

Mind-Blowing Truths About Jesus You May Have Missed in Revelation

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ ... the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:1-5).

An Episcopal church or a United Methodist church receives a letter from the bishop, which is read to the congregation the following Sunday. The letter scolds the church for its failure to live up to its obligations, keep its pledges or honor certain commitments. Following the reading, a discussion breaks out within the membership. Several people, who may have joined the fellowship only recently, are concerned and want to know, “Who does the bishop think he is? What gives him the right to rebuke us?”

The minister is glad to answer the question. “We are not on our own out here. We are a member of this denomination. The denomination owns this church. The bishop is the local ruling authority for the denomination. We may or may not like his assessments and rulings, but there they are.”

Those of us whose churches observe congregational forms of government never receive letters from the bishop for the simple reason that we don’t have them. Our churches are autonomous (self-governing, independent) and cooperate to whatever extent we can, feel led or choose to.

So, here are the seven churches of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey): Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. They receive this circular letter which is to be read, no doubt copied, and then sent on its way to the next church.

Five of the seven churches are told to “shape up or ship out.” That is, they’re told to “Repent or else.” Only two of the churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, get off without a rebuke.

Vance Havner used to say, “The last word of the Lord Jesus to His church was ‘Repent!’”

But the question lingers: What gives Him the right to do this? By what authority is Jesus analyzing and instructing and warning these seven churches?

Or, as the irreverent might ask, “Who died and made you God?”

I’m glad you asked.

Part 1: Jesus Has All Authority

Just before issuing the Great Commission to the disciples, the Lord Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). (See Matt. 11:27, John 3:35 and Phil. 2:9-11.) He has the authority to command and to promise.

The first chapter of Revelation is overloaded with information/descriptions/claims of the Lord Jesus. The mind staggers. Take a look at these:

–v. 5: Jesus is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler over the kings of the earth. (Referenced in the letter to Laodicea, Rev. 3:14.)

–vv. 5-6: Jesus has loved us, washed us from our sins in His own blood and made us a kingdom of priests.

–v. 7: He is coming back—with clouds, visible to all, acclaimed by “all the tribes of the earth.”

–v. 8: Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

–v. 11: Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.

–vv. 13-16: Here we have the glorified image of the ascended Lord. We are reminded of Daniel’s vision in Daniel 7:13-14. (Referenced in the letter to Ephesus 2:1, to Pergamos in 2:12, to Thyatira in 2:18 and to Sardis in 3:1.)

–vv. 17: The First and the Last. (Referenced in the letter to Smyrna in 2:8.)

–vv. 18: I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. I have the keys of Hades and of death. (Referenced in the letter to Smyrna in 2:8.)

How’s that for authority? It reminds us of the time He cleansed the temple. Promptly the religious big shots—I hesitate to call them “authorities”—demanded of Him, “By what right do you do this? Who gave you the authority?” Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘My house will be a house of prayer’” (Luke 19:46b). Get that? *My house*. That’s my authority! It’s my house. I can clean it any time I please. (See Matthew 21, Mark 11 and Luke 19.)

In the next two chapters, the letters to the seven churches, the Lord is going to give them four things: His analyses, His instructions, His warnings and His promises. He has the right to do so. He alone, in fact, has the right to do this.

Part 2: Because Jesus Has Such Authority

Our Lord deserves the respect, obedience and worship of His people. Look at who He is. Look at what He has done. Look at what He will yet do.

There is no one like Him.

Who Jesus Is: Revelation 1:5

1. Jesus is the faithful witness.

Jesus came to tell earthlings about heavenly things. See what He told Nicodemus in John 3:13.

2. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. See what Paul makes of this in 1 Corinthians 15:20.

3. Jesus is the ruler over the kings of the earth. Bear in mind, those reading these letters were daily being harassed by “the kings of the earth” and their representatives. God’s redeemed needed this reminder that one was over even these.

What Jesus Has Done: Revelation 1:5-6

1. Jesus loves us. “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” God said in Jeremiah 31:3. The Lord Jesus said, “As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you” (John 15:9a). “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25b).

2. Jesus washed us from our sins in His own blood. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7b).

In Revelation 7, someone asks, “Who are these clothed in white robes?” Answer: “These are those who have come out of great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:13).

3. Jesus made us a kingdom of priests to His God and Father. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” (1 Pet. 2:9a). A priest, we recall, speaks to people on behalf of God and intercedes with God on behalf of the people. It’s a privileged function we enjoy by witnessing and praying.

What Jesus Will Do: Revelation 1:7

1. He is coming again. This is the consistent promise of Scripture, everywhere from John 14:3 to Acts 1:11 to 1 Thessalonians 4:14, climaxing in Revelation 22:12-20.

2. He is coming with clouds. The cloud must surely represent the *shekinah* glory cloud seen all through Israel’s wilderness

wanderings and most notably, in Ezekiel's visions (see the departure in chapters 8-11 and the Lord's return to the temple in chapter 43).

3. Every eye shall see Him, even they who pierced Him. As Paul said, "... at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

4. All tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Jesus said this in Matthew 24:30b, "then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

But for believers, the story will be vastly different. God will "wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death.' Neither shall there be any more sorrow nor crying nor pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

These words are trustworthy and true, God says. Depend on it.
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