

Revelation
Lesson II
Revelation 1:4-20

Christ's Care for the Churches

Introduction:

1. The sense of being isolated, alone and unloved can destroy an individual.
 - a. Emotional problems.
 - b. Even physical health is affected.
2. Imagine that you are a Christian living in the Roman province of Asia at the end of the first century of this era.
 - a. Shunned, boycotted, family abuse, threats, anxiety over government arrest and prison.
 - b. Might you begin to feel isolated, alone and unloved?
3. Revelation begins with an assurance that the church remains the constant object of Christ's love and concern.
 - a. His supreme love for the church. Eph. 5:25
 - b. His assurance of victory. Rom. 8:34-37
4. In this lesson, we shall examine the significance of John's initial vision of the Christ in the Apocalypse.

Body of Lesson:

I. John's Greeting to His Readers: Rev. 1:4-8

A. The typical beginning of first-century epistles is used by John to begin this section of the Revelation.

1. Writer identifies himself.
2. Names the intended readers of his work.
3. Sends a greeting/blessing.

B. The "seven churches" of Asia

1. Real rather than representative.
2. Not the only congregations in Asia at the time.
3. Why these seven – and no more?

C. The beautiful salutation: "Grace to you and peace, from..."

1. Father
2. Holy Spirit
3. Jesus Christ

D. John's doxology concerning salvation in Christ

1. Salvation by the blood.
2. Constitution as a kingdom of priests

E. Jesus' coming "with the clouds"

1. A natural inclination to view this as a prediction of the second coming.
2. Probably best to see as a direct reference to his coming in judgment against Rome in the manner indicated in this book.
 - a. Revelation events to occur shortly. Rev. 1:3
 - b. Old Testament precedent speaks of God coming (non-personally)

“upon a swift cloud” to judge his enemies. Isa. 19:1

II. John’s Commission to Write Rev. 1:9-11

A. Patmos was a prison island about 70 miles southwest of Ephesus.

1. John banished there for loyalty to Christ.
2. Rome likely thought to take his leadership from the churches.

B. “In the Spirit on the Lord’s day.

1. Surely filled with thoughts of the brethren on their worship day
2. Taken hold of by the Holy Spirit.
 - a. “In the Spirit” = under direct control of the Holy Spirit for purpose of speaking to and through John.
 - b. Likely similar to Acts 10:9-16.
3. No dream but inspired revelation.

C. John identified himself with his readers in the matter of sharing “tribulation”.

D. Note: John’s notion of the kingdom in Revelation.

1. Not something to be ushered in by the events in the Apocalypse.
2. Something already existing and being shared by John and his brethren.

E. The first event of the vision was connected with hearing a voice “as of a trumpet”.

1. Attention-getting, authoritative.
2. The voice is that of Jesus himself.

III. The Glorious and Caring Christ: Rev. 1:12-20

A. His appearance was astonishing.

1. “One like unto a son of man” Cf. Dan. 7:13-14
 - a. Brief sketch of Daniel background.
 - b. Son of man has a kingdom from Ancient of Days. Jesus refers to himself as Son of Man.
2. Dressed as one of rank and position – possibly as a priest.
3. Hair, eyes, feet and mouth: unweaving the rainbow?

B. He was walking among (in the midst) seven lamp stands and held seven stars in his right hand.

1. Verse 20 interprets: lamp stands = churches of Asia, stars = “angels” (messenger) of the churches. John the Baptist in Mk. 1:2
2. Christ knows the status of his churches and upholds faithful proclaimers of his Word to them.
3. Saints are not alone.

C. John’s reaction to the vision of Christ.

1. Afraid and awestruck.
2. Compare Mount of Transfiguration. Matt. 17:6-7

D. Write Rev. 1:17b-18: _____

1. Eternality: “the first and the last, and the living one”.

2. Personal resurrection: “I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore”.

3. Power over death: “I have the keys of death and of Hades”.

E. The object of such a vision and presentation of the Christ is the elimination of a sense of fear and loneliness among the churches.

1. The Savior has overcome.

2. He has a share of his glory for all among the “overcomers”. Cf. Rom.

8:18

Conclusion:

1. What an effect this vision must have had upon John!

a. Lonely? The Lord is with you.

b. Frightened by his appearance? He comforts and makes secure.

c. With a living and life-giving Redeemer, John need have no fear of Rome’s threats or acts of violence.

2. Is this message of reassurance for John alone?

3. Jesus cares about the churches wearing his name and about every child of God in those bodies of his people.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT LESSON:

Please read all seven of the letters to the churches of Asia for next time. Read Rev. 2-3 with a view toward understanding the different situations of the seven churches and how the Lord’s counsel to each one meets its needs specifically.