

Lecture 24 – Revelation 1-3: Prologue, Letters to 7 Churches

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lamp stands, and among the lamp stands was someone 'like a son of man,' dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. Revelation 1:12-16

Key Terms

Christian reign, vision of Christ, symbolism (Son of Man, robe, hair, eyes, feet, voice, right hand), Christ and church, church letters: structure, church letters: elements

Lecture Objectives

- Outline the first vision of Christ and describe its relationship to the rest of Revelation
- Identify the seven churches and the major emphases of each letter
- Compare and contrast your own circumstances with those of the seven churches

Preliminary Questions

- Many of us are accustomed to speaking or thinking of our “union with Christ” through our salvation. What are some implications of that reality when we consider Christ’s present reign over the earth?
- Consider the vision of Christ printed above from Revelation 1. What are some particular “in your life” implications of this vision for your Christian life and service?

Revelation 1-3: Prologue, Letters to 7 Churches

I. Introduction to Revelation 1-3

A. Prologue and genre (1:1-11)

1. A prophetic revelation (1:1-3)
2. Greetings (1:4-5)
3. A Pastoral letter (1:5-11)

B. Preliminary message

1. He speaks to (1:9) ...
2. Words of ...
3. We are made ...
4. We are going to ...
5. Christians are (Rev. 1:5,6; 2:26; 5:9,10; 20:4; cf. Ex. 19:6; 1 Peter 2; Luke 22:29; 2 Tim. 2:12; Matt 25:21,19:28) ...
 - a. “I want you to believe this theme.” Not we should reign, but we DO reign
 - b. The Lord wants us to reign for him
 - c. We ought to take this seriously
6. How do Christians reign?
 - a. Look at John: easy to overlook this reality, in the details of our lives
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

II. The First Vision of Christ – Rev. 1:12-20

A. Overview:

1. Jesus wants to make an impression on John and on us.
2. Each element presumed to have a symbolic meaning because Revelation says many do.

B. Symbolism

1. Son of Man among 7 lamp stands:
 - a. Son of Man: This Son of Man, Jesus, is fully God. (compare Rev. 1:5,8 with 1:17-18)
 - b. 7 lamp stands:
 - c. Therefore:
 2. Robe to feet and golden sash - chest. Dignity
 - a. A note regarding robes:
 - b. A note regarding sashes:
 - c. Therefore:
 3. White head and hair
 - a. White:
 - b. White hair:
 - c. Therefore:
 4. Eyes like blazing fire.
 - a. Eyes:
 - b. Fire:
 - c. Therefore:
 - 1) 2:5 Remove lamp stand from (Eph.)
 - 2) 2:16 Repent or I will fight vs. you with sword (Pergamum.)
 - 3) 2:24 I search hearts and minds and will repay (Thyatira)
 - 4) 3:3 Wake up lest I come as thief (Sardis)
 - 5) 3:16 I am about to spit you out (Laodicea)
 5. Feet glowing bronze: (Reminiscences from Daniel.)
 - a. Feet:
 - b. Glowing bronze:
 - 1) Daniel 2: image of gold, silver, bronze had feet of iron, clay.
 - 2) Flawed at base - it crumbles.
 - c. In contrast, therefore:
 6. Voice:
 - a. Jesus' voice as many waters.
 - b. Pounding surf?
 - c. Therefore: Power in his word, his voice.
 7. Right hand holds 7 stars
 - a. 7 stars:
 - b. Possible meaning?
 - c. Note regarding *Angels* (*angeloi*):
 - d. Therefore:
 8. Summary and overall impact of opening vision:
 - a. Jesus is royal judge. Splendor invites worship. Simultaneously frightening & encouraging.
 - b. Judge, come to wage war against the wicked. (see chapter 6-20) But he begins with church.
 - c. _____
- C. Vision of Christ defines, identifies, constitutes the church
1. Example of church at Smyrna
 - a. v 19: I am the first, the last, the living one, dead and alive
 - b. Smyrna must endure persecution, perhaps even ...
 - c. Jesus ...
 - d. If Jesus had to face death, they must too. If they face death let them remember

- that they serve a lord who died.
- 2. Example of church at Thyatira
 - a. 2:18: church at Thyatira is ...
 - b. Jesus sees and evaluates them; His eyes are ...
- 3. Example of church at Ephesus
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
- 4. The instruction of Revelation rests on the Christology of Chapter 1.
 - a. The teaching of Jesus without the person of Jesus, the son of God, is just moral instruction.
 - b. Contrast with liberal theology:

What are some specific ways in which the vision of Christ defines, identifies, and constitutes the global church of which you are a member? The local church of which you are a member?

III. Introduction to Churches

- A. Structure: Three basic elements:
 - 1. Reminder of:
 - 2. Recognition of:
 - 3. Realization of:
- B. Seven-fold pattern, used with minor variations in most (See Rev 2:1-7, Ephesus)
 - 1. Address to:
 - 2. Christ's self-designation:
 - 3. Commendation (usually):
 - 4. Condemnation or rebuke:
 - 5. Warning of possible punishment:
 - 6. Exhortation:
 - 7. Promise of reward:
- C. All Churches are exhorted to:
 - 1. Remain ...
 - 2. Shun ...
 - 3. Avoid ...
 - 4. To be ...
 - 5. Make no ...

IV. Exposition

- A. Sample: Ephesus
 - 1. Address:
 - 2. Self-designation, suited to needs of church:
 - 3. Commendation:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
 - g. Notes regarding "bearing":
 - h. Nicholaetans:
 - i. Note regarding "blessed intolerance":

4. Condemnation and correction:
 - a. Left ...
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - b. More “hard work” than “love at work”
 - c. Love grows cold through:
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - d. How does a church grow cold? A simple case study:
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) Warning of potential judgment:
 - e. Repent or “I will remove your lamp stand from its place.”
 - f. Zeal and orthodoxy are necessary but not sufficient conditions for living church.
5. Exhortation:
6. Promise:
 - a. “To the one who conquers”:
 - b. “I will give to eat.”:
- B. Smyrna (2:7-11 - no rebuke)
 1. Self designation:
 2. Evaluation: Jesus says ...
 3. Promise:
- C. Pergamum and following (2:12-17 - a compromised church)
 1. Self-designation:
 2. Correction:
 - a. Toleration ...
 - b. Nicolaitans ...
 - c. Emperor worship?:
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 3. Warning: “Repent lest ...
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 4. Promise: White stone, perhaps for purity.
- D. Thyatira (optional)
 1. Correction:
 - a. Too tolerant
 - b. Liable to seduction and compromise
 2. Self-designation:
- E. Sardis
 1. Correction: fallen asleep and soiled its clothes
 2. Self-designation:
- F. Laodicea
 1. Correction: lost its zeal
 2. Self-designation: