

The Revelation – Christ’s Introduction to the Churches

Last week we looked at the first three verses of The Revelation of Jesus Christ as an introduction to a series of lessons on this blessed book. Today I want to look at the rest of the first chapter. This Scripture says:

- (4) John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;
- (5) And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
- (6) And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.
- (7) Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.
- (8) I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.
- (9) I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.
- (10) I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,
- (11) Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.
- (12) And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;
- (13) And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.
- (14) His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;
- (15) And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.
- (16) And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.
- (17) And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:
- (18) I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.
- (19) Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

- (20) The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

In this lesson we find the introduction to this letter. John begins his letter by identifying himself as the writer of the book. He let's us know, though, that the book is not his book. It is a book given by God himself. It is a book full of the spirit of worship, as represented by the seven spirits before the throne. It is a book of grace from Jesus Christ himself. You see, while we may look at this book and see the doom and gloom, Jesus wants us to realize that he has given us the book out of grace, and his grace is sufficient for all our need.

John continues by giving praise to Jesus Christ because he has washed us from our sins. Not only that, he has given us direct access to the throne, making us kings and priests. No longer do we have to use the blood of animals as a sacrifice for our sins because the perfect sacrifice has been given. No longer do we have to carry our sins to a priest because we have each been made priests. We can go directly to God. It is this same glorious Jesus who will return.

John tells us all of this to give us the frame of mind that he was in when God revealed these things to him. Many would look upon his circumstances as bad. He had been exiled because he would not stop preaching the Word of God.

He gives us some information about the circumstances about the revelation of these truths to him. He tells us that he had been exiled to the island of Patmos because of his testimony. It is likely that John had been severely mistreated prior to coming to Patmos. It is possible that even deadly punishment had been used without causing harm. In any event, John had been banished to this lonely island with only small amounts of food in hard to reach places. Not exactly the kind of place that most people would be praising God, but this is exactly what John was doing.

Notice that John kept track of the days, even when it might seem that it wouldn't matter. He tells us that the vision began when "he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." Now this brings us to a distinction between the Old Testament law and the New Testament. In the Old Testament the seventh day of the week, Saturday, was sanctified. In the first century we find that Christians were observing the first day of the week as their sacred day, with each "Lord's Day" being a reminder of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. John, then, was having church all by himself on Sunday when these things were revealed.

This, then, brings us to the introduction of Jesus Christ. He tells us that he is the First and the Last, the beginning and the end. He is all in all. There is none other greater than Christ.

Jesus introduces himself to seven churches in Asia. I'll talk more about these churches next week as we look at the individual letters. Let it suffice that these churches represent the church throughout the ages. There are some who say that this is, itself, a timeline for

the church, but as we'll see next week I believe that it is more of an identification of all of the problems that exist within the Church. It also lets us know that there is no perfect church. Even the best of churches are given instruction.

Next we have a picture of Jesus himself. Now this picture is not anything like the pictures that you often see. You see, this is Jesus in a glorified form, after he has returned to Heaven. I'm not going to go into great detail about all of these things, but I would recommend that you read over them once again so that you can see how that each of these things represent his power, his glory, his compassion, and his grace. It is this Jesus that is being revealed to the Church throughout the Revelation.

This description of Jesus is important as we go further into the Revelation because on various occasions he uses different aspects of his countenance to identify himself. When we reach those points we'll talk a little more about each of those aspects of his countenance. In any event, his appearance was awe inspiring and caused John to fall on his face in worship.

Jesus told John to not be afraid. This is something that should resonate throughout this book. Even though Jesus is revealed in all of his vengeance we that have his testimony should not be afraid. We that adore Christ should not be afraid. His hand is upon us, and everything will be alright.

There are a couple of things that I would like to mention here. First of all, there are seven stars and seven candlesticks. The seven stars are representations of the seven angels of the seven churches. The word angel, as applied here, appears to mean God's messenger. It is the responsibility of the pastor of the church to be the spokesman for God to the people and to carry God's message, not his own. Many times today pastors spend much time putting together a message on their own, based on their own studies, rather than listening to the voice of God. God wants the pastor to be an angel to the church over which he is laid in charge.

The seven candlesticks are the seven churches. Notice that the pastors are in Christ's hand, showing that they are to be in total submission, and the Christ is in the midst of the candlesticks, showing his presence within the Church throughout the ages. This is important for us to recognize as we continue our study next week.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich