

An Encounter with Jesus Christ

NKJV Notes by Pastor Mike Sasso

Introduction

Today's text gives us great insight to the person and character of Jesus Christ. If you have ever questioned the doctrine of the deity of Christ, today's passage will be of great help to you. It's important to keep in mind that the allegorical language in this book uses types and symbols to help us better understand the character of Christ. For instance, when we see the Lord at His return we may not see Jesus with a literal sword coming out of His mouth (1:16). But the symbolism is clear that He speaks the Word of God which is like a two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12).

Verses nine through 20 contain one complete account of John's apocalyptic description of Jesus Christ. It is very difficult to find an appropriate place to split this text into separate studies. There is so much to examine in this text concerning the person of Jesus Christ that we will take our time and make three studies out of it. How shall we divide it up? Get as far as you can each week in these study notes, and pace yourself to cover this material in the next three weeks. Let's do our best to keep all our home groups together.

Before beginning today's study notes have your group read the entire first chapter of the book of Revelation out loud.

STUDY NOTES: verses 9-20

v. 9 I, John, Both Your Brother and Companion in the Tribulation and Kingdom and Patience of Jesus Christ - Once more the Apostle John uses humble terms to describe himself. He identifies with his readers in two important ways.

- 1.) He lays aside his lofty title of apostle and calls himself our **brother**. As was always John's way, he focuses on the brotherhood of all believers and the relationship of love in the family of God.
- 2.) Not only does John identify with his readers as a brother, but also says he is their **companion**. A companion is one who walks alongside you as a friend, sharing equally with you the experiences of life.

John declares that he is their companion in three ways...

- a. A companion in **tribulation**: It is quite interesting to note that the apostle whom Jesus loved (John 13:23) was not exempt from suffering. Being loved by God does not guarantee an easy life. As a matter of fact, the scriptures tell us that those whom the Lord loves He chastens (Heb 12:6). Trials and tribulations are sometimes the only way God can reproduce the deep character of Christ in us (Rom. 5:3). Tribulation also comes from persecution of the wicked. The scriptures have much to say about tribulation and the Christian (Rom. 8:35; 2 Cor. 1:4, 7:4; 1 Thess. 1:6).

As a matter of fact, the followers of Christ are clearly promised tribulation in this world (1 Thess. 3:4; Matt. 24:9; John 16:33).

b. A companion in the **kingdom**: in spite of the great variety of Christians around the world and throughout all times, we are all a part of one kingdom. Regardless of our culture, class, sex, age, or IQ, we are all partners in the Kingdom of God.

c. A companion in **patience of Jesus Christ**: All those who belong to Jesus share in the patience of waiting for His return and the setting of all things right. This is the blessed hope of every believer (Titus 2:13).

Was on the Island that is Called Patmos – The island of Patmos in John’s day was a notorious prison island much harsher than Alcatraz. Since the island was rich in marble, it was used as a slave labor camp for the prisoners. It was ten miles long, six miles wide, and 37 miles from the mainland where the seven churches he was writing to were located in Asia Minor. It needed no walls to contain its prisoners.

For the Word of God and for the Testimony of Jesus Christ – Some believe that John went to this prison island as a missionary to minister to the prisoners. But church tradition says John was banished to this island by the emperor Domitian (81 AD to 96 AD) as punishment for preaching the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As Church tradition goes, the emperor first tried to kill John by boiling him in oil. But the boiling vat of oil reportedly had no effect upon the apostle, so he was instead banished to the island of Patmos.

Review Truth Application...

1.) What does today’s text reveal about the Apostle John? Review the three ways the Apostle John related to his readers (v. 9).

v. 10 I Was in the Spirit – Because of what follows, this term obviously means much more than merely “walking according to the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16). It seems John was transported into a spiritual realm where he could see into the future and see things un-seeable by an eye of flesh. Compare this idea with Revelation 4:2 and 21:10.

On the Lord’s Day - This is the only place in all of scripture where this phrase is used. The majority of commentators take this to mean Sunday because later in church history this phrase was commonly used to describe Sunday. I personally lean toward the thought that John, by the Spirit of God, was transported to “The Day of the Lord” (1 Thess. 5:2 and 2 Pet. 3:10).

And I Heard Behind Me a Loud Voice, as of a Trumpet - John did not hear a trumpet, but rather a loud voice “as” a trumpet. A trumpet was the standard instrument used to get the attention of God’s people. Even though this was happening behind John, there was no way he was going to miss this voice. This is the voice of Jesus Christ. This is also the same wording used to describe the voice heard by Moses at the mountain of God in Exodus 19:16-19. Compare this also with 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

v. 11 Saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last” – Here we find strong evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ. This is the same language used by Jehovah God as He identifies Himself in Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, and 48:12, and Jesus Christ clearly identifies Himself with this same title in Revelation 1:17b-18.

And, What You See, Write in a Book – In the book of Revelation 11 times John is commanded to write. And once he is even told not to write what He sees (10:4). It seems clear that there were definitely things God wanted recorded and passed along to the churches.

And Send it to the Seven Churches Which are in Asia - We know that there were many more than seven churches in Asia. Some commentators suppose that Jesus chose churches strategically located in one giant circle encompassing Asia Minor. This circle is said to be the standard postal route of John’s day. Others believe these particular churches were chosen because they represent the problems and solutions of all Christians everywhere and of every time. It is possible that both are equally true.

To Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea” – These were seven literal churches located in Asia Minor in John’s day. It might be helpful to view a map of the locations of these churches. It is interesting to note that Paul also wrote to seven churches: Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, and Thessalonica.

v. 12 Then I Turned to See the Voice that Spoke With Me – It is quite interesting that John, though “in the Spirit,” began his vision facing the opposite direction from where Jesus was actually standing. The loud trumpet call of God got his attention and turned him around and now he looks to see the One who called him. How true it is that at times even the best Christian finds himself in a place where he must turn around and face the other direction. Never assume you are facing the right way even if you are fairly confident that the Spirit of God has been leading you. Always be open and ready to turn at the sound of the Lord’s voice.

And Having Turned I Saw Seven Golden Lampstands - This is distinct from the seven branched menorah used in the Tabernacle and Temple. The menorah was all one piece. What John sees here is clearly seven separate lampstands. Each lampstand represents one of the seven churches (1:20). This vision speaks of the special relationship Jesus has with each church and not just each individual Christian. Just as the High Priest in the Old Covenant was responsible to inspect and trim the golden lampstand, so Jesus, our High Priest, is seen inspecting and tending the lampstands which symbolize the seven churches. This also says something of the importance of the institution of the church in contrast to those who believe they don’t need to belong to a church. The lampstands are great symbols of the churches because they can give no light of themselves. The lampstands merely hold up the lamps to make the light more visible. And so it is with Christ’s church.

“No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light” (Luke 11:33).

v. 13 And in the Midst of the Seven Lampstands One Like the Son of Man - Jesus identified Himself as the Son of Man more than 80 times in the Gospels. Some incorrectly suppose that

Jesus is describing Himself in a humble way. This title is not merely referring to a son of humanity, but a divine being according to Daniel 7:13-14. The One like the Son of Man described in the book of Daniel sounds an awful lot like the eternal King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13, 14).

It is also very interesting to compare Daniel’s vision in Daniel 10:5-6 to John’s vision in Revelation 1:13b-16.

“I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude” (Dan. 10:5-6).

Daniel obviously had a vision of the pre-incarnate Christ.

Clothed with a Garment Down to the Feet and Girded About the Chest with a Golden Band – One who wears a garment down to the feet is not dressed for work but rather for formal dress. A long flowing robe speaks of greatness. This is a picture of a person with great dignity and authority. The description here resembles the High Priest’s garment of the Old Covenant. According to Exodus 39:1-5 the High Priest’s garment had a few gold strands woven into it. But in John’s vision we see Jesus’ breastplate is all gold! This is a picture of the ultimate breastplate of righteousness. How much higher in majesty, honor, and righteousness is Jesus than the High Priest of the Old Covenant!

v. 14 His Head and Hair were White Like Wool, as White as Snow - White hair is a symbol of age and wisdom. This speaks of His eternity, duration, and absolute holiness. Like the white wigs worn by British judges, whiteness symbolizes the purity of judgment.

Compare this vision to Daniel’s description of the “Ancient of Days” in Daniel 7:9-14.

“I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire” (Dan. 7:9).

And His Eyes Like a Flame of Fire - Fire in the scriptures is often a picture of purification and judgment (2 Pet. 3:7). Have you ever looked into somebody’s eyes and felt like they could see right through you? When Jesus looks at a person there is nothing hidden from His sight. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that someday all things will be tried by fire (1 Cor. 3:13). Fire can give light. Fire can purge and purify. But fire can also destroy.

v. 15 His Feet were Like Fine Brass, as if Refined in a Furnace - Brass is the symbol of judgment and sacrifice. The altar of sacrifice in the tabernacle was made of brass (Ex. 27:1-6). Brass was also the strongest metal known in the ancient world. Therefore brass would also be a picture of stability, strength, and permanence. Having feet of brass would therefore represent unwavering and irresistible judgment.

And His Voice as the Sound of Many Waters - Of all the sounds of nature, this is one of the most overpowering and deafening sounds (such as the sound of a great waterfall). This again was the figure used to describe the very voice of God in Ezekiel 43:2. This is more evidence for the case of the deity of Christ.

v. 16 He Had in His Right Hand Seven Stars - The right hand is the hand of lordship, power, and authority. We are told (v. 20) that the seven stars are seven angels of the seven churches. Since the word angel means messenger in the original Greek, there is some debate whether these angels are guardian angels or the pastors of the seven churches. Either way, those who walk in God's wisdom and those who turn people to righteousness are considered "stars" in God's eyes.

"Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

In this dark world in which we live, the servants of righteousness stand out as stars against the black backdrop of a sinful world. Isn't it an interesting contrast to compare God's definition of a star to man's definition of a star?

Out of His Mouth Went a Sharp Two-Edged Sword - This is an obvious allusion to the Word of God (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). Everything that comes out of Jesus' mouth is the Word of God.

And His Countenance was Like the Sun Shining in its Strength - There is a great contrast between the dim light of a distant star and the blinding light of our sun. When the sun rises, it so overpowers the light of those stars that they disappear in the background. The same is true when you compare the brilliance of Christ to the much lesser light of His saints.

This is also the same phraseology used to describe the face of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:2).

"And He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matt. 17:2).

Keep in mind that this is the most detailed description we have of Jesus in all of scripture. This is quite a different picture than the brief picture given by Isaiah when he described the crucified Jesus in Isaiah 52:14. When you put this whole apocalyptic picture together, it is no wonder that John fell at Jesus' feet as dead in the next verse.

v. 17 And When I Saw Him, I Fell at His Feet as Dead. But He Laid His Right Hand on Me, Saying to Me, "Do Not be Afraid; I am the First and the Last – What a wonderful thing it is that with the very hand with which Jesus holds the seven stars - that hand of power,

lordship, and authority - He reaches out to comfort John. Notice the three words of comfort Jesus gives John, the three reasons to “not be afraid.” The first reason is that Jesus is the First and the Last. Jesus is the eternal God who offers John his right hand. In the Old Testament this phrase was only used to describe the eternal God (Is. 41:4, 44:6, 48:12).

This also implies that His period of influence is powerful and permanent (Cp. Heb. 13:8).

The next two reasons for John not to be afraid are in verse 18.

v. 18 “I am He who Lives, and Was Dead, and Behold, I am Alive Forevermore. Amen -

Here is the second reason Jesus gives John to “not be afraid”: Jesus is the resurrected Lord. And because of His death and resurrection, He now lives forever and is able to save and make intercession for the saints (Heb. 7:25).

And I have the Keys of Hades and of Death – Here now is the third reason Jesus gives to John to “not be afraid”: Jesus Christ alone holds the power of life or death, heaven, or hell. He alone determines the destiny of every human being. Since He holds the keys of Hades (hell in the KJV) He controls who is punished and who is kept from punishment. And since He holds the keys of death He can also resurrect the saints to eternal life. Now that’s authority!

v. 19 “Write the Things Which You Have Seen, and the Things Which Are, and the Things Which Will Take Place After This

– Again John is commanded by Jesus to write. This time he gives us what many consider to be the divine outline of the book of Revelation. The things which you have seen (past); the things which are (present); and the things which will take place after this (future).

Many futurists/pre-tribulationists break up this outline as follows:

1. **The things which you have seen** = chapter 1: the reality of the risen Christ.
2. **The things which are** = chapters 2-3: the church age and its history.
3. **The things which shall take place after this** = chapters 4-22: End time’s history, from the rapture of the church to the new heaven and new earth, on to eternity.

v. 20 The Mystery of the Seven Stars Which You Saw in My Right Hand, and the Seven Golden Lampstands: The Seven Stars are the Angels of the Seven Churches, and the Seven Lampstands Which You Saw are the Seven Churches

– Fortunately for those who study this book, many of the types and symbols found here are later explained. All you have to do is be patient and keep reading. So we now know that the seven stars in Jesus’ hand represent seven angels (though there is debate over what the word angel actually means here. See notes on v. 16). And the seven lampstands represent the seven churches. This information will be very valuable in our understanding of the rest of this book. Perhaps that’s why Jesus plainly tells us the meaning of this picture.

TRUTH APPLIED:

1. What are some of the facts revealed about Jesus Christ in this text that support the doctrine of His deity?
2. Discuss some things that might be considered unusual about John's vision of Jesus Christ.
3. What do verses 12-13 reveal about Christ's relationship with His church?
4. Identify and explain the three reasons Jesus gives to John to not be afraid.
5. Which verse in this text is often used as an outline for the book of Revelation? Please explain to the best of your ability.
6. Does verse 17 support the practice of being slain in the Spirit? Discuss.

CONCLUSION:

Verses nine through 20 are so rich with theological meaning and so full of insights into the person of Jesus Christ that it seems fitting that we should spend several more weeks digging into this text. But we must push on. There are many more treasures yet to be discovered as we continue this adventure together through God's Word. I encourage you, if you have not already done so, to go back over this study and carefully look up every cross reference for deeper insights.

All Glory and Honor and Power to the Alpha and Omega!

Mike Sasso