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THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

“Rekindling an Old Flame”

1:12-16

Certain businesses and agencies are subject to a surprise audit. Without any notice the auditor arrives to conduct a thorough review.

There is a strong sense that Jesus Christ was conducting a surprise spiritual audit of His churches on the earth. He suddenly appeared to John at the end of chapter one. Chapters two and three reveal the results of His audit. The letters to the seven churches read like a summary of His findings.

As John turns to see Jesus Christ he gives us a revelation of our Lord as He is today in the midst of our church. We can audit ourselves and implement the standards Jesus sets down.

Revelation 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

The apostle John had been exiled to the Aegean island of Patmos. In a supernatural trance he would receive a series of visions showing him the historical events of the last days – and especially the seven year Great Tribulation. He heard a voice behind him, then **turned to see** who it was.

It's interesting that the very first thing he saw wasn't Jesus. Turning, he **saw seven golden lampstands**. No mystery as to what these represent. In verse twenty you read,

Revelation 1:20 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.

(As we've said, the symbols in the Revelation are either immediately identified for you; or they can be found in the Old Testament).

Why did John see the **lampstands** before he saw Jesus – even though the Lord's **countenance was like the sun shining in its strength**?

It was to remind us of the purpose of the churches on the earth. They are to burn brightly as the lights in the world showing forth the glory of Jesus Christ. We see the Lord; the world sees us. They only see Jesus to the extent He is revealed by our burning brightly for Him.

The **lampstands** John saw were what we call *menorahs*. They were seven-branched **lampstands** like the one that was in the wilderness tabernacle of the Jews and later in the Temple at Jerusalem.

It was an oil-lamp with wicks in each bowl. It was the duty of the priests to attend to the menorah night-and-day. In the Old Testament book of worship, Leviticus, you read,

Leviticus 24:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

Leviticus 24:2 "Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually.

Leviticus 24:3 Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the tabernacle of meeting, Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the LORD continually; *it shall be* a statute forever in your generations.

Leviticus 24:4 He shall be in charge of the lamps on the pure *gold* lampstand before the LORD continually.

In the New Testament every believer is considered a priest. Each of us, then, is charged with keeping our lamp burning brightly for the Lord so that His church on earth is a veritable beacon or lighthouse revealing Him to the world.

The churches on earth were described by John as *golden lampstands*. Gold is our precious metal, is it not? **The church on earth is something precious and to be cherished.** There should be a kind of gold-rush of people wanting to be a part of it.

Revelation 1:13 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.

Jesus has taken up a position *in the midst of* His churches. Although omnipresent, Jesus is revealed in a special way when His church is gathered together to serve Him.

- *being changed to bring change* -

John saw Him as *One like the Son of Man*. It's a title that is used in Scripture to emphasize the humanity of the Savior. He was and is God, but God in human flesh.

If Jesus were not God, then He could not save me from my sins. If Jesus were not man, then He could not substitute Himself for me. God became flesh to do both... and much more.

Note this: Jesus was resurrected in a glorified human body. **He will forever be God in human flesh, *the Son of Man*.**

John described the Lord's *clothing* and *countenance*. First, His clothing:

Revelation 1:13 ...clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

Since Jesus is ministering to **lampstands**, then He is certainly being pictured as our great high priest. He wants to be sure that we burn continually and brightly. He supplies the oil – which is the Holy Spirit. He trims our wick by His divine providences. But do we burn? Is it bright? We can gauge whether we do or not by reading His assessments of the churches.

We're told two things about Jesus' clothing:

1. His **garment** went all the way **down to the feet**.
2. His **chest** was **girded** with a **golden band**.

Whatever else these may suggest, they are not the garments of a servant. A servant would have his garment drawn up and girded at the waist.

Jesus told us that He did not come to be served but to serve. He told us to do the same. He even set aside His robe one time and girded Himself about the waist to stoop and wash His disciple's feet.

Yes, Jesus is in Heaven as our Great High Priest interceding for us. Though exalted He still serves us in many ways. But we must also regard Him as our final authority. He doesn't just serve us. He is our sovereign. We are to serve Him.

Revelation 1:14 His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

Revelation 1:15 His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

The rest of the descriptive phrases relate to His countenance. **His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow**. Scholars familiar with the Old Testament see something of the prophet Daniel's description of God in chapter seven of his book:

Daniel 7:9 "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;

Daniel 7:10 A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.

Daniel 7:11 "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame.

Daniel 7:12 As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

Daniel 7:13 "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

Daniel 7:14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed.

It reads like a summary of the Revelation of Jesus Christ! But, you say, isn't the description in verses fourteen and fifteen of the Revelation more like that of God the Father? Why do we say it is Jesus? Are we confused?

No - we are being given clarity! The Person John saw was Jesus, no doubt. For one thing, He identifies Himself in verse eighteen by saying *I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.*

This is an example of what Jacob mentioned last Wednesday in his discussion of the Doctrine of the Trinity. God the Father and God the Son are both described as having the same attributes – in this case, their pure-white wool-like hair. They are both God. Not two 'gods,' but one God eternally existing in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Each of these phrases in the Revelation is a descriptive masterpiece. I think they can never be exhausted. Each time you consider one of them something new suggests itself.

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow... Not just His *hair*, but His *head*, reminded John of *wool, as white as snow*. In the *wool* there seems to be a suggestion of Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. *White* hair suggests age; in this case, eternity. *White as snow* suggests purity. Isaiah once wrote,

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

Jesus, **the Son of Man**, is the only One both eternal and perfectly pure who could substitute Himself for us as the final sacrificial lamb of God.

Revelation 1:14 ...and His eyes like a flame of fire;

John looked into Jesus' eyes and saw them **like a flame of fire**. Remember that he was seeing Jesus in the midst of **seven golden lampstands** – each with seven bowls burning with **flames of fire**. It tells me that the churches should look like Jesus. Or, to put it another way, when a person is in a congregation of believers he or she should sense that they are looking into the eyes of the Lord. And He is looking back!

If Jesus were looking directly at you, would it *warm* you or *warn* you? Would you feel the need to turn away from His gaze? Or would you be drawn to Him?

Revelation 1:15 His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace....

At the very beginning of the Bible, in the first proclamation of the Gospel, God the Father told the devil that when Jesus came He would **bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel** (Genesis 3:15). We interpret the bruising of Jesus' heel to describe His suffering on the Cross. On the Cross He accomplished the redemption of the human race and bruised the devil's head.

Now we see Jesus with indestructible feet! They are the feet that have walked on earth, in our place, up the hill to the cross at Calvary. **Refined** through His suffering on our behalf, they are the **brass** that have bruised and will finally crush the devil's rebellion.

Revelation 1:15 ...and His voice as the sound of many waters;

The sound of many waters are beautiful, yet deafening. Not in the sense of being painful, but of being powerful. When Jesus gives His assessment of the churches, it is full, accurate, and final.

Revelation 1:16 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.

The **seven stars** are the angels of the seven churches. As we'll see in a subsequent study, He almost certainly means the earthly leaders of each church. They were **in His right hand**. It's a picture of the pastor or pastors of the local church. They have both *authority* and *accountability* to the Lord.

Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword... Not literally; that would be freakish! At His return we're told that Jesus' words will be **a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations** (19:15). Then He will rule the nations.

Thus His words as **a sharp two-edged sword** precede His ruling. The words we are going to read, to the churches, precede His ruling. Though Jesus is the Head of His church, we don't always let Him rule over us. We'll see it in the seven letters He dictated to John. There are things He has assessed that we must attend to in order for Him to be in His proper place in our gatherings.

His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. It's a poetic way of describing the absolute glory of the Lord. He is much more radiant and powerful than our sun.

- being changed to bring change -

I also see a progression:

1. John saw the flames of the **seven lampstands**.
2. Then he saw the Lord's eyes as a **flame of fire**.
3. Then he saw the **countenance** of the Lord **like the sun shining in its strength**.

When the Lord is given His proper place, His presence is manifest to His people who in turn manifest it to all onlookers.

That's what I want us to be! And we will if we have ears to ear His assessments of the churches. We will rekindle our old flame.