

CHRIST Speaks to Churches

Letters to the Seven Churches of Revelation 1-3

by Theodore H. Epp

Copyright © 1960

CHAPTER ONE

WHO IS THIS CHRIST?

The Person who addresses Himself to the seven churches in the Book of the Revelation carefully scrutinizes their various records, looking not only at their outward actions, but probing to the very heart of the motives prompting their actions. He commands, encourages, instructs, warns, and condemns wherever necessary. The question naturally arises, Who is He? Has He the right to speak as He does? Has He the ability to carry out His promises and warnings? This is no light matter to consider, because the position and character of the one who speaks in such a situation as this establishes the weight to be attached to his words.

In the first chapter of the Book of the Revelation John described this Person as the "**Son of Man.**" He is seen standing in the midst of the lampstands, knowing to the last detail what is transpiring among the churches.

His name, the Son of Man, is the one most used by CHRIST during His public ministry. The name portrays Him as the representative man and designates Him as the last Adam in contrast to the first man, Adam (I Corinthians 15:45).

He is the Eternal Son of GOD, Creator, and Sustainer of the universe. But His other name, Son of Man, serves to identify him as the One who gave Himself as the sacrifice to save men.

CHRIST is herein set forth as Judge. However, He is the High Priestly Judge who takes disciplinary measures with His people as He lovingly seeks to guide them in paths of truth. This is in contrast to His position as Kingly Judge in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation where He administers punitive justice to those who have rejected all efforts to reconcile them to GOD.

As High Priestly Judge He exposes the sins and wretched condition of His people through revealing His own perfection and beauty and holiness. And it is also as High Priestly Judge that He can say, "**I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore**" (Revelation 1:18). As a Kingly Judge in Revelation 20 He does not offer redemption to those who appear before Him at the Great White Throne Judgment. The time of probation will then have been ended.

As the High Priestly Judge He walks in the midst of the churches; but as the Kingly Judge He will sit on His throne and pronounce final sentence against all who have rejected GOD's offer of mercy.

It is with the High Priestly Judge, then, that we are concerned as we seek to discover what the Scriptures say concerning Him who speaks to the church.

The apostle tells us that he turned to see the voice that spoke with him and found "**in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle**" (Revelation 1:13). What CHRIST had to say was not a matter of hearsay on His part, for He stood in the midst of the churches. There was nothing that escaped Him.

Righteous

We notice in this description, first of all, that He was fully clothed. This speaks of His absolute holiness. This is in contrast to Adam who, when he sinned, found himself naked. It is also in contrast to the time when CHRIST came to die for men and was disrobed and crucified on the cross because of the spiritual nakedness of man. But now that is all changed. He is pictured here as the Sinless One, the One who is perfect, absolutely holy. There are no fig leaves here such as our first parents wore but clothing that reaches to His feet. He is the one before whom every human being will one day have to stand. They will see Him as He is here, perfect and glorious in His righteousness.

Divine Authority

In the second place we find Him girded with a golden girdle which is a symbol of absolute divine authority. He expressed this to His disciples just before His ascension when He said, "**All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world**" (Matthew 28:18-20).

His authority is such that no one can successfully challenge it. This is fully confirmed in Scripture where we learn that GOD has raised Him from the dead and put Him far above all principalities and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in that which is to come. And GOD has put all things under His feet and has given Him to be head over all things to the church. There is none other like Him.

We read in Philippians, chapter two: "**Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**" (vv. 9-11). So great, then, and absolute is His power, that none can gainsay Him. He has myriads of angels to call upon to enforce His commands if the need should arise; but so great is His inherent power that His own Word is sufficient. This is the Son of Man who speaks to the church.

Respect

He is next described as having His head and hairs white like wool, as white as snow. One cannot help but compare this with Daniel 7:9:

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool." The Son of Man is to be respected. The wisdom of the ages is in Him. He is the Eternal One who is all wise. He is the Eternal One who was before all things and without Whose power and presence in the universe nothing would hold together.

Paul describes CHRIST in these words: **"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. 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"** (Colossians 1:15-18). It is an exceedingly serious matter for any human being to lightly cast aside the words of CHRIST to whom GOD has given the preeminent place in the universe.

All-Seeing

As John continues his description of the Son of Man He tells us that **"his eyes were as a flame of fire"** (vv. 1:14). His penetrating gaze sees the very thoughts and intents of men's hearts. There is nothing hid from Him.

An illustration might help here, though it is but a poor illustration of the remarkable powers our Lord has. The X-ray machine is widely used today both in industry and medicine. Where the human eye could easily be misled with regard to precious gems such as diamonds, the X-ray is not. To the man who knows how to use it, the X-ray machine discloses whether a stone is a genuine diamond or an imitation.

The eyes of the Lord see far more than any machine ever made by man. **"I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."** The Lord sees the motives back of all the actions. Not only does He know what is done on the outside but He knows the motivating principles on the inside. We do well to listen to Him who speaks to the Church.

Judge

In verse 15 of Revelation 1 we find that the feet of the Son of Man are likened as **"unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace."** Brass speaks of judgment. He, who once was judged for man's sin, now is revealed as the rightful Judge (Philippians 2:5-11).

His countenance is described as the sun shining in his strength. His face reflects the glory of GOD. There will be no question in that day as to His identity.

Nothing can stand before the brightness of His presence: **"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it (this is the Lord JESUS), from whose face the earth and the heaven fled**

away; and there was found no place for them."

When He came the first time, He came in all meekness and lowliness. He was not recognized to be the glorious Son of GOD, and men crucified Him. His face was so marred, Isaiah tells us, that it did not look like the face of a man. But when He comes the second time, He will not have a marred face but a face of glory that will outshine the sun. It will be a face from which the heavens and the earth will flee. They will not be able to stand its brightness. Neither will you nor I be able to stand in His presence unless we are united to Him now. He is One to be respected.

His Word Is Final

We are next told that His voice is like the sound of many waters. Those who have had the experience of listening to the thunder of the water as it pours over Niagara Falls have a slight indication of what this means. But more than sound is included here, for His voice is one of power. We learn from Genesis 1 that GOD spake and it was so. Everything obeys His voice. Men have and even yet, rebel against Him, but that is only for a time. They may even send missiles into the sky and boast that there is no GOD because scientists have not been able to find Him with their instruments. GOD will allow man to reach the end of his resources and will then step in and reveal Himself. He will speak with a voice that sounds like that of many waters, and man will tremble before Him.

When our Lord JESUS walked this earth, He came to the grave of Lazarus and called: "**Lazarus, come forth.**" Someone has wisely said that if our Lord JESUS had not designated who was to come forth the whole graveyard would have come forth.

When He comes again, the dead shall hear His voice and believing saints shall be raised into His presence and living saints shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

Another day will come when the rest of the dead will live, those who have not trusted in CHRIST as Saviour, and they shall stand before His Great White Throne (Revelation 20:12). His Word is final. The law was given that every mouth might be stopped. His Word we are told is forever settled in heaven. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall never pass away.

In this connection we learn that out of His mouth proceeds a two-edged sword. The significance of this is suggested in Isaiah 55:11: "**So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**" GOD's Word not only proceeds from Him but returns to Him having accomplished its purpose.

In speaking to the Pharisees our Saviour said, "Ye have the word, and the words that I have spoken, they will judge you." Words that are words of mercy today will be words of judgment at a future date.

As we have said, His words are final. There will be no earthly court to interpret or misinterpret what He says.

This is the Person who speaks to the Church

We learn that all things are to be put under His feet. This will be a final judgment. When Joshua was in process of subduing Canaan, five kings who had opposed him were brought before him, and he put his foot on their necks. This signified his authority and right of judgment over them. We read of our Lord in I Corinthians 15 that all enemies shall be put under His feet. The One who was judged for our sins on the cross will then stand forth as the rightful Judge of all the earth (Philippians 2:5-11).

He is described as the First and the Last. It was by His word that all things came to have being. It is by His word that all things will be consummated. Men in their foolishness and wickedness are trying desperately to deny that CHRIST is Creator, thereby hoping to escape the final judgment He has told us will fall upon unregenerate men. Their wicked imaginations, however, will never substitute for the facts of GOD; and though men try with all their might, they cannot escape the penalty of their wrongdoing.

He stands as victor over all the earth. He was dead and is alive forevermore. Not even death could hold him. Such power does not belong to men in this world. In spite of the remarkable advances made in medical science in our day, the most men can do is at times to prolong life, but they cannot banish death. All men die, and after death is the judgment.

Having risen from the dead, CHRIST now holds the keys to hell (Hades) and death. He speaks to us as never man spoke. He must be listened to as He speaks to the Church.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
