

WHAT WILL JESUS SAY ABOUT OUR CHURCH?

## THE ETERNAL RELEVANCE OF CHRIST FOR HIS CHURCH



Revelation 1:9-20 (ESV) <sup>9</sup> I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

<sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

<sup>11</sup>

saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

<sup>12</sup>

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,

<sup>13</sup>

and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

<sup>14</sup>

The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,

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Written by NJ Coertze  
Sunday, 13 May 2018 06:00

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15  
his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

16  
In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

17  
When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,

18  
and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

19  
Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

20  
As for the mystery of the seven stars that 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 are the seven churches."

### **Introduction.**

We often make the statement at Logos that our desire is to be the Church that Jesus intends us to be. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 (ESV) "18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

We did a whole sermon on this previously which you can read on the Internet. That which is of critical importance though is that Jesus is building His church, and therefore at the end of the day, it is His view on the matter that counts. We are not concerned about human opinions about His church, but the opinions of Him who walks amongst His golden lamp stands which are the churches. Something that we must never forget is that while the Church is His church and He is building His church, the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and today you and I are fellow workers in building His church, but it must be done His way, as He will inspect our church, just as much as He inspected the 7 Churches of Asia.

When we look at the building of the church in our world today, there are a few characteristics that jump out of the cracks of churches going to spiritual ruin. Techniques have replaced truth,

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style overshadows substance, numbers trump depth, convenience ranks far higher than consecration, churches are purpose driven instead of Bible driven and regenerate church membership has fallen by the wayside. Sadly, so much of what is called church have adopted the world's methods, the world's agenda and theology.

As we embark on this series: “**what will Jesus say about His church?**”, two things are going to stand out.

**Firstly,** we will see that Christ is eternally relevant to churches of all ages, and therefore Christ is eternally relevant to Christians of all ages.

**Secondly,**

we will see Christ's judgement of His church and relevance to His church as demonstrated in the 7 churches of Asia, and so much of that will be applicable to us. Therefore, it will require us to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, and we will have to adjust our conduct accordingly. This series will help us to be re-acquainted with His revealed plan and purpose for the church outlined in the Bible. If the church must return to its former glory, it must be through radical transformation by taking the church back to the basics as outlined in Scripture.

The book of Revelation to many believers is a book of confusion as we spend too much time searching for the focus of Revelation in the detail of the book, all the symbols, and metaphors and the unknown, instead of focusing on the person of the book of Revelation namely Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:1-2 (ESV) “<sup>1</sup> The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup> who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.”

Revelation is exactly what the word says. It is not confusion, it is not to be breaking our heads, it is a revelation. We focus on what is revealed, and we live with the tensions of that which is hidden. Ultimately Revelation is about Christ revealed. Another way to say it is that it is Christ unveiled. Revelation must be outlined around Jesus Christ, that is why Prof Adrio Konig entitled his book on Revelation, “Christus die Eschatos”, “Christ the last one”. All that we read in Revelation that will take place on earth will come to an end, but Christ remains the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. All things came to be in Him, through Him and unto Him, and

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all things will end, but Christ will be forever, and ever, as His dominion knows no end. In Chapter 1 you see

**Christ'**

**s Glory,**

in Chapter 2 & 3 you see the

**relevance of Christ's Glory to the 7 churches of Asia**

and in chapters 4-22 you see the

**relevance of Christ to the churches of all ages**

and the unfolding of God's eternal plan in Christ Jesus.

To understand the relevance of Christ to His churches, we must look at the Revelation of Christ as seen in Chapter 1. In chapter 2 we will see how that which is revealed in chapter 1 is applied to the churches.

Verse 12: <sup>12</sup> Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. Notice verse 20 for an interpretation of the lampstands: "<sup>20</sup> As for the mystery of the seven stars that 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 are the seven churches.**"

So, the vision of Jesus that John receives is Christ among the churches. Christ is standing among the churches. He is not merely over the churches. He is not distant from the churches. He is in the middle of them.

This revelation that John receives of Christ is seen in His apparel, in His appearance and in His appeal. We will look at it today and next week.

### 1 His apparel.

#### 1.1 Robe & Sash.

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The first revelation we have of Christ from John is seen in verse 13 <sup>“13</sup> and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.” The word translated "long robe" is not used anywhere else in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament it almost always refers to the robe of the high priest. And the gold band across his chest shows two things: the fact that it is high—not around the waist but around the chest—and the fact that it is gold, show that the priesthood that he holds is very great.

Jesus is not only the son of man from Daniel 7 who receives everlasting dominion over all nations; he is also the final high priest who brings all the priestly work of the temple to an end. There is no more need for animal sacrifices with all their priestly labors. Verse 5 says that Christ "released us from our sins by his blood." This priest is so great that he gave his own blood once for all at the end of the age to put away sin once for all by the sacrifice of himself.

Notice that He stands among the lampstands—he stands here by us today—as one with authority and everlasting dominion and one with final, decisive forgiveness for our sins. He is the one who said of Himself in Matthew 28:18 (ESV) <sup>“18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, “**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

## 2. His appearance.

### 2.1 Head and hair.

Then John sees (v. 14) that <sup>“14</sup> The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow." This is remarkable, because in that same chapter in Daniel where John gets this picture of "one like a son of man" (v. 13–14), God the Father is described like this in verse 9, "The Ancient of Days took his seat; his vesture was like white snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool." In other words, John is describing the Son of Man in terms used for God himself.

I think John wants us to see something here about the age of Christ and the wisdom and dignity that come with age—everlasting age!

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In our culture today, we respect the process of aging less and less. A person is admired if he can keep looking young, not if he has the dignity of age. The Bible saw it another way. Proverbs 16:31 says, "A white head is a crown of glory." So much so that in the law God commanded that "You will rise up before the white head, and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God; I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:32).

One of the reasons we don't want to grow old is that we associate age with the fading of powers that make life worth living—the capacity to see and hear and think clearly and move about and not have pain. But all of those things do not belong to aging as aging. They belong to aging in a futile and fallen world of sin. Once God does away with sin and the curse, and establishes the new heavens and the new earth, aging will not have any of these negative connotations. It will only be associated with growing wisdom and insight and maturity. All the strength will still be there. All the mental powers. All the sight and hearing and agility. Nothing that is great about youth will be left behind. There will only be added all the powers and beauties and depth of age.

This is what John saw in Jesus. He was like the Ancient of Days with all the wisdom of eternity and all the maturity and steadiness of age, but he was not weak or weary or faltering in his step.

### 2.2 Eyes "Like a Flame of Fire"

Put this picture together with the next thing John saw at the end of verse 14, "His eyes were like a flame of fire."

The eyes of this son of man are not the clouded eye of fading glory. They are eyes of sharpest clarity. They miss nothing that happens in the universe. And they are exploding with energy.

We all know the drooping eye that is about to go to sleep or is sullen and half shut with scowl or a bad mood. And we know the eye that is alive with wonder and excitement and hope and expectancy and energy. Jesus' eyes were like a flaming fire. What we see then is hair as white as snow and eyes like fire—wisdom and maturity like the Ancient of Days together with the energy and vitality and zeal of youth—like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber with strength and hope, and yet with the depth and ripening of many, many years of life and marriage.

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When you gaze upon Jesus, remember he is not tired or careworn or burned out or fatigued. Instead his eyes are aflame with the flashing fire of inexhaustible energy and hope. When Jesus thinks about his plans for you and for all the nations of the world, he is not hesitant or wearied or bored. His eyes are a flame of fire with utter exhilaration and passion and relish for the work he intends to in our lives.

There are a few more things in the revelation John has of Jesus Christ that are vital for us to behold. Then in two weeks' time, we will start looking at the 7 churches of Asia and find rich lessons that show that Christ appears to His churches and to us, in the embodiment of these characteristics, and that they are aptly applied to us where we live.

In the meantime, let me wet your appetite. What we will discover is that we:

1. We need the perseverance of Christ in the face of affliction.
2. We need the energy and strength of Christ in the face of depleting pressures.
3. We need the wisdom of Christ in the face of complexities of life and ministry.
4. We need the stability of Christ in the midst of rapid social and political and personal changes all around us.
5. We need the assurance of his sovereign authority in a culture sliding farther and farther from his truth.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

Logos Community Church:- 13 May 2108