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### The Glorified Christ

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SOME THIRTY-SEVEN miles south to southeast from Miletus in Asia Minor lies a rocky, wind-swept island in the Aegean Sea. It is a small island, at its greatest extent not more than ten miles long and six miles wide, and shaped somewhat like a giant hand with several twisted fingers. There about A.D. 95 came a Roman galley with a boatload of prisoners. For this island was being used as a penal colony on which to banish criminals. Roman guards herded them ashore and left them to eke out an existence as best they could. Among them was an aged white-haired saint, named John, banished to Patmos because he was a Christian who refused to worship the Emperor Domitian as a god. "I was on the island called Patmos," John tells us, "because I had preached God's word and borne my testimony to Jesus" (Rev. 1:9, N.E.B.).

There, straining his eyes north-eastward to the mountainous coast of Asia Minor, he thought of the Christian communities he had left behind. How would his fellow Christians meet the crisis? Would they have the faith and courage to endure in the face of death? Would they remember that ultimately Christ and His cause would triumph over all? Or would they yield to pressure and desert their Lord for the safety of the official religion of the empire?

In a short time a sacred charge came to John: he was commissioned to write a book and send it to seven Christian communities in Asia Minor. (See Rev. 1:11, 19.) In this book he was to write down the substance of a series of visions that would come to him. This is the book we now call the Apocalypse, or the Revelation. Its purpose was to inspire hope, courage, and endurance among persecuted Christians. The church of Jesus Christ would face conflict and difficulty, but ultimately Christ and His cause would triumph. The book of Revelation contains messages for the guidance and comfort of God's people till that day of glorious triumph at His second advent.

In writing this book John was fully conscious of the fact that what he wrote was not the product of his own reasoning or literary imagination. He knew that he was recording what he had received by divine rev-

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# THE GLORIFIED CHRIST

elation. This book is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place" (Rev. 1:11).<sup>\*</sup> It was communicated to John by the angel Gabriel, "His angel."<sup>1</sup> More than this, Christ came in person to John to communicate to him light on the future.<sup>2</sup> Because this is so, the book stands on a high level as inspired, revealed Scripture.

## A Special Blessing

A special blessing is pronounced upon the reading, hearing, and heeding of the messages of this book. "Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near" (Rev. 1:3). It is of great importance that all Christians receive the message of this book. John is here not merely talking about the private reading and study of this book. He is talking about the public reading of it in Christian assemblies. "Blessed is he who reads aloud . . . , and blessed are those who hear." The message of the book is so important and so urgent that it is to be read at once to as many as possible. Uriah Smith well asks the question: "Is there so direct and formal a blessing pronounced upon the reading and observance of any other part of the word of God?"<sup>3</sup>

Here is a blessing upon reading, hearing, and doing. The book contains more than predictions; it has moral instruction to be heeded, and promises on which to lean. It was not designed to satisfy curios-

ity, but to stimulate courage, steadfastness, and hope. It contains injunctions and warnings to be carefully observed. This is particularly true in these tumultuous days to which we have come. The importance of this book increases with the lapse of time. The hour of fulfillment is growing very near.

John entitles his book, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." From the viewpoint of grammar this title could mean either a revelation of which Jesus Christ is the subject, or of which He is the object.<sup>4</sup> That is, it could mean a revelation given by Jesus Christ, or a revelation about Jesus Christ, of which He is the content. The clause that follows makes it evident that the first of these alternatives is intended. John is speaking of the origin of this Revelation. It came from God, the source and fountain of all truth, but it was given by Jesus Christ, the channel of all God's communications to man.

Nevertheless, the Apocalypse does unveil the postascension Jesus as no other book in the New Testament. As Ellen White put it: "All revelation to men comes through Christ, and all centers in Him."<sup>5</sup> Christ is the central theme of the visions of this marvelous book. Uriah Smith declared: "In the Revelation we have the gospel of His enthronement in glory, His association with the Father upon the throne of universal dominion, His overruling providence among the nations of the earth, and His coming again, not a homeless stranger, but in power and great glory, to punish His enemies and reward His followers."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

plying old age, but is rather an indication of His radiance as a heavenly Being.

John goes on to picture Jesus' eyes as blazing like fire, a symbol of His all-searching omniscience. He is the searcher of the inmost soul of man. His feet glowed like metal in a furnace (Rev. 1:15; 2:18; cf. Dan. 10:6), symbolizing, perhaps, His power to crush evil. His voice was "like the music of many waters,"<sup>8</sup> at times majestic, strong, and awe-inspiring, and then again soft and tender, like a gentle breeze.

For safekeeping He held in His right hand seven stars, interpreted as the "angels of the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20). From His mouth there proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, "an emblem of the power of His word."<sup>9</sup> And His face had the brilliance of the sun at noonday.

Overwhelmed by the awesomeness of this august Being, John swooned and fell as a dead man. But Jesus tenderly laid His right hand on him and declared: "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Rev. 1:17, 18). The purpose of the vision was to inspire hope and assurance, not to create fear and terror.

#### Amazing Titles and Descriptions

Amazingly, in His reassurance to John, Jesus assumes titles and descriptions that in the Old Testament are ascribed to the God of Israel. In Isaiah the concept is conveyed that God is the eternal sovereign over the whole sweep of time and history from the beginning to the end. (See Isa. 44:6; 41:4; 48:12.) God is the origin and conclusion of everything. He was before all things and nothing survives Him. He is the One who begins and the One who ends. He is the Creator and the Consummator. The first and last word is always God. "God is always a majority."<sup>10</sup> Jesus now declares Himself to be "the first and the last." He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 22:13). He is equally eternal with the Father, and His sovereign lordship over and activity in history is affirmed.<sup>11</sup> He is the ruler of kings on earth (Rev. 1:5). All kings and nations are under His rule and government.<sup>12</sup> The Greek word for "ruler" (*archōn*) was used as the translation of the Latin word *princeps*, which was the official title of the Roman emperor. Jesus is the *princeps* of the kings of the earth.

He will ultimately triumph over all the temporal powers of earth.

Jesus also refers to Himself as the "living one." One of the common epithets for the God of the Old Testament is "the living God" (Deut. 5:26; Ps. 42:2; 84:2; Jer. 10:10; Dan. 6:26). "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God beside me. . . . For I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear, As I live for ever" (Deut. 32:39, 40). Again Jesus proclaims that He possesses the nature and prerogatives of God. He is the living One. "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived."<sup>13</sup>

But, more specifically, in the words that follow Jesus refers to the resurrection: "I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of Death and Hades" (Rev. 1:17). Our Lord assumed human nature that He might experience the sharpness of death. But by the resurrection He has entered a new and victorious life in which death is conquered. "For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9). He has life, immortal life, self-perpetuating life. As "the firstborn of the dead" (Rev. 1:5). He is the pattern and pledge of a new resurrection life through His power. By His death and resurrection Jesus gained the mastery over death and the abode of the dead. He has gained the keys of death and hades. Hades, like the Hebrew *she'ol*, refers to the unseen world, the world of the dead. Keys are a symbol of authority and control. Our Lord holds dominion over death. He has power to leave in death or to release from death.

For the believers in Christ, particularly those who are facing death for their faith, the bitterness of death is taken away. Death has lost its terror, for Christ can unlock the gates of the grave and lead its captives to eternal life. He is the way, the life, and the resurrection. □

*Continued next week*

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> See Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26; Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 99, 234.
- <sup>2</sup> See *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, on Rev. 1, pp. 953-955.
- <sup>3</sup> Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, Revised Edition, p. 341.
- <sup>4</sup> These two alternatives are called the subjective genitive and the objective genitive by grammarians.
- <sup>5</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, on Rev. 1:1, 2, p. 953.
- <sup>6</sup> Uriah Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 337.
- <sup>7</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, on Rev. 1:10, p. 955; White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 128; White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 581.
- <sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 582; cf. Eze. 43:2; Dan. 10:6.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 590.
- <sup>11</sup> See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 366, 367.
- <sup>12</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 505.
- <sup>13</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

By WALTER F. SPECHT

In John's first vision the royal majesty of the glorified Christ was unveiled. It came to him on the Lord's day, i.e., the Sabbath.<sup>7</sup> He was "in the Spirit," that is, in vision. With startling suddenness a loud trumpetlike voice as one approaching from behind summoned him to write down his visions and transmit them to the seven churches in Asia. "Write down what you see!" And what did John see? On that windswept island he saw many things in his several visions. He saw the dreadful conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Antichrist. He saw this conflict go on till the return of Christ in triumph. But first of all, and most important of all, he saw his Lord.

As John turned to see the One who was talking to him, his attention was first arrested by seven golden lampstands, symbolic of the seven churches. Moving among them was the form of the Lord Jesus. But He did not appear as He had some sixty years before. He was still "like a son of man"; but there was no longer any trace of the weakness and limitations of humanity upon Him. He was now transfigured and glorified, and Patmos was made resplendent by His majestic presence.

He was vested in a long robe reaching to His feet and a golden girdle encircled it at His chest. Such attire was an emblem of royal or priestly dignity. Kings, princes, and priests wore such robes. Our Lord was therefore attired as a personage of distinction and dignity.

His person was radiant with heavenly glory. The whiteness of His hair is not to be understood as im-