

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA

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Scripture: Revelation 1:9-20

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ..." (part 4)

REVELATION'S MESSAGE

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we know that Christmas is coming soon. And while some of us still may have shopping to do, cards to send, and preparations for out-of-town visitors, hopefully, we remember that Christmas is really only about One Person – the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else matters really when you think about it. He is why there is a St. Bart's. He is why we are here, today. He is not only why we are here, but He is why we are alive. He is why we have hope. Why we have eternal life. He is why we can truly become like Him. Yes, Christmas is all about Christ and so is Advent. In Advent – which means coming or the arrival of - we are looking forward not only to Christmas but to Christ's Return. So how appropriate it is to look at the book that is the culmination of all that God has revealed from Adam and Eve until the coming of Christ – the book of Revelation. Let's turn there now for the final time before Christmas - Revelation chapter 1.

Recall the title of the book found in the very first verse: ***"The Revelation of Jesus Christ."*** It is not the Revelation of John! In fact, I was visiting a shut-in earlier in the week and asked to see his Bible, and the title of Revelation was the Revelation of St. John! Maybe the Revelation to St. John, but not of! It has nothing to do with John – he simply is the transcriber of the message. This book comes directly from God! Note again the words that follow – ***"that God have Him to show his bond-servants what shortly must take place."***

That this message is primarily focused on Christ becomes crystal clear in verses 5-20! We read that Jesus is **1. *The faithful witness*** (which would highlight His role as Prophet) **2. *He is the firstborn of the dead*** (which would highlight his role as Priest since he presents the sacrifice to God with His own blood! **3. *He is the ruler of the kings of the earth*** (which would highlight His role as King) Jesus is not on the Son of Man and Son of God, but He is our prophet, priest, and king! Moreover, we are told that He loves us – which corresponds to His being a *"faithful witness"* – for how else is love shone except by faithfulness especially unto death. He has released us from our sins by His blood which corresponds to His priesthood and finally He has made us to be ***a kingdom of priests to His God and Father***. The King making us a kingdom to rule and reign! Do you know we will be ruling the angels?

Now last week we looked at the vision that John had of Christ Himself. It was such an awe-inspiring experience that John fell down flat on his face like a dead man. But Jesus touched him with His right hand and told him, ***"Do not be afraid."*** We saw how such words are comforting, reassuring words. Words we need to be reminded of in this life. Jesus says over and over again not to be afraid. Why? We have already been told - because He loves us, He rules over all authority, and He is all-powerful. Moreover, like His Father, as the Alpha and Omega is all knowing, and as the First and the Last, He is outside of time and space and therefore holds our future literally in His hands. It is why Paul declared in **2 Tim. 1:7** that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind!

12Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 13and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man,

What John sees is awe-inspiring, and his description of each detail of Christ’s body conveys timeless truths about His inner reality. The vision is not just for John, however, it is for the entire Church. Note the seven lampstands. Recall seven is the number of completion in the Bible. It is God’s number. And the seven lamp stands bring to mind the Menorah – the seven-lamp (six branches) ancient Hebrew lampstand made of pure gold and used in the portable sanctuary set up by Moses in the wilderness and 300 years later in the Temple in Jerusalem. Fresh olive oil of the purest quality was burned daily to light its lamps. The menorah has been a symbol of Judaism since ancient times and is the emblem on the coat of arms of the modern state of Israel. Now, however, they represent more than just the Jews as the people of God but they represent the entire Church – the Body of Christ. For “*the seven golden lampstands*” are identified later in verse 20 as the seven churches. It represented Israel as a light to the nations. In **Mt. 5:14**, Jesus said that we are the “*light of the world.*” The only way we can truly be His light is if we are letting His light shine through us! Hence, Jesus, the Son of Man, is in the middle of the lampstands. He is the head of the Church. He is the Lord of His people.

For then we hear we hear the words “***I saw one like a son of man.***” John is echoing the prophecy given to Daniel the prophet 600 years earlier. Let’s turn there for a moment – **Daniel 7:1-14:**

John is in the Spirit of God and hears a loud voice behind him. He turns around and then sees His Lord who is identified as “***one like a son of man.***” This is the same way the prophet Daniel referred to the Lord in the vision given to him in **Daniel 7:13-14:**

***And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.***

***14“And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.***

It is why Jesus took the title “Son of Man.” Jesus is fully man as the Son of Man and fully God as the Son of God. John continues to describe what He saw.

“***clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.***” As noted in our last study, we are again brought back to the prophecy of **Daniel 7:13-14**. Jesus is the fulfillment of

that prophecy! He is “*clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.*” Such imagery reminds us of the robes that were worn by the priests of the Old Covenant (**Ex. 28:4**). Their vestments reflected the authority God had given them as His priests to His people. Jesus is our High Priest (cf. Heb. 5 & 7) and has divine authority to minister in the Father’s name. His head and hair are like white wool, thereby indicating divine wisdom (cf. **Prov.16:31, 20:29; Col. 2:3**). In the ancient world, such white hair commanded respect and reflected wisdom. This imagery also parallels **Daniel 7:9** where we see a similar vision of the Ancient of Days (the Father). Christ’s eyes were like a “*flame of fire*” or as some translate it, a “*blazing fire.*” (c.f. **Dan. 10:6**) Such imagery reflects fierce judgment and penetrating scrutiny.

The golden sash is what the high priest would wear to distinguish his office. Jesus is not just our priest. He is our high priest. He is what Hebrews already declared in **Heb. 7:26-27**: “*For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*”

THE SEVENFOLD GLORY OF CHRIST

Now we have the sevenfold description of the glory of Christ, First, in verse 14 we read that , “*His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow;*” Look again at **Daniel 7**, this time verses 9-10 for comparison:

“I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire.”

Here again, Jesus as the Son of God is identified with God the Father – the Ancient of Days. Like the vision Daniel saw of the Father, Christ has white hair – why? Because He is old? Now, to show that Christ is the embodiment of wisdom. Remember **Proverbs 9:10** – “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*” Just as all knowledge is in and from Christ, so to the right application of knowledge – wisdom – comes from Christ. It is why the Scriptures teach that the fool is the one who is wise in his own eyes (**Proverbs 12:15**)

Second, “*and His eyes were like a flame of fire.*” Christ, the all-knowing one, knows our thoughts and our hearts. His gaze penetrates to our very soul.

Third, “*His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace,*” This reflects that Christ, when He returns, will judge the wicked and destroy them. The bronze feet are alluded to again in **Rev. 19:15** where Christ is trampling down His enemies. We also find similar descriptions in **Ez. 1:13, 27; 8:2**; and **Dan. 10:6** of bronze feet that reflect the glory of God. And we find these words again in **Rev. 2:18** which would add a further dimension – one of triumphal judgment – the trampling down of false teachers and unbelievers.

Fourth, **“His voice was like the sound of many waters.”** These words echo the majesty and awesome power of God. We find a similar description in **Ez. 1:24; 43:32** and in **Ps. 93:3-4**. Anyone who has ever been to Niagara Falls can appreciate this aspect of John’s vision. The Lord is an all-powerful and majestic force that drowns out anything else in Creation. This imagery is again found in **Rev. 14:2** and **19:6**.

Fifth, **“In His right hand He held seven stars.”** In the ancient world the right hand was a symbol of authority and power. The seven stars are later identified in verse 20 as “angels.” In the Old Testament (**Job 38:7**) and New Testament (**Rev. 9:1**) “stars” are used as a metaphor for angels. We will see the importance of these seven angels in verse 20. The fact that the angels are in Christ’s right hand demonstrates that He is not only greater than the angels but that they are under His authority and also are a means of His power!

Sixth, **“out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword”** – a reference to the Word of God (c.f. **Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17**) which highlights the power of Christ to transform evil hearts as well as to judge them – the sword cuts both ways! Unlike human swords, symbols of oppression and war, which are wielded by the hand and arm, Christ’s sword comes from His mouth. It embodies who He is as the living Word. He conquers the falsehood of the Nicolaitans at Pergamos in **Rev. 2:12, 16**; He strikes down the rebellious at His coming in **Rev. 19:15, 21**; and the faithful who follow Him do so through the power of His Word (**Rev. 19:8, 14**)

Seventh, **“His face was like the sun shining in its strength.”** There is no greater power, energy source, or light in our solar system than the sun. So too, Jesus’ face is like the sun. It reflects the divine radiance, power, and glory of Christ as the Son of God. C.S. Lewis wrote, *“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”* One could certainly interpose “Christianity” with Christ. Just as by the sun we can see and understand and live in our natural world, so by Christ we can see and understand the purpose and meaning of life and live life the way it should be lived – in His Spirit!

So we have been given a glimpse into the glory of the incorruptible Christ! He is why all creation has hope. He is why Christmas is only the beginning. We look forward to His Return not just in this Advent season but every day! It is why we look to Him, we listen to Him, we learn from him, we long for Him and always shall love Him! In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!