

The Book of Revelation

Lesson Two

Revelation 1:9-20

JESUS AMONG THE CANDLESTICKS

Introduction

1. The book of Revelation was “signified” to John (cf. John 12:32-33; 18:32; 21:19).
2. Because the first three chapters take the more usual form of an epistle, it helps the reader to gain an understanding of how signs and symbols are used throughout the book.
3. The faithful Jesus will now be revealed in His glory (in the form of symbols).

I. The Mission of John

(1:9-11)

- A. After describing the Father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus, John now records information about himself and his mission.
- B. John was a brother and companion to the Christians in Asia Minor.
 1. The term “brother” signifies their spiritual kinship – they had been adopted into the same family by obedience to the Gospel of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5; 3:15; etc.).
 2. A “companion” is a joint partner, a co-participant (cf. Rom. 11:17; 1 Cor. 9:23; Phil. 1:7). {*The root of this word is the idea of fellowship.*}
 3. John was a companion in tribulation – he was suffering persecution just as they were (2:9-10; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17; etc.).
 - a. Note that they were already enduring tribulation.
 - b. This was not some “Great Tribulation” that would take place in the future after the “Rapture!”
 4. John was a companion in the kingdom – *by being in the church they were already in the kingdom* (cf. Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13).
 5. John was a companion in patience – endurance, steadfastness, perseverance (2:13, 10).
 - a. Thayer: “[I]n the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.”
 - b. Hutton: “Three pivotal themes in the lives of 1st Century Christians.”
- C. John reveals the specific tribulation he was enduring – exile on the island of Patmos for the word of God (cf. 6:9; 20:4; Acts 1:8).
- D. Though physically he was suffering on the barren island, John was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.”
 1. This means that John was under the control of the Holy Spirit that he might receive the inspired revelation (4:2; 17:3; 21:10; Matt. 22:43).
 2. The Lord’s day is the first day of the week (cf. 1 Cor. 11:20; Acts 20:7; etc.).
- E. In this state, John heard a voice “as of a trumpet” (cf. 4:1).
 1. John did not actually hear a trumpet (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7-11).
 2. Instead, the voice was so great that it is compared to the sound of a trumpet. {*Likely, it indicates that something was to be announced or a warning given* (cf. Isaiah 58:1).}

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- F. The voice spoke, identifying Himself as Jesus – the Alpha and Omega – and instructing John to write what he saw in a scroll and to send it to the seven churches in Asia.

II. The Glory of Jesus

(1:12-18)

- A. John was to write what he saw and what follows is the record of his vision.
- B. As he turned to see where the voice was coming from, he witnessed an amazing sight.
- C. First, he saw seven golden lamp stands.
 - 1. The candlesticks were lamp stands, reminding one of the source of light in the Tabernacle (Exo. 25:31-37; 1 Kin. 7:49; Heb. 9:2).
 - 2. That lamp stand consisted of seven branches on one stand; these appear as seven distinct and separate candlesticks.
 - 3. This symbol is explained in verse 20 – the candlesticks represent the seven churches to whom John was writing.
 - 4. The church shines forth the light of God's Word into the world (cf. Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thes. 5:5-8; 1 Tim. 3:15; etc.).
 - 5. Just as gold is a precious metal, the church is precious to Jesus – and should be to all.
- D. In the midst of these candlesticks, John saw Jesus (1:18; 2:1).
 - 1. This phrase – “one like unto the Son of Man” – comes from an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus (Daniel 7:13-14; cf. Matt. 26:63-64; Heb 4:15).
 - a. It emphasizes His humanity.
 - b. Jesus called Himself “Son of Man” more than 50 times (85 verses).
 - c. In spite of His glory and power (soon to be described), Jesus was the Son of Man – able to understand the suffering of His followers.
 - 2. Jesus is described in highly symbolic language.
 - 3. He wore a garment down to the foot, symbolic of royalty (Isa. 6:1).
 - 4. He wore a belt or sash of gold, emphasizing His majesty.
 - 5. His head and hair were white as snow, symbolizing purity (Isa. 1:18) or wisdom (Prov. 16:31) – drawn from the vision of the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9).
 - 6. His eyes were like a flame of fire, indicating piercing vision to see and know all (2:3; John 1:47-50; Heb. 4:13).
 - 7. His feet were like brass heated in a furnace, representing both strength and judgment.
 - 8. His voice sounded like the roaring of many waters, demonstrating power and authority (Psa. 93:4; Acts 3:23).
- E. In His right hand, Jesus held seven stars.
 - 1. This symbolized His protection (Psa. 63:8; Exo. 15:6; etc.).
 - 2. The stars represented the “angels of the seven churches” (vs. 20).
 - a. The word “angel” means messenger.
 - b. Preacher? Reader? Eldership? Faithful members?
- F. Out of His mouth proceeded a sharp, double-edged sword.
 - 1. The Word of God is described as a sword (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17).
 - 2. Since this sword comes from the Lord's mouth, it seems clear that it represents His Word.

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3. Thus, it is a symbol of judgment (19:15, 21; Isa. 11:4).
 - G. In appearance, He shined with the brightness of the sun.
 1. John must have been reminded of the Transfiguration (Matt. 17).
 2. Again, it represents the glory and majesty of Jesus (Ac. 26:13).
 - H. Upon seeing such a vision of the Lord's glory, John fell down as dead (cf. Dan. 8:18; 10:8-9, 17-19).
 - I. Jesus responded with a touch and words of comfort.
 1. There was no need to fear for the Lord is in control.
 2. In fact, He has the keys (authority) of Hades and of death!
- III. Summation (1:19-20)
- A. John's commission to write a record of his vision is repeated.
 1. The things seen refer to the vision of Jesus.
 2. The things which are refer to the present condition of the churches
 3. The things which shall be hereafter refer to what will soon be revealed to John concerning the church.
 - B. Verse 20 gives an inspired interpretation of the symbols used in the previous vision.
 - C. It is to serve as an aid for the study of the remainder of the book.