

1. Introduction

- a. Revelation is a revealing of Jesus to His people—namely seven specific churches who he writes “love” letters to—love letters in a sense because they are spoken directly by Jesus himself (He even states that one church has abandoned its first love Reve. 2:4)
- b. The style of the Book of Revelation is a genre of literature known as “apocalyptic” literature.
 - i. It is meant to give hope to an oppressed people who are struggling.
 - ii. It’s not necessarily the answer and details of the end times. (Even Jesus says he doesn't know this information cf. Mark 13:32).
- c. We will be examining the letters to the seven churches. What kind of church are we? What is church? What church ought we to be? A community centered on Jesus, in love with him

2. Jesus With the Clouds

- a. He has come but he’s coming again. V. 7—his second coming to judge
- b. This is the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies that Jesus would return (cf. Daniel 7 or Zechariah 12 among others)
- c. The doctrine of the second coming to judge is more important than we think.
 - i. It should shape our emotional condition each day.
 - ii. The condition of the human heart is to judge. Others or ourselves.
 - iii. We are keenly aware of weaknesses’ in others but not typically those of our own
 - iv. If we don’t have an eternal perspective of Jesus coming in judgement then we will put ourselves in the position of judge.
 - v. Jesus coming back removes us from the throne of judgement. And we need this eternal perspective
 - vi. C.S. Lewis’ essay *The World’s Last Night* offers this type of eternal perspective
 1. “Any moralist will tell you that the personal triumph of an athlete or of a girl at a ball is transitory: the point is to remember that an empire or a civilization is also transitory. All achievements and triumphs, in so far as they are merely this-worldly achievements and triumphs, will come to nothing in the end. Most scientists here join hands with the theologians; the earth will not always be habitable. Man, though longer-lives than men, is equally mortal. The difference is that whereas the scientists expect only a slow decay from within, we reckon with sudden interruption from without—at any moment. (“What if this present were the world’s last night?”)”
 2. “Precisely because we cannot predict the moment, we must be ready at all times. We must train ourselves to ask more and more often how the thing we are saying or doing or failing to do at each moment will look when the irresistible light streams in upon it. That irresistible light that is so different from the light of this world, that will reveal all things as they truly are. Women sometimes have the problem of judging by artificial electric lights how their clothing and makeup will look by the full light of the sun. That is what we have to do. We have to learn how to dress our souls not for the electric lights of the present world but for the daylight of the next one. The good dress is the one that will face that light, for that light will last forever.”
 - vii. We stop judging ourselves and others in the dim pale light of this reality and instead rely on God’s judgement in the light of eternity
 - viii. Jesus is coming with the clouds of glory—the presence of God is coming back to judge, heal and mend everything so that we don’t have to ourselves.

3. Apostle On the Ground

- a. John is stunned but alive
 - i. John knew the human Jesus and yet he's overwhelmed by this sight.

- ii. It's sensory overload for sure. (V. 16 like the sun shining in full strength)
- iii. You can't stand in front of this Jesus because of his awesome power
 - 1. John shouldn't be able to stand in the presence of Jesus (v. 17) and he was as though dead—but he didn't die and this is significant.
 - 2. It's death to see God's face in the Old Testament (see accounts of Moses and Isaiah in the very presence of God)
 - 3. And here Jesus shines and John isn't killed or blinded—rather, he's touched by Jesus.
 - a. Jesus places the right hand on John—the hand of honor and blessing
 - b. This is incredibly significant because it speaks to the grace Jesus shows John (and us as well)
 - i. Genesis tells us that, at one time, humans could walk with God and handle his face with no consequences
 - ii. But, after sin has entered into the world, we can no longer stand in front of God (cf. Exodus 3:20, Isaiah 6:5)
 - iii. And then here John is back in his presence staring at his face.
 - 4. See? We've been brought back and he touches us with the right hand of honor—not because we deserve it but by grace alone.

4. Lampstands In the Fire

- a. The lampstands are the churches (Rev. 1:20)—they are suffering yet brilliant.
- b. The churches addressed are struggling as communities as they undergo intense persecution at this time John is seeing the revelation
- c. What's interesting is that Jesus stands us is in the middle of the lampstands
 - i. He's right with the churches—among us.
 - ii. This harkens back to Daniel 3:25 when the men of God were thrown into the fiery furnace
 - iii. And someone shows up in the fire with them (like the son of gods)
 - iv. Jesus is walking through the fire—He is in the middle with you in your suffering
 - v. This entirely changes the way we see suffering when we are in the midst of it because we see him going into the “furnaces” of our lives with us and bearing with the pain together
- d. And it's in the furnace, in weakness and trial, that His power is made perfect and his grace is sufficient for us cf. (2. Cor. 12:9)