

Introduction to the Churches of Revelation

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Churches of Revelation / Jesus: Divinity / Revelation 1:9–20

In preparation for the series on the churches of Revelation we look at John's encounter with Jesus.

- I'm starting a series on the letters to the churches from Revelation chapters 2-3.
- When I mention Revelation, I usually get one of two reactions.
- Some people sit forward, they like the prophecy & symbolism.
- Others run for the door! It prophecy & symbolism gives them a headache.
- So, let's start by putting these letters into context:

Revelation 1:9 NKJV

I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

- This is the apostle John.
- In his gospel, John refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23).
- John was banished to the island of Patmos because he was preaching the Gospel.
- I guess we would say he was lucky, the other Apostles

died, but that's another discussion.

- Ask yourself, would you be banished for the Word of God?

Revelation 1:10 NKJV

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

- How was John spending his time?
- "In the Spirit" meant he was praying and meditating.
- Do you spend time praying and meditating about these things of God?
- If so, is it more than just Sunday morning?
- Why do I enjoy my morning Bible reading?
- It helps me stay connected to my Lord.
- Helps me remain connected to the Holy Spirit.
- "The Lord's Day" is Sunday
- The Sabbath was the last day of the week – That is when God rested and when the Jews rested.
- Early Christians wanted a day to focus on God, they chose the first day of the week.
- That is why we are here today.
- While in prayer, John hears a voice...

Revelation 1:11 NKJV

saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

- Who is speaking?
- Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega

- The First and the Last.
- Remember when He said “before Abraham was, I AM”?
- Jesus tells John to write down what he sees and send it to a list of churches.
- In chapters 2-3, Jesus will dictate “cover letters” to these churches.
- What is a church?
- [*ekklesia* /ek·klay·see·ah/] – Literally “Called out ones”.
- An assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting.
- Notice, it is an assembly of Christians:
- It is a group of people who ARE saved.
- NOT a group of people to be saved.
- Those anywhere, in a city, village, constitute such a company and are united into one body.
- Those believers in a locality who are of one body.
- We are a church a group gathered in this place.
- We are also part of a larger church in our community
- I wish we acted like a church with other congregations.
- The whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth.
- The church universal or “catholic” (as opposed to the Roman Catholic church).

Revelation 1:12–13 NKJV

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in

the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

- John turns and sees:
- Seven lampstands – We'll learn more about those shortly.
- One like the Son of Man – Jesus!
- Jesus has a golden band around his chest.
- This is a symbol of a judge.

Revelation 1:14–16 NKJV

His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.

- What is John trying to describe here?
- The image of Jesus is just how Daniel saw him:
- **Daniel 7:9 (NKJV)**

“I watched till thrones were put in place,
And the Ancient of Days was seated;
His garment *was* white as snow,
And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool.
His throne *was* a fiery flame,
Its wheels a burning fire;

- Ezekiel describes his voice this way:
- **Ezekiel 43:2 (NKJV)** And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice

was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.

- What is this sword coming out of His mouth?
- **Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)** For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
- This sword is the Word of God. The stars and candlesticks are explained in Rev 1:20

Revelation 1:20 NKJV

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

- Jesus explains the seven stars and lamp stands.
- The stars represent the angels, literally messengers of the churches.
- Who is the messenger of this church?
- Does Jesus hold Brother Mark in His hand?
- The lampstands represent the churches themselves.
- Is Jesus walking amongst us?
- Don't respond to quickly, think about your answer.
- If it was suddenly a crime to be a christian, would the police come here?
- John is encountering His Lord Jesus not as the man he leaned against at the last supper but in His glory and power.

- John's image is of the pure, sinless glorified savior.
- John's image is also that of the Lord and King, powerful with eyes of fire and feet of refined brass signifying strength and power.
- John described Jesus in His Gospel as the Word of God. Here he shows the Word of God coming from His mouth.
- His voice is strong, the voice of God.
- His words are sharp, dividing soul and spirit.
- Don't let anyone tell you that Jesus never offended anyone.
- The Word of God offends many. Jesus taught us to speak the truth in love, not to hide the truth to avoid offense.
- This is not the cute and quite Jesus who hangs out with children and sheep.
- This is not the meek and mild Jesus the world thinks about on Christmas.
- This is the Lord and King that Israel has been waiting for.
- This may not be the image they were looking for.
- Some people say the seven churches are seven dispensations of the church.
- Dispensationalism, or the belief that the church will go through different times with different characteristics can fit well with this list.
- Dispensationalist see the different characteristics of the churches in Revelation are different stages the church will go through.
- I believe the churches are actual churches with actual

issues.

- I also believe God gave us Scripture so we can see ourselves and learn from it.
- Scripture is meant as a mirror, showing us our flaws rather than a tool to beat up on others.
- Remember, a church is not a building or an organization, but a group of believers.
- As we go through these churches, let us look at ourselves and see how much we look like the people Jesus is talking to.
- Are you prepared to meet your Lord as John is?
- The King who rules all, including other kings?
- The Lord who is able to judge the world and YOU?
- The one who will speak God's Word, even to our pain?
- The Master who will show us our deepest secrets, our deepest sins?
- Who must know it all since He has paid for them.
- Are you prepared to hear what he has to say,
- Not only TO the churches, but ABOUT them and where we see ourselves in them.