

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 10/21/09 Wednesday Evening

Series: *A Walk through the Book of Revelation*

Revelation 1:4-20 "The Portrait of the Risen Christ"

I want to know Christ. That's what the Christian life is all about, after all. Knowing Christ and making Christ known to others.

If you were going to draw a picture of Jesus, how would you make Him appear? For many, the product would be a dark complected man with dark eyes and dark hair--after all, Jesus was a Middle-Easterner.

That may have been what Jesus *looked* like during the latter part of his thirty-three years on planet earth, nearly two thousand years ago. But...that's not what He *looks* like today.

What does He look like today? If you want to see a portrait of the Risen Christ, turn to Revelation 1.

Review: Last week we began a new series in the book of Revelation. Here's a quick summary of what we discussed in session #1...

- Two preliminary cautions...
- Three suggestions for our study...
- An Overview of the whole series...
- The "Big Picture" in 1:1-3...

Tonight: We're going to see a portrait of the Risen Christ in 1:4-20...

Let's walk through the text.

I. John's Introduction (4-8).

A. John begins with greetings (4).

John the Apostle is writing. He's the last, surviving member of Jesus' twelve person apostolic team. It's the last decade of the first century A.D. Jesus returned to heaven six decades earlier. John's ministry has taken him from Jerusalem to Asia Minor.

Q: To whom did he sent this book? To the seven churches in Asia (we'll see their cities identified in 1:11)

John begins with a standard form of greeting: "Grace and peace to you."

Q: Who is the source of grace and peace, acc. to verse 4? John uses three phrases to identify its source. What are they? 1) From Him who is, who was, and who is to come 2) And from the seven spirits before His throne 3) And from Jesus Christ.

Let's unpack these three phrases.

John says, "From him who is, who was, and who is to come." Who's that? A reference to God. In the next verse John will specifically identify (and distinguish) Jesus. What's more, in verse 8, Jesus Himself identifies Himself by using the same phrase, "who is, who was, and who is to come."

Q: Who are the "seven spirits" before His throne in verse 4? It could be translated "the sevenfold spirit" (see also 3:1). Possible this phrase, like many others in Revelation, comes from the OT (Isaiah 11:2; Zech 4:2, 10).

B. John teaches us about Christ (5-8).

In the following verses, we discover some amazing things about Jesus. We could spend weeks pondering each of the details, but our purpose tonight is to survey the whole picture...

Who He is: (verse 5)

1. He's the faithful witness.
2. He's the firstborn from the dead.
3. He's the ruler of the earth's kings.

Discuss: How would this description have encouraged John's readers?

What He does/did: (verses 5b-6)

4. He loves us.
5. He freed us from our sins.

Q: By what means did He set us free from our sins?

6. He made us to be a kingdom and priests.

Notice how phrases once used of OT Israel are now applied to the Church. Throughout Revelation we'll see such OT images.

Q: Why did Jesus save us according to verse 6?

Observation: We tend to forget that we have been saved for this purpose: "to serve God." What happens when we forget that?

Q: According to the end of verse 6, who deserves glory? Does the "Him" refer to Jesus Christ or

to the "Father?"

What He will do: (verse 7)

7. He is coming with the clouds.

Q: What will happen when He comes?

- "Every eye will see Him.
- "All people will mourn.

Discuss: Why will they mourn?

What He says about Himself: (verse 8)

8. He identifies Himself, "I am."

Discuss: That's quite a resume, wouldn't you say?! What strikes you about this introductory description of Jesus by John?

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II. John's Vision (9-20)

A. Here's how it happened (9-11). Read verses 9-11, and notice the following details...

1. It happened on Patmos.

Q: Where's that? See map

Q: Why does John say he was on Patmos in verse 9?

2. It happened on the Lord's Day.

What day is that? Sunday. Why is it called that?

3. John was "in the Spirit."

He's about to receive a vision (as did Peter in Acts 10).

4. John heard a trumpet-like voice.

Q: What does the image of a trumpet indicate about the voice?

5. John was told to send the message to seven churches.

Q: What specifically was John to write? "what you see"

B. Here's what happened (12-20).

Upon hearing the voice, John instinctively turned to see who was talking to him. The sight he beheld was breathtaking...

1. John saw seven golden lampstands (12).

Revelation is full of images that represent something. It is apocalyptic literature which was popular from the 3rd century B.C. through the 2nd century A.D. It's from the Greek term *apocalupsis* comprised of *apo* (meaning "off") and *kalupto* (meaning "to cover").

George Athas offers the following definition (taken from the internet article "What is Apocalyptic Literature?"): "Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature characterized by a revelation about end-times and/or the supernatural realm and/or general secrets, given to a human being by an otherworldly mediator."

We find some examples of apocalyptic literature in extra-biblical literature: I Enoch, II Enoch, III Enoch, IV Enoch, the Book of the Luminaries, II Baruch, III Baruch.

Apocalyptic literature often had to do with themes such as cosmic chaos, the Last Judgment, the Messiah, and the messianic kingdom. Angels and demons appear frequently.

God used this literary form in giving us the final book of the Bible. The first century readers would have been familiar with it, though we are not.

John's vision begins with seven golden lampstands. He'll tell us what they represent later (in 1:20).

2. John saw someone like a son of man (13-16).

Note: The book of Revelation uses the words "like" and "as" frequently (in the KJV--83 appearances of "as" and 26 uses of "like"). The reason is clear. John cannot find human vocabulary sufficient to describe what he saw. The heavenly vision was so magnificent that the best he could do was to say, "It was *like* this..."

Here he says the person he saw was *like* a "son of man." What would that phrase have meant to a first century Jew like John? John knew of another Jew, a prophet in the sixth century B.C., who too had seen a vision, and who used this phrase. Look at Daniel 7:13.

John is saying, "That's who I saw--the same person Daniel saw."

Q: What did He look like? Here's the description...

- "Dressed on a long robe

Q: Who wore long robes? The High Priest did (Ex. 29:5)

- "Wearing a golden sash
- "White head and hair

Q: What does white indicate?

- "Eyes like blazing fire

Notice the use of "like" throughout this section. His head and hair were *like* wool, His feet *like* bronze, His eyes *like* fire.

Q: What does "eyes like blazing fire" indicate?

- "Feet like bronze
- "Voice like rushing waters
- "Holding seven stars in His right hand
- "Double-edged sword out of His mouth
- "Face like the sun

Note: In the seven letters to the churches in chapters 2 & 3, John will use these above features in his description of Jesus.

Q: What kind of impact did this vision have on John? Notice...

3. John experienced this response (17-20).

- "He fell at His feet.

This was no planned response, but an instinctive reaction. It's what a sinner does when he realizes he's in the presence of a holy God.

Discuss: Why don't we fall as dead every time we open the Bible or come to church?

- "He felt Jesus' right hand.

Q: Why did Jesus touch John? It indicates the Savior's condescending mercy. He comes down to meet us at our point of need.

- "He heard Jesus' instructions.

What did Jesus tell Him? Read verses 17-20.

Q: What does Jesus hold? Verse 18

Q: What did Jesus tell John to do? Verse 19

Q: Where is Jesus right now? Verse 13 says He's "among the lamp stands." What do the lampstands represent according to verse 20? The seven churches. Jesus is in the midst of His Church!

Discuss: How does John's description of Jesus differ from the way people often think about Jesus today? What are some practical effects thinking rightly about Jesus will have on our lives this week?