

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

“Overwhelmed by a Vision”

Revelation 1:16-20

Introduction

1. The Apostle, John, having turned to see the voice which spoke with him (vv. 10, 12) was given a revelation of the glorified Son of God (vv. 12-16).

2. Response to the vision is stated:

a. He saw Him. There was no doubt about the identification. John saw a person (Him).

b. He fell at His feet. John was so overwhelmed by the vision, he fell down at His feet (cf. v. 15).

c. He was “as dead”. Similar deep moving is recorded of others who had visions of God (cf. Moses (Ex. 3:5); Isaiah (Isa. 6:5); Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:28); Daniel (Dan. 8:17, 18; 10:7-10); Disciples (Mt. 17:6); Peter (Luke 5:3)).

3. Response to the Lord to John is recorded:

a. He laid His right hand on him. The verb “laid” specifies “placed.” The significance of “right hand” is patent (cf. vv. 16, 20).

b. He commanded. The present tense imperative means to “stop fearing.” There is no fear in His presence for those who truly worship Him.

4. Following this interchange between John and the Lord at this amazing vision, there are three carefully worded statements by the Lord:-

1. ABOUT HIMSELF vv. 17b, 18

a. He is Eternal. “I am the first and the last.”

1) By revelation. The words “I Am” identify Him with the “Jehovah” (Holy Name of God) in the O.T. (Ex. 3:14).

2) By confession. The divine title “first and last” is affirmed of God in the O.T. (Is. 41:4; 44:6; 48:2). It is used of Christ three times in Revelation (here, 2:8; 22:13). As “first,” He is before all and from Whom all proceeds. Being “last” He is after all and in Whom all things are centered.

b. He is True. “The Living One.”

As “the Living One” (present active articular participle). The Lord is identified with the God of the O.T. (Deut. 32:40; Isa. 49:18; Jer. 10:10) and opposed to false gods (Ps. 115).

c. He is Glorious. “I was dead.”

The aorist middle verb points to our Lord’s voluntary death -- I “became” dead. The glory of it all is that the self-existent One stooped to give up His life and He did (Mt. 27:50; Jn. 14:30; 10:17, 18; Heb. 2:14, 15).

d. He is Victor. “I Am alive for evermore.”

Here He says He will no more die. No wonder the text says “behold.” The present tense shows Christ’s eternity in resurrection life. The prepositional phrase used with the verb is the strongest possible to affirm He never changes for eternity.

e. He has Authority. “I have the keys.”

The present tense verb points to present continuous authority. Death demands the body and hell (Greek: Hades) the soul, but our Lord has the keys of them both. Hallelujah! Hades is considered the place of departed dead. Believers go to the Lord (Phil. 1:23), but non believers to a

place of torment (Lk. 16:23).

2. ABOUT INSTRUCTION v. 19

This is the second time John is charged by the Lord “to write” (cf. v. 11). Because some MSS (manuscripts) the particle “therefore” follows the verb “write.” This seems logical because of His Person (vv. 17, 18), He can rightfully command John to “write!” What he is to write is specified:-

a. Past Things. “Things which . . . seen”

The obvious reference here is to the incomprehensible vision of the Lord in the Glory (vv. 13-16).

b. Present Things. “Things which are.”

The verb is plural and the pronoun is plural, but the reference is clearly to the messages for the seven churches (chaps. 2, 3).

NOTE: The Greek connective “and” can be taken ascensively and translated “even.” If taken this way, the “past” and the “present” above would be considered “current things,” the two items blended into one single unit. Moreover, such a view would support structurally that the first three chapters occur within the present age or dispensation.

c. Future Things. “Things which shall be hereafter.”

This phrase is literally “things which are about to happen (to become) after these things.” The entire final chapters of the book are included here (chap. 4 - 22). This gives the chronology of the book.

3. ABOUT MYSTERIES v. 20

A mystery in the Bible is both an open and sacred secret. Profane eyes will not get the mystery though it is fully explicable (1 Cor. 2:14). It really is truth made known to redeemed hearts by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures. Several mysteries are revealed in the N.T. (cf. Mt. 13; 1 Cor. 15:51; Eph. 3:1-12; 1 Tim. 3:16).

a. Stars

Definitively these “are” the seven “angels” of the seven churches. Numerous views have been advanced regarding the identification of the “angels.” It is obvious that the reference is to someone responsible in each church for what prevails. That “angels” or “messengers” refers to the Pastor of each local assembly is the preferred view. The text teaches the Lord has these Pastors “in” His right hand. Here it is recorded as their being “on” His right hand. The public relation of the stars or Pastors to Christ is enforced. He upholds them!

b. Candlesticks

Added to the fact the churches “are” is that John “saw” them. Here, then, are seven local churches (cf. v. 11). The idea behind “candlestick” is witness/testimony. These seven were that number out of the reported 450 in that area in John’s day.

Conclusion

This then is the Word of our glorified Lord to His own (cf. 1:1, 17, 18). He is ever God of very God! All truth is organized before Him (v. 19). He unveils mysteries to those who know Him (v. 20). Oh, let us worship and adore Him now and forever.