

Revelation: The Glorified Christ

Revelation 1:9-20

John hears a commanding voice, telling him to write what he sees and circulate it to the seven churches in the western part of the province of Asia. He turns around to see a glorious being in human form, dressed like a high priest, with pure white hair, suggesting wisdom and dignity. His sight is penetrating, His feet like bronze, and His voice commanding and awe-inspiring.

In His right hand are seven stars (v.16a). Verse 20 defines these as the “*angels of the seven churches*”. But what is their relationship to the churches and their function? We’re not told, but somehow they represent the churches before the throne of God.

The face of the glorious figure is shining like the sun (v.16c). From His mouth comes a sharp, double-edged sword (v.16b). The use of this image elsewhere suggests that He speaks God’s mighty word. Some commentators point to elements like this to claim that John’s vision is a symbolic, literary vision composed by him, rather than something he saw. But this is not necessarily so. Both scripture and personal experience teach us that when experiencing a vision, we are participants in the situation rather than detached observers. Thus within the vision, we attach meanings that go beyond the visual. We bring knowledge and context to the vision. We know more than we see, and what we see may go beyond what we see in waking life. Visual elements like the sword don’t necessarily mean the vision is only a symbolic, literary composition.

The Figure’s own words make it clear that this is the glorified Christ. Remember the Jesus that John saw at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8). Here John sees Christ in even more of His visible glory. He sees Jesus, not as a Galilean peasant, but as the magnificent, eternal Being He truly is. Hear Jesus’ message to John:

- “*Do not be afraid*” (v.17, NASB). This is a common opening for special revelations of God or angelic visits.
- “*I am the first and the last*” (v.17b, NASB). Elsewhere God describes Himself in these terms. Here, Jesus applies them to Himself. All history is flowing from Him, through Him, and to Him (Romans 11:36).
- He is “*the living One*”. He identifies Himself by His death and resurrection: “*I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades*” (v.18, NASB). What a tremendous comfort to those threatened by persecution! Christ has already gone through death and resurrection and has prepared the way for us. Death and life are in His loving hands.

The Glorified Christ is walking among the churches, observing, warning, encouraging, challenging. He is still walking among us, seeing us as we truly are.

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