

Portraits of Christ in Revelation

From Revelation 1

- I. Rev 1:7-18 ***Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.***

A. Here is a portrait of the risen Christ in all his glory. The vision is of a high Christology. The Christ that is encountered here is the Lord of glory who has attained to his glorious kingdom and who is the Lord of history and King of the Universe. Let us look at the ten-fold description of Jesus the Christ.¹

B. **The Recapitulating Christ** *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*

1. To recapitulate means to subsume many things under one heading. Thus the Bible says of him: Eph 1:9-10 *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him*
2. Alpha and omega really means more than beginning and end. If Christ were to speak this today he would say, "I am A and Z." In other words, "I am the alphabet of God." What is an alphabet? It is an ingenious manner of storing accumulated wisdom and knowledge. Jesus is the accumulated

¹The alliterated list contained in this section of notes is from Adrian Rogers, Pastor of Bellview Baptist Church in his radio message of 1995. The message is now available in a set of tapes entitled "Revelation" available through Love Worth Finding Ministries, 901-382-7900. The list and reflection is fundamentally his work though I have adapted and added to it for these notes. Note too that Adrian Roger's overall approach to the Book of Revelation is very much in the futurist point of view and typical of that of many more fundamentalist and many Evangelical preachers.

wisdom of God. He is the Word of God. He is the refulgence of all wisdom and knowledge. He knows all things.

- C. **The Resurrected Christ - *Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man*** -
1. It had been some years since John had seen Jesus. Now he turns and sees him. But what is he like? ***One like a son of man***. Jesus is forevermore a man. Jesus was not a man before his incarnation. But at his conception he became a man. But not merely to wear his manhood for awhile then discard it. Jesus will keep his humanity for all eternity. There is a man in the glory. Truly his humanity is glorified but it is humanity as well as divinity. He was resurrected in a body, he ascended in a body, he is coming back in a body, literally and visibly. Here is the resurrected Christ, the Son of Man.
- D. **The Reigning Christ - *clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast*** -
1. Here are regal robes. The dress and splendor of a king, the dress and splendor of a magistrate or a judge
 2. The portrait here is not of Jesus Christ as savior *per se* it is Jesus Christ as judge.
 3. We must all face Jesus one day as Judge, the scriptures are clear:
 - a. Romans 14:11-12 *For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So each of us shall give account of himself to God.*
 - b. 2 Cor 5:9-10 *So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.*
- E. **The Righteous Christ - *his head and his hair were white as white wool,***
1. This text speaks of his righteousness and purity.
 - a. Isaiah 1:18 *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*
 2. Jesus is purer and cleaner than new-fallen snow or bleached wool. Oh the holiness and the blessedness of this Christ
- F. **The Revealing Christ - *his eyes were like a flame of fire.***
1. The text means that he has a penetrating vision, like fire that penetrates and burns. Today we might say "He has eyes like an x-ray" He sees right through you. Everything you've ever done, he knows about. Every thought, every word, every deed. You can fool others but his eyes are like a flame of fire. He knows, you'll not fool him.

- a. Heb 4:13 *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*
 2. You can fool an earthly judge but you will not fool this Judge. He sees through and through. He cannot be:
 - a. Deceived
 - b. Disbarred
 - c. Disputed
 - d. Discredited
 3. His eyes are like the flame of fire. He is the revealing Christ
- G. **The relentless Christ - *his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace***
1. This means his coming and his judgement will be unstoppable. Brass is a weighty and a hard metal.
 2. In the Old Testament brass was a symbol of judgement.
 - a. In the temple all of the instruments were made of brass. There was the brazen laver, the brazen altar. Why? Because it was there that sin was judged
 3. Here then is burning judgement and strong feet. He is the relentless Christ. You cannot stop him. He is going forth to judge. He will judge. He must judge. "He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored."
 4. He is going to judge.
 - a. John 5:22-23 *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son,*
 5. Many people have not understood that Jesus is not only the savior he is the judge.
- H. **The regal Christ - *and his voice was like the sound of many waters***
1. A likely background to this text is Psalm 29: 1-4 *Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. Oh the majesty of Christ. See how what is ascribed to God in the Old Testament is here ascribed to Christ. He is our majestic Lord and God.*
 2. Some of the following texts also describe the mighty voice of our Lord
 - a. Psalm 47:5 *God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.*
 - b. Jeremiah 25:30-31 *The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the*

nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

- c. 1 Thess 4:16-18 *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*
 - d. John 5:28-29 *for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*
3. It won't do any good to talk back. Can you imagine standing at the foot of Niagra Falls and arguing with it?
 4. How different this second coming will be from the time of his passion and death wherein the Bible says:
 - a. Is 53:7 *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*
 - b. Is 42:1 *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.*
 - c. Matt 27:13-14 *Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.*
 5. When he comes again he shall speak and what power there shall be. He is the regal Christ. This verse speaks of his majesty.

I. **The Regulating Christ - in his right hand he held seven stars**

1. Jesus doesn't just have the whole world in his hand. He's got the whole universe in his hand. He is the one who regulates it all. He regulates, runs and rules all of creation.
2. The Bible says of Jesus
 - a. Col 1:15-17 *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*
 - b. Eph 1:9-10 *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him

3. The book of revelation also defines the stars as the seven Churches. Rev 1:20 states: *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches*: Thus we see here the governance over the Church which Christ has. He regulates and rules the Church as scripture says of him: (Col 1:17-18) *And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence*. Thus, even in this context we can see how his regulation of the Church flows from his regulation of all things.
4. Jesus Christ our regulator and ruler. All things are under his control. Fear nothing. There is no panic in heaven only plans.

J. **The revenging Christ - *from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword*.**

1. Here is a word picture that reminds of Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*. The sword that is in his mouth is his Word.
2. And what is he going to do with this sword? He is going to smite the nations with it. Jesus is not coming back only to receive his own. He is coming back to exact vengeance on his enemies. No this bothers some who cannot imagine Jesus in this role. Yet Jesus is not just savior, he is judge and if you won't let him save you, then he must condemn you. There is no third way given. Either we accept the invitation of salvation Jesus give or we must accept condemnation.
3. Now the word of God is a sword that will cut. Either it will cut to bless (like a surgeon) or it will cut to bleed. We will be cut by it to be brought under conviction and to the Lord Jesus Christ or we will be run through and through by it in judgement.
 - a. Rev 2:16 *Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them [the Nicolaitians] with the sword of my mouth*.
 - b. Rev 19:11-15 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God*.
 - c. 2 Thess 1:7-10 *And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the*

Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

4. There is a different experience of the same reality. For those who love God there shall be vindication and triumph. For those who hate the truth and hide from the light, there shall be blinding glory that they experience as wrath and destruction. Thus, to speak of the wrath of God is not to say that God is mad *per se* or that he is in a foul mood. It is to say that in order to endure the day of his coming we must be brought up to the temperature of glory lest we melt like wax on that day. Thus the Word of God must act like a surgeon's scalpel and remove all that is putrefied in us. We must be healed by God's word and the sacraments of grace lest we perish on that day when his Word shall have its full effect. Only he can do this for us. God is what and who he is, he doesn't change. So, by his grace we must be changed. Then we can experience his presence as warmth and glory rather than wrath.
5. He will speak and the battle is done. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword. His truth is marching on. Glory Hallelujah.
6. Vengeance belongs to God alone
 - a. Romans 12:19 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

K. **The Resplendent Christ - *and his face was like the sun shining in full strength***

1. Oh the brightness of his face! Oh the brilliance of his glory. For the saints his shining glory is a beauty to behold. They glory in the light
 - a. Psalm 50:1-2 *The Mighty One, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.*
 - b. Psalm 18:28 *Yea, thou dost light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness.*
 - c. Psalm 27:1 *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*
 - d. Psalm 36:9 *For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light.*
 - e. Psalm 37:6 *He will bring forth your vindication as the light, and your right as the noonday.*

- f. Psalm 43:3-4 *Oh send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to thy holy hill and to thy dwelling! Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise thee with the lyre, O God, my God.*
 - g. Psalm 89:15 *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.*
 - h. Psalm 97:10-11 *The LORD loves those who hate evil; he preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked. Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.*
 - i. Psalm 104:1-2 *Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, thou art very great! Thou art clothed with honor and majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment,*
 - j. Psalm 112:4 *Light rises in the darkness for the upright; the LORD is gracious, merciful, and righteous.*
 - k. Prov 4:18 *But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.*
 - l. John 1:4-5, 9 *In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.*
2. But for the wicked, the light is blinding and it exposes their wickedness:
- a. Psalm 90:8 *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*
 - b. John 3:19-20 *And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*
 - c. Acts 22:6 *And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.*
3. Who can describe the glory of the coming savior. The light of Jesus is the very light of heaven: Rev 21:23 *And the city has no need of sun or moon*

to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

- L. **The reassuring Christ** - *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*
1. Our world needs today a new vision of the holiness of God. Look at John. He knew Christ and lay his head upon his chest at the last supper. But now, despite all their history, when he beholds the glorified Christ, he falls on his face as though dead. For as the Bible says, Exodus 33:20 *But," God said, "you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live."* Too frequently today God has been trivialized. Look at John's experience. Jesus will reassure him, but the glory is awesome, he is Holy, Holy, Holy. Here is the glorified Christ, awesome in power and majesty.
 2. Yet Jesus says, "Fear not!" He is the reassuring Christ. But notice that what he tells John not to fear: death and the power of evil one. Thus the awesome power and majesty of Jesus becomes the basis for fearing not. His resurrection is the source of his glory and also the reason we should not fear. Thus, Jesus does not hide his glory to reassure John, he lets his glory shine forth not to make John afraid, but to reassure. He has power to save. Hallelujah.