

Lesson 2: The Jesus of Revelation

Key Text: Revelation 1:9-20

Lesson Objectives

In this lesson we will discover:

- a) Where was John when he received the vision?
- b) When did John receive the vision?
- c) Who did John see at the beginning of the vision?
- d) What was John's initial interaction with the visitor like?

Words You Should Know

Eschatology (n) – The doctrine of the last things or end time events.

Where was John when he received the vision? (Revelation 1:9)

John was on the island of Patmos. Patmos, a small rocky island, served in the first century as a Roman penal settlement. John was exiled there because of his faithful testimony to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. On this barren island, he suffered tribulation while surrounded by the sea. The sea becomes for John a symbol of separation and suffering. His persecution and the rejection of his faithful testimony becomes the symbol of the experience of God's end-time people because of their faithfulness to the gospel.

When did John receive the vision? (Revelation 1:10)

The Lord's Day. John used the phrase "the Lord's day" in a twofold meaning. He wanted to inform his readers that he was taken by the Spirit into vision to witness the events from the perspective of the eschatological day of the Lord, and that the vision actually took place during the seventh-day Sabbath. The association of the two days by John would fit the eschatological connotation of the Sabbath in the Bible (Isa. 58:13-14; 66:23) as the sign of the day of deliverance (Deut. 5:15; Ezek. 20:10-12).

This also fits the portrayal of the final events in Revelation within which the Sabbath will play a central role in the end-time scenario. And this would also explain why John coined the phrase “the Lord’s day” in order to incorporate the two biblical concepts into a single one.

Who did John see at the beginning of the vision? (Revelation 1:13)

Jesus Christ. Christ is portrayed as ministering to the churches in the role of the Old Testament priests. He ministers to them wearing a robe reaching to the feet and girded with a golden girdle. These robes were worn by the priests as well as the kings in the Old Testament. This portrayal emphasizes the priestly as well as the royal character of the glorified Christ. He is no longer a man of Nazareth, but the exalted Christ “who was dead and now is alive” (1:18). In his prophecy of the messianic shoot from the stem of Jesse, Isaiah explains that “righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist” (Isa. 11:5).

The man-like glorified Lord walks among the churches in the full priestly capacity ministering to his people, and in the full capacity of King, ruling over the kingdom which is his church. The churches are not perfect; they are rather weak and far from ideal. Yet, Jesus assures them of his presence. It is very important in our Christian experience to know that Christ is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, because he was tempted “in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). He is faithful to his promise, and he walks among his people despite, rather than because of, their weaknesses. And he will be with them always until the close of the age (Matt. 28:20)

What was John's initial interaction with the visitor like? (Revelation 1:17)

Jesus Christ appears to John as a human being; yet, he is the glorified Lord. His white hair and his voice like the sound of many waters remind one of the presence of God. He is dressed in a robe of power, dignity, and authority. His eyes are like a flame of fire, his feet like burnished bronze, and his face shining like the sun; these are metaphoric descriptions of the glory and majesty of the exalted Christ. He is the victorious Messiah equipped with the two-edged sword coming from his mouth. No wonder that John, overwhelmed by his glory, falls at his feet like a dead person, as he did earlier on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:6). This is the common reaction of a man who is in the presence of God's glory (Josh. 5:14; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; 43:3; Dan. 8:17; 10:9, 11; Matt. 28:9). This reminds us also of the event in Galilee (Luke 5:1–11), when, after the great catch of fish, Peter glimpses who Jesus is and falls down at his knees, conscious only that he himself is a sinful man.

Next Week: Messages to the Churches (Part 1)