger paraphrases this verse to say, “I, the almighty Lord of hosts, the unchangeable God, will accomplish all My will, fulfill all My word, and execute all My judgments.
 - a. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, which the readers would understand as easily as we would to say A and Z.
 - b. It is used of Jesus Christ in Revelation 22:13 where it expands it even more. What stands out is how it is interchangeable between the Father (8) and Jesus Christ (22:13).
 - c. Add to this that in Isaiah this is used four times to speak of YHWH as being infinite and eternal not just in His being but in transcendence and sovereignty.

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- C. What you actually have from verses 7 to 20 is a careful glimpse to the true ruler of this creation.
 - 1. It is designed to sober us up from the many foolish amusements that capture our time and attention in this age—helping us to forget that there is the one, true God who is over all and to whom we are accountable.
 - 2. It is reminder that He truly is in control and that those who trust in Jesus Christ are truly safe for all eternity.
- D. Having stated the over-arching theme of the book John now speaks of the divine commission to write what is shown to him.

III. The Divine Commission (1:9-20).

- A. Vs 9 give the details of the first revelation to John.
 - 1. Note the terms used by John: brother and fellow partaker. Although an Apostle he is first and foremost a brother-in-Christ.
 - 2. His role is unique but before God he sees himself as one with the other believers.
 - 3. Regardless of who you are in Jesus Christ you are ultimately a fellow-partaker in various things. You share these things with all who hope in Jesus.
 - a. John lists three things in which he partakes with us. Tribulation, kingdom and perseverance.
 - b. Some will see these as three distinct things but really it is simply a construction that is intended to see as making one point, not three.
 - (1) Fancy term for it is a *hendiatriis*, literally means one through three.
 - (2) “Sex, drugs and rock’n’roll” is designed to capture the experience of a rock star. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hendiatriis>)
 - (3) So what is John’s point? He is describing the life of following Jesus (. . . in Jesus).
 - (a) When you believe in Jesus you are transferred out of this age and into the Kingdom of God’s Son.
 - (b) This brings troubles because you now are going and hoping in utterly different things.

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- (c) And the constant call of Scripture it is to endure to the end.
- 4. John next tells us where this revelation was seen—Patmos.
- 5. And also the reason for being on this island—The Word of God and testimony of Jesus.
 - a. This is the second of four times the Word of God is mentioned in this chapter.
 - (1) It is the written words that bring blessing (3).
 - (2) It is the Word of God that put John in exile/prison (9).
 - (3) The written Word has authority attached to it in a unique way (11).
 - (4) There is a permanency in the written Word (19).
 - b. The key point is that he is not exiled (the Romans had a penal colony there) there for doing wrong, but for what was right.
 - c. Let this be always known among MDF, that if we are punished or suffer, that it be done because we have been faithful witnesses and teachers of the gospel to a dying world.
- B. Vs 10 gives us the unique circumstances of this revelations.
 - 1. “In the Spirit.” This is mentioned four times in this book. Each of them represent a significant point in John’s visions.
 - a. Here it is a vision of Jesus Christ.
 - b. 4:2 it is a vision of the throne room of God.
 - c. 17:3 is the hugely important vision of the revelation and fall of the harlot of Babylon.
 - d. 21:3 it is the vision of the coming of the New Jerusalem.
 - 2. “On the Lord’s day.”
 - a. Sunday.

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- b. It was the day of the week Jesus rose again.
- 3. A voice like a trumpet.
 - a. A call to arms.
 - b. A call to attention.
- C. Vs 11.
 - 1. Hear and write.
 - a. Write what you are seeing. Be a faithful witness for those who shall hear and read it.
 - b. The recipients of this first vision is first and foremost seven church of Asia. I will explain them next message, suffice it to know that they were listed in the typical postal route of that time.
 - 2. When he turns to see three who is speaking three key things stand out: Lampstands, the Lord, and Stars.
 - 3. Imagine his surprise. He is on an island in exile. He is minding his business and suddenly he is brought into this ecstatic state. Next thing he knows there is a loud voice commanding him. He turns around to see who spoke and this is what he is looking at.
- D. The Lampstands.
 - 1. There were seven in number.
 - 2. Their identity.
 - a. He does not know what he is looking at but frankly the lampstands or the stars are not what grip him. He is utterly taken by the vision of the person among the lampstands.
 - b. But the one who is among the lampstands also wants him to be a faithful witness to the vision so He explains the mean nonetheless in vs 20.
 - c. They are the seven churches of when He is ready to speak to and about.
 - 3. He is drawing from imagery of the Old Testament here.

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- a. First is Zechariah 4:2 where there is the image of the golden lampstand with seven lamps burning.
 - b. Also it speaks of the menorah in the tabernacle and later the temple. A golden lamp of seven lights.
 - c. All of this speak of the idea of Jesus Christ being the light of the world and that both Israel and the Church are to function as bearers of that light.
- E. The Stars.
1. Though there are many things standing out in what John is seeing, especially about the person. What the person wants him to understand is what the stars represent.
 2. Again we look at the last verse and see that these stars are “angels” of the church listed. In vs 16 he is holding these stars in his right hand.
 3. A question needs to be asked here of what is meant by “angels?”
 - a. The term simply means “messengers” and the bible uses it to speak of humans, spiritual beings, holy angels and fallen spirits.
 - b. I am going to call them by their simplest meaning which is messengers.
 - c. Some see this passage to show that specific angels are given oversight of each church in the world.
 - d. But it is better to see this as a specific person/human that is connected to each church. These would be key leaders that stand out in each church. They could be the ones who would normally read and explain the Scripture to the church.
 - e. What is important to understand is that these messengers are given the responsibility to receive the message of John and presumably communicate it to their church (2-3).
- F. The Speaker.
1. The One like the Son of Man (13).

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2. When we see this image it is one that calls us to worship. It is designed to give us pause and to sit up and take notice. We no longer are dealing with opinions, we are dealing with the One who alone is Truth.
 - a. In chapter 5 we see the weeping in heaven for the time of judgment and righteous vindication comes. A time of reckoning, something all of creation is straining to see come. And no one is found who can break the seals of the scroll. And then we see Jesus
 - b. In chapter 6 we see the seals broken. Hear what is written, "When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Revelation 6:12-17)
 - c. The one who opened that sixth seal that caused the hearts of the great and powerful in this world to melt, he is the one standing before John and among these churches, just as He is standing in our midst beloved.
3. The vision of the Son of God.
 - a. Already in chapter one we saw six different aspects of Jesus in vss 5-6. Now we have several more in vss 12-20. 12-16 they are descriptions of Him and in 17-20 they are declarations that He makes of Himself.
 - b. Descriptions:
 - (1) Son of Man.
 - (a) Here is a description that John was quite familiar with as many times Jesus referred to himself using that title in the presence of John.

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- (b) It comes from Daniel 7:13 which is a heavenly vision of the Messiah.
- (2) “. . . clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle”
 - (a) Again an image drawn from Daniel (10:5) of a divine messenger.
 - (b) It is also worth pointing out that Daniel’s reaction to this being was much like John’s, one of great fear and dread.
- (3) “. . . head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow . . .” (14)
 - (a) Again an allusion to Daniel (7:9) but what is significant is that it is applied to God the Father there and to Jesus here.
 - (b) It likely speaks of great wisdom though many also see it as a symbol of eternity.
- (4) “. . . His eyes were like a flame of fire. . . .” (14)
 - (a) Again Daniel (10:6).
 - (b) Speaks of penetrating judgment. Nothing is hidden from His gaze and all must come under its burning examination.
- (5) “His feet were like burnished bronze” (15)
 - (a) Again Daniel (10:6).
 - (b) A symbol of strength and power. The ability to crush the enemy is likely seen.
 - (c) They are glowing as if just from the furnace, hot and powerful.
- (6) “His voice was like the sound of many waters” (15)

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- (a) Picture the sound of a massive waterfall or crashing waves in a storm.
 - (b) The image is to provoke a sense of power and even confusion because of the crashing of water. It is an intimidating feeling.
- (7) “His right hand He held seven stars” (16)
- (a) these are the messengers of the various churches.
 - (b) It speaks of the fact that He is sovereign over them; they are under His authority.
 - (c) but also that they are kept safe by Him. It pictures John 10 where He is the good Shepherd and in His grasp He keeps safe all who are His.
- (8) “. . . His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword” (16)
- (a) This image shows up several times in this book.
 - (b) Again this is a reference to His judicial authority to render judgment. It is sharp and decisive and brokers no argument or debate.
- (9) “. . . His face was like the sun shining in its strength.” (16)
- (a) Here we see the idea of His glory.
 - (b) It is reminiscent of when Jesus transfigured Himself.
- c. Declarations:
- (1) I am the first and the last (17).
 - (a) He stands on both ends of all time.
 - (b) Therefore He is the eternal one and all things find their place in Him.
 - (2) The living One (18).
 - (a) A common designation of God.

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- (b) At its core it speaks of the fact that life is found only in Him.
- (3) I was dead and I am alive forevermore (18).
 - (a) This fits with the one prior.
 - (b) He is a conqueror of death for Himself. Never again shall He taste it.
- (4) I have the keys of death and of Hades (18).
 - (a) He possesses authority over the great enemies of death and judgment.
 - (b) John 5:28.
 - (c) To possess the keys is a way of speaking of authority. Christ is now the one who has the authority even over the arch enemy, death.
 - (d) Cf. Revelation 20:11-15.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. Thinking back to vs 7 we saw the terror of seeing the return of Jesus. This is the one they killed. This is the one they rejected. This is the one they mocked, or just simply ignored.
- B. There will come a day for countless who will find themselves standing before Jesus for judgment. The calls to repent not merely in word but in deed and to turn to hope in Christ alone will echo in their ears.
 - 1. They shall wail and quake, but time is done and eternity is now present.
 - 2. And you? Have you heard the good news that in Jesus Christ there is true and full forgiveness of sin.
 - 3. The answer here is what it always shall be. Are you finding yourself filled with dread? Are you coming to realize that you are not right before God?
 - 4. Are you knowing now that you are guilty and worthy of His judgment?

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5. Are you cut to the very core of your heart with a desire to know how you might be delivered from this certain judgment?
 6. The answer is the same, “Repent! Believe! Follow Jesus! Stand up and be baptised in His Name.” And the promise is the same, you shall be saved.
- C. But we also saw a different fear in vs 17 where the vision was too much for John
1. Yet here we see the grace of God as Jesus comforts him.
 2. It is the reality that if you belong to Jesus then you are as safe as you could ever be.

V. Benediction/Doxology.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Small Group Questions

- What stands out in the sermon for you? What, if anything, caused you to pause and think?
- As you read and heard the description of Jesus was there anything in it that either encouraged you or concerned you? What and why?