

THE CHRIST OF TODAY: Revelation 1:4-20

In the 9th chapter of John, Jesus heals a man. This man had problems with the authorities. In verse 35, Jesus heard that the synagogue had put him out, "And finding him, He said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered and said, 'Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in Him?'" The book of Revelation answers the questions: Who is this Son of Man, who is Christ?

We experienced the Christmas season a few months ago. The focus was entirely on Jesus as a baby. In this series, we want to move on to the man Jesus is today. Who is Christ today? Our churches seem to be very confused on this fundamental question.

Most of our concepts have been molded by medieval thought, and especially by medieval artists who have pictured Jesus as an effeminate weakling, with long hair and a beard. Back when the Jesus Movement came out of the hippie movement, many of the men let their hair and beard grow because they said this is what Jesus did. The concept of Jesus has been distorted. John tells us in the book of Revelation what Jesus is like and who He is. In highly symbolic language, John sees Him and tells us what he sees.

We will begin reading Revelation, chapter 1, verses 5-12, where John tells us that this letter and what he writes is from Jesus Christ. Verse 5, "From Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the Earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him *be* the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, and even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the Earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen."

Verse 10, John said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet." That voice told him to write what he was about to see and send it to the seven churches. John turned to see who was speaking with him, verse 12 "I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me." That is the sequence in the book of Revelation. First there is the voice, then John sees. He first hears, then he sees.

When John turned to see the voice, verse 12, "I saw seven golden lampstands;" or candlesticks, "and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to His feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet *were* like burnished bronze when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters. And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength." Verse 17, "And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one; I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys to death and Hades.'" King James says "death and Hell." There are two words in the King James version that are translated Hell. One of them means the

lake of fire, the final Gehenna of fire. The other that is translated Hell, as is the case using the word Hades. Hades is the word “sheol” and means the grave. The King James never made any distinction between the two. There is the eternal Hell of fire that Jesus talks about, and there is the Hades or the grave. In verse 17, Jesus says, “I have the keys to death and the grave.”

In Revelation, John is not talking about the babe of Bethlehem, a barefooted carpenter, or an effeminate figure depicted by medieval artists. He is talking about the One who stands so tall that He holds seven stars in His right hand. They tell us our sun is a star. John sees Jesus holding seven stars in His right hand.

John makes a series of summary statements about Jesus in verse 5. The first summary statement is, “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness.” In I Timothy 6, Paul testifies of the faithfulness of Christ in verse 13, “I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who testified,” a better translation is witnessed, “Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate.” John 18, tells us Jesus witnessed before Pilate, verse 36, “Jesus answered ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’” Jesus’ kingdom is a reality. It is not a physical kingdom on earth nor is it visible to the world. It exists in the realm of the spiritual. For some reason, this creates challenges to some Christians that we will highlight later.

Now, when Jesus told Pilate He had a kingdom “My kingdom,” Pilate logically asked Jesus, verse 37, “So you are a king? Jesus answered, ‘You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth (that the Kingdom of God has come). Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’”

In Matthew, chapter 26, a similar incident occurred when the Jews seized Jesus and led Him to the high priest, elders, and the Jewish Council where they tried to obtain false testimony against Jesus in order that they might put Him to death. Not having any success, verse 63, the high priest said to Jesus, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus responds to the high priest different than He did to Pilate, verse 64, “Jesus said to him (the high priest), ‘You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the SON THE MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.’” Jesus quoted from Daniel, chapter 7, verses 9-10 and 13-14, telling the high priest that He is the fulfillment of Daniel’s vision seeing the Son of Man ascending and sitting at the right hand, coming in the clouds of heaven.

The high priest correctly understood Jesus had just told the high priest that Jesus was the Son of Man whom Daniel spoke about in Daniel, chapter 10. Having spoken the truth, Jesus is the faithful witness. He witnessed to the fact that He was the Messiah, He was the King, He had a kingdom, and He was the Son of Man spoken of in the book of Daniel.

John’s second summary description is: Jesus is “the first-born of the dead.” Jesus was the first

man to ever live upon the face of the Earth, die, and come back to life never die again. He is the firstborn from the dead. He is the only man who has ever lived that died and came back to tell about it. The ones from the Old Testament, for example, that did not appear to have died, scripture later says, "They all died." Jesus died and came back to life to never die again. People were resurrected, people who died and had been brought back, but Jesus was the only man who was brought back never die again. He conquered death.

In Romans, chapter 8, Paul speaks of this and applies it to us. Verse 29, "For whom He foreknew, He predestined to *become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Jesus was the firstborn. There are going to be others. Jesus was the first one, to die and to come back, and never die again, but there are going to be others.

John's third summary description, Jesus is, "the ruler (present tense) of the kings of the earth." Now please get that. All of the nations of this earth have been granted to Him as an inheritance. The kings of the Earth are under God's court order to submit to His rule. God has ordered the nations of the world, the kings, the rulers, the world in its entirety to submit to Him. Few rulers have ever understood that or even heard it. But God said Jesus is "the ruler of the kings of the earth" and it will happen. Do not allow prophesy preachers and others to tell you Jesus will only begin to rule the kings of the earth when He returns at His Second Coming. That position is contrary to all scripture that talks about Jesus.

The book of Psalms, chapter 2, verse 8, "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the Earth as your possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthen ware." The might and the power that destroyed the Roman Empire, the mightiest war machine on the face of the Earth in Jesus' day, was broken with Jesus' rod of iron after He ascended to the right hand of the Father. Jesus did that. It was not America and its Allies who conquered Nazi Germany bringing an end to Hitler's reign. Jesus shattered Nazism like earthen ware. Jesus broke them with a rod of iron and shattered them.

Psalms, chapter 2, verse 10, "Now therefore, O kings, show (present tense) discernment; take warning, O judges of the Earth. Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" Government officials are tasked to bow before the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. Any nation that does not honor Him as Lord and King will inevitably come to an end. It does not matter what nation it is, including America. What applies to all the nations, applies to America as well.

Psalms 110, verse 1, is an interesting; it is the 5th most quoted old testament verse in the New Testament, "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies the footstool for Thy feet.'" Verse 2, "The Lord will stretch forth Thy strong scepter from Zion, saying, 'Rule in the midst thine enemies.'" Zion is a prophetic and symbolic word. Without going into great detail now (we will later), it refers to the people of God, and more specifically, to the church in the New Testament."

The reason the enemies of Christ do not recognize His ruling power is that He is ruling in the midst of His enemies. They do not know Christ is ruling because they do not see it. They have to see it before they believe it. Christ has been ruling in the very midst of all of the powers upon the earth and in the midst of everything they are doing since His ascension. And most Christians today do not know it either (and for the same reason). Our modern belief sequence is: we must see it, then we will believe it (just like the world). We were never taught the truth from Psalm 27:13 that we must first believe God and what He says in His word, then we will see it.

Psalm 110, verse 5, "The Lord is at Thy right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country." This is speaking of Christ, not God. This was precisely the reason Rome persecuted the early church . . . not because the Christians recognized Jesus as their Lord and King, but because the early believers rightly proclaimed Christ as the one and only true Lord ruling (present tense) over all other gods and the kings of the earth. Rome worshipped many gods. Everyone had a lord. When the early church refused to comply with Rome's edict to place no other gods or kings above Caesar, Rome persecuted the church. The church proclaimed Jesus in His true position as ruler (present tense) over everything in this world, knowing they would suffer greatly for it.

The early church refused to take the easy way that is currently used by many of our modern churches who proclaim Jesus is Lord only in a spiritual sense for now, because His actual Kingdom will not be established until His Second Coming far into even our future. The early church rejected this nonsense. Too many modern believers reject God's word saying, for now Jesus is only Lord of the Heart and is concerned with only spiritual things in heaven. Jesus is not ruling over earthly events like wars, disease, pestilence, famine, natural disasters, etc. Our God, who created the heavens and earth, is in control of all earthly matters until Jesus Returns . . . then God will establish Jesus' millennial reign. We will discuss this falsehood in detail later in this series on Revelation.

Much of our doctrine today has made Christianity toothless and impotent producing a gold mine for Satan. Too much of our doctrine keeps men's attention focused on the clouds. As long as the church is looking upward toward heaven focused on the clouds, the State can pick our pockets and steal our children's hearts and minds. We have been so busy holding church services, Government has taken over the minds of our children right from under our noses. Far too many in Christ's body, the church, have rejected God's word regarding Jesus' present position and authority allowing our doctrine to deny who Jesus is today. That is sad.

John says not only is Jesus the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the Earth, but "To Him who loves us, and released (loosed or washed) us from our sins by His blood." The King James says, "Washed us from our sins in His own blood." The Greek words loose and wash have just one letter different between the two words. Sometimes this is translated washed or loosed. It's the same thing. But Jesus is not alone in this. As the faithful witness, He has revealed to us the truth about the love that God has for us. God loves us also.

As the firstborn from the dead, He has released us from our sins. It is only by conquering death that Jesus is able to conquer sin. When He conquered death, He released us from our sins.

Revelation, chapter 1, verse 6, "and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him *be* the glory and the dominion, forever and ever. Amen." As the ruler of the kings of the earth, He has made us to be a kingdom of priests to His God and Father. That is what the church is, a kingdom of priests. What Israel failed to become; Jesus accomplished in us.

Early in God's dealing with Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, just before God gave them the Ten Commandments, God said to Israel, Exodus, chapter 19, verse 6, "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." God wanted Israel to be a kingdom of priests, not just one tribe. He wanted the whole nation to be a kingdom of priests to Him. Israel failed repeatedly and never became a kingdom of priests to God. In Matthew 21:43, Jesus came along and said to the Jewish rulers, "Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation bearing the fruit of it."

What nation did Jesus give it to? I Peter, chapter 2, verse 9, identifies it as us, His church, "But you are a CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD'S OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." In verse 5, Peter said, "You also . . . are a spiritual house, a holy priesthood." The nation to which Christ gave the kingdom is the church. We are that holy nation because He has made us to be a kingdom of priests. Here again, far too many Christians do not know they are priests to God because they have not been taught from scripture that they are priests, they have never heard it, and based on the way they feel, they do not see it. First we must have faith in what God says and believe it, then we will see it.

Revelation, chapter 1, verse 7, "BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him." Ordinarily, we think of that in terms of His Second Coming. Whenever clouds are mentioned in scripture, our first thoughts are the physical, material clouds indicating God's presence or when Jesus Returns at His Second Coming. We do not dispute the truth of that. In other scriptures, however, clouds are used symbolically to indicate judgement is coming

For example, Isaiah 19:1, Isaiah is speaking a message to Egypt, "The oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, the Lord is riding on a swift cloud, and is about to come to Egypt." That did not mean the Lord was physically going to ride a cloud into Egypt. It meant the Lord was coming to bring judgment upon Egypt. He is going to come in a cloud to Egypt. Verse 2, "The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them. So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians; and they each will fight against his brother, and each against his neighbor, city against city, *and* kingdom against kingdom." When He comes in judgment upon Egypt, He is coming in symbolic form riding on a swift cloud.

The 18th Psalm gives a description of God delivering David from the hand of his enemy, Saul I suppose. When David recounts the event of how God came in judgment against his enemy, verse 7, "The earth shook and quaked; and the foundations of the mountains were trembling and they were shaken, because He was angry. Smoke went up out of His nostrils, and fire from His mouth; coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down with thick darkness under His feet. And He rode upon the cherub and flew; and He sped upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him. Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds, hailstones and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered His voice, hailstones and coals of fire. He sent His arrows, and scattered them, and lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them. Then the channels of water appeared, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at Thy rebuke."

If you read that and take it literally, you would think the Lord was shaking up the heavens and the Earth with some sort of catastrophe. But, that is not it, verse 17, "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me." David is talking about God's judgment against his enemies and delivering David.

Next, let's look at a highly misunderstood New Testament example. Matthew, chapter 24, verse 30, "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory."

Isaiah said He is "riding a swift cloud" to judge Egypt. David included everything he could imagine when God judged him and avenged him on his adversaries. What cloud is Jesus talking about in Matthew 24:30? To understand this cloud, we have to return to its source, Daniel 7:13, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like the Son of Man was coming." If we stopped right there (as many do), we would think Daniel is talking about Jesus' Second Coming "one like the Son of Man was coming."

But note, Daniel tells us Jesus did not come down to the earth (Second Coming), "He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him (Christ's Ascension). And to Him was given (past tense) 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." When Daniel saw Him coming in a cloud, Jesus was not coming back to the earth, He was ascending from the earth to the Ancient of Days where He received dominion, glory, and a kingdom.

Now with that in mind, let's complete the picture. Go back briefly to Matthew, chapter 26, and notice what Jesus said to the high priest, verse 64, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." Jesus is quoting Daniel 7:13.

Jesus told the high priest the high priest is going to see that. How is the high priest of Israel, to whom Jesus is having a face-to-face conversation, going to see that if this event is to take place thousands of years later, at the Second Coming? According to Daniel, the high priest will see it at Christ's ascension, when Jesus receives dominion, glory, and kingdom, begins His Rule, begins judging nations with a rod of iron, and all the peoples of the earth mourn over Him.

You see, in Revelation, chapter 1, verse 7, John does not have in mind the end of time (Second Coming), John has in mind the beginning of times when Christ began to rule and reign over everything in the heavens and on the earth. The picture John saw of Jesus coming on the clouds of heaven was His Ascension when Jesus He came up to the Ancient of Days. I wish we could understand how much emphasis God has placed on Christ's ascension. It was at the ascension that God gave Christ the reigns to the world and all of its governments. It was when God gave Christ total control of the universe as the Son of Man.

Why can't believers see all of what God accomplished for us in Jesus at His ascension? I think it is because we are the type (just like the world) who must first see it, then we believe it. If we maintain this worldly belief sequence until we die, when will we see it? Probably at the Second Coming? Is that a problem? Probably. For believers to earn eternal rewards stored up in heaven, I think the proper sequence is: we must first have had faith in God's word and have believed what God says about us in scripture is true; then we will see and understand the scriptures' descriptions of all that God has accomplished for us in Christ "in the land of the living" (Psalm 23:13). After that then, we begin to walk and live in the true knowledge of God, serving God as He intended resulting in our earning eternal rewards stored up in heaven.

Fast-Forward to the Second Coming and consider, if you can, the eternal impacts of not having had faith in God's word to believe all He told us about who we are in Christ, and all He has already made available to us in Christ [access to live our lives in heaven now (don't wait to enjoy heaven until Jesus Returns, our time to enjoy heaven is by faith now while we live on this unredeemed earth, after Jesus Returns we'll all be back here on our redeemed earth judging the world, judging angels, and everything Jesus has us doing for our High Priest forever), to actually live our entire lives in the presence of God before His Throne in heaven, and to enjoy now all of the richest resources found only in heaven. We may have secured our goal of salvation, but what might our time in eternity look like?

If we failed during our mortal lifetime to enter into all of this, we undoubtedly failed to serve God as He intended for us to serve Him. His intended eternal rewards for our faithful and steadfast belief in His great love toward us who believe in Him are at risk of never being earned because we allowed our disbelieving preachers, elders, teachers, etc. to wrongfully tell us to indirectly reject God's word by pushing all that God has given to us and made available to us over-yonder, instead of receiving and applying it all by faith throughout our entire lives.

Can you see the difference in how poorly we will serve God when we do not know how much He truly loves by not knowing what He has truly done for us? Salvation and releasing us from

our sins are a small percentage (I am guessing less than 5%) of our spiritual life in Christ compared to all of the new things that our salvation and release from our sins has given us access to in Christ (to heaven itself now, to God, to the Throne of God, to the richest resources in this universe found only in heaven), including all of the derivatives from each of these new things. No wonder the New Testament repeatedly tells us, “Behold, new things have come.” (II Cor 5:17, Rev 21:5, Eph 2:5-6, 10, and 15).

Our rejection of His word by not believing the exceedingly, abundantly beyond anything we could ask or think level of God’s love will cause us to miss out on unfathomable rewards. If all we want from God and Jesus is salvation, and if we reject everything else that He has done for us, we will also miss out on the abundant life He has prepared for each of us now. How can we say that? At the Second Coming, we will “see” it all. That is exactly why we will not be able to earn any eternal rewards after Jesus Returns . . . all scriptural truths will be there for us to clearly see in plain sight, no faith required. Without faith it is impossible to please God!! Eternal rewards are only earned by faith!! The faith God and Jesus are talking about is the faith we have while we are in the land of the living.

Modern day church leaders (pastors, preachers, elders, Sunday school teachers, and parents) may have special responsibilities in all of these failures of faith because each produces an eternally significant outcome (i.e., You knew faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ . . . Why didn’t you tell them?). Believe God and His word. You believed Him enough to believe in Jesus for salvation. Go back and pay closer attention to the present and past tense language He uses when talking about us, His Church, His Body, His House, His City, the holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God . . . it is all the same; He is talking about us, His church!! Do not allow present and past tense items to be pushed over-yonder before we see it, receive it, apply it our life, live life abundantly (the way God intended), earn eternal rewards stored up in heaven, and most important, serve God the way He intended us to serve Him.

Reject the lies of Satan (whom Jesus called, “the Father of lies”) that we may wrongfully hear from any unbeliever, including leaders in our church, denomination, or national organization. Serve God by faith, not sight.

Now, these are just John’s preliminary thoughts on Jesus. How does John really see Jesus? John begins in chapter 1, describing the Jesus he sees in verses 10-15. He does not see the whimpering cry of a baby in Bethlehem, a meek and lowly man walking the hills of Palestine, or the cry of a suffering man on a cross when He cries out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” All of that is in past. Whenever John hears Jesus speak, His voice is the sound of a trumpet and the sound of many waters. It is like the blast of a trumpet. Spiritually, that is significant.

In scripture, there are seven things that happen when a trumpet blows. We will look at five that pertain to the message of Jesus in Revelation:

Isaiah 27:13, the trumpet summons the people of God to worship. Before the people of God came to worship in their assemblies, they sounded the trumpet.

Numbers 10:9, they sounded the trumpet to call the people to war, get ready for battle.

Zechariah 9:14, whenever they won a victory, they sounded the trumpet. The trumpet sounded when victories were won.

Numbers 10:10-11, before they offered sacrifices, they blew the trumpet.

Leviticus 25:10, he is describing the year of jubilee. The year of jubilee meant release of all the slaves, release from all your debts, and release from obligations connected to your property. It was a jubilee, a time of release. When the year of Jubilee begins, it is started with the blowing of trumpets.

These five trumpets call people to worship, to war, to victory, to sacrifice, and to jubilee. As a Jew, John would have been accustomed to the blowing of trumpets. Could he have had these things in mind when he heard behind him a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet. Did John connect that the one like the son of man was Jesus? When did John understand:

Jesus is the One who calls us to worship Him as Lord of Lords and King of Kings?

Jesus is the One who calls us to war, to fight the battle, to put on the whole armor of God, and to go forth to war?

Jesus is the One who calls us to victory whenever we fight these wars, we are to be victorious in it, Jesus gives us victory, Jesus blows the trumpet and calls us to victory?

Jesus is the One who orders us to give our bodies as a living sacrifice; in all of our circumstances in life, Jesus says it is going to take a sacrifice, Jesus blows the trumpet?

Jesus is the One who sounds the trumpet providing the jubilee in our lives?

When we worship Jesus as the Lord of Lords, when we fight the battles, when we have the victory, when we make the sacrifices, we enjoy the jubilee, release from our debts, release from our sins, release from being slaves to whatever it was we were enslaved to.

If we listen to His voice, as it sounds like the voice of a trumpet; if we hear Him as He calls us to worship, to war, to victory, to sacrifice, to jubilee; if we fought the good fight, finished the race, were faithful to the end . . . then, we will be ready to hear His voice as the last trumpet sounds when Jesus Comes on the clouds of the sky on that day, whenever that day is, when the dead in Christ shall rise imperishable.

John actually takes a look at Him, beginning in verse 13, and tells us who Christ is. Christ is the most powerful monarch in the universe. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the ruler (present tense) the kings of the Earth. He is our Lord, and He is our Savior (same present tense; we believe this, why can't we believe everything else He says about us using present or past tense language?). He makes us a part of what He is doing. We are His kingdom. He does nothing for Himself or by Himself. He is doing everything for us, and with us, and through us. The King of the universe, the one who rules the nations with a rod of iron is our Lord. He is with us. He has given us the Most Exceedingly Abundantly Beyond anything we could ask or think gift package this universe has ever heard or seen. He is not a baby anymore. He is not even a man as He was in Palestine. He is King, Savior, and Lord.