

“A Vision Of Christ” (1:1-20)

NOTES

1. The prologue (1:1-3) includes a “preview” of the entire book and the first of seven “beatitudes” or blessings offered in Revelation (cf. 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14).
2. The “greetings” section (1:4-8) is in the customary Greek letter-form of the 1st century (Sender to Recipient, Greetings). But John, like Paul, makes the greetings explicitly Christian by stating “Grace and peace to you” and by including a section of praises (5-8). The recipients are 7 churches in Asia. There are other churches in Asia, so scholars debate why these 7 are chosen. Perhaps they are churches under John’s care, or main postal centers in the region. Or, because the number 7 symbolically indicates completeness, perhaps the 7 historical churches are meant to signify all churches in Asia or the universal Church of all ages.
3. The phrase “The One who is, and was, and is to come” is repeated twice in this section. It is a take-off of the “I Am” name of God given to Moses in Exodus 3:14 and modified in Deuteronomy 32:39. However, it changes the traditional “I am who will be” with “is to come” which highlights the coming of Christ and the fulfillment of His kingdom - a major theme in Revelation.
4. Look at the striking portrait of Christ presented in 1:5-6, and the portrait of Christ in 12-20. Both his divinity and his humanity are emphasized. He is an awesome sight but also touches and comforts John (1:17). Great truths about Jesus and what He has done for those who believe in him are revealed here!
5. John was “in the Spirit” on the “Lord’s Day.” The Lord’s Day for Christians was the first day of the week - Sunday - so named because it was the day Jesus rose from the dead. It was a day Christians met for worship, fellowship meal, and the Lord’s Supper. “In the Spirit” probably means the revelation he writes about occurred in a vision he received in worship or prayer, and not in a dream he had.
6. John’s vision recalls visions the prophet Daniel had in the Old Testament (read Daniel 7:9-14 and 10:4-6). The “sharp double-edged sword” is also an OT image (cf. Isaiah 49:2). Jesus called himself “Son of Man” (cf. Mk. 8:31).
7. “What you have seen, what is now and what will take place later” sets the tone for the rest of Revelation. Revelation is about describing contemporary spiritual battles faced by its first readers and Christians of today, and about the coming spiritual battle surrounding Jesus’ Second Coming. Jesus’ words are called a “mystery.” This doesn’t mean that they are a puzzle to be solved (as many assume), but that they are something humans could never work out fully but that God chooses to reveal.

QUESTIONS:

1. What difference does it make to you that God is He “who is to come?” How should that affect the way you deal with circumstances or the people around you?
2. What picture of Christ is revealed in 1:1-20? How does this reinforce and challenge the picture of Christ you have held up to now?

3. What does it mean to you that Jesus "freed us from our sins by his blood?" What impact does this make on your life?
4. What is your view of "mystery?" Which view should be used when reading Revelation?
 - a. Sherlock Holmes - something to be solved by intellect and reason;
 - b. Guru - something to be revealed if we just pray hard enough or become "spiritual" enough;
 - c. Shrug Your Shoulders - it's meant to be accepted as something we cannot know fully, no matter how hard we try.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Find the 24 "titles" for Christ in 1:1-20, and then see if they are repeated elsewhere in the book. What does each title tell you about Jesus?
2. List the things in Revelation that there are "7" of. What do you think this number should mean?
3. Using a concordance, research the Old and New Testaments symbolism of fire, bronze, lampstands, and two-edged sword, etc.