

THE BOOK OF REVELATION: VERSE BY VERSE

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WEEK TWO

I. SETTING THE SCENE (Revelation 1:9-20)

A. Introducing The Main Characters In The Drama

1. John... (vv. 9-10a)

"I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit..."

- a. Note what a follower of Christ can expect: suffering that requires endurance, yet a victorious kingdom!
- b. John was in exile due to his refusal to engage in the worship of Caesar.
- c. This is the first use of the term ***"the Lord's Day"*** in recorded history.
- d. The term ***"in the Spirit"*** emphasizes the prophetic inspiration (Ezekiel 2:2; 3:12-15; 11:5-6, 24-25) and divine source of this book.

2. The church... (vv. 10b-12, 19-20)

"...and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said, 'Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.' I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands... 'The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.'"

- a. John is pastorally and prophetically speaking to specific churches in his region, yet the number seven (like all numbers in apocalyptic literature) has symbolic meaning. Seven is the number of wholeness or completeness; John is speaking to all churches, by addressing specific churches.

Over The Years...

Some have viewed the seven churches as seven consecutive stages in church history (called "dispensations") beginning with the apostolic church (represented by Ephesus) and ending with the apostate church (represented by Laodicea). Others view these seven churches as more of a "snapshot" in time, observing that there will always be some who are doing well while others are complacent.

- b. Whether or not each church has its own specific ***"angel"*** is not John's point. Such language is typical of the apocalyptic genre.

3. Jesus... (vv. 13-18)

“... and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was 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 coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.’ ”

a. The apocalyptic symbolism kicks into high-gear:

- i. ***“Like a son of man”***: literally “a human figure” but figuratively the term for the Messiah. (Daniel 7:13-14). It was Jesus preferred term to describe Himself.
- ii. ***“A robe reaching down to his feet, with a golden sash...”***: the Messiah yet also the High Priest!
- iii. ***“The hair on his head was white like wool as white as snow”***: See Daniel 7:9! John ascribing divinity to Jesus. Also denotes wisdom and purity...
- iv. ***“His eyes were like blazing fire”***: See Daniel 10:6; depicting penetrating scrutiny.
- v. ***“His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace”***: Taken from Daniel 10:6 and contrasting with Daniel 2... Sturdy and untarnished bronze contrasts with unsteady clay mixed with iron...
- vi. ***“His voice was like the sound of rushing waters”***: description of God’s voice in Ezekiel 1:24.
- vii. ***“In his right hand he held the seven stars”***: right hand symbolic of power, authority and stability; also possible added symbolism combatting first-century astrological beliefs.
- viii. ***“Coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword”***: (Isaiah 49:2; Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12-13) Symbolic of the power and authority of Christ’s words.
- ix. ***“His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance”***: symbolizing God’s glory; likely anticipating the conclusion of the book (See Revelation 21:11 - 22:5).
- x. ***“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead”***: echoing Ezekiel’s response in Ezekiel 1:28...
- xi. ***“Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid.’”***: Similar to Daniel 10:10, 18-19... John did not seem to be prone to fear: he was imprisoned for refusing to worship the most powerful politician on the planet. Such was the impact of this revelation of Christ that he was afraid.
- xii. ***“I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever. And I hold the keys of death and Hades”***: language used by Yahweh to identify Himself (Isaiah 44:6; Deuteronomy 32:40) and used by John to identify God in Revelation 1:8; 4:9. Jesus’ victory over death means He is victorious over everything Satan can throw at us!