

[R2826 : page 187]

## **JESUS REVEALED TO JOHN IN VISION.**

– REV. 1:9-20. – *JUNE 16.* –

**"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."**

– Heb. 13:8.

VISIONS are not realities, tho they symbolically represent them. This is true, whether the vision come, as Daniel describes his, as "visions of my head upon my bed," or whether they come in broad daylight, as with the transfiguration scene, which our Lord declared was a vision. (Matt. 17:9.) The visions granted to John, recorded in the Book of Revelation, are in no sense and in no part to be understood as realities, and this is the significance of John's statement in our lesson, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day" – in a trance.

Altho the words, "on the Lord's day," might not unreasonably be understood to signify that John in vision was carried down the stream of time to the great Millennial Day, the Day of Christ, the Lord's Day, nevertheless, we think it reasonable to understand him to mean also that he saw this vision on the first day of the week. And how appropriate it was that our Lord, who arose on the first day of the week, and who most frequently manifested his resurrection powers on that day, should on the same day reveal himself and certain great instructions to the Church through John, honoring the same day of the week. It is no wonder, therefore, that Christian people from the very earliest times have held the first day of the week in special reverence as the symbol of the fulfilment of all our hopes, whereof God gave us assurance in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus on this day. Besides, to confine the meaning of the expression to the Millennial Day exclusively, would be to ignore the fact that the larger proportion of John's vision related not to the Millennial Day, but to the intervening time.

Note the simplicity of the Apostle's introduction to this most wonderful book. He did not write the title of the book as it appears in our Bibles – "The Revelation of St. John the Divine" – that is to say, the Revelation of St. John, Doctor of Divinity, Doctor of Theology. On the contrary, John claims no credit for the revelation; it was not *his*, but, as he distinctly explains, it was from our Lord Jesus Christ, – and to him from God the Father. Nor was it even *to* John in any special sense, but, as he again declares, unto God's "servants," sent by his "servant John." This simplicity, common to all the apostles, commends them to us as men of humble minds, – the very kind we should expect our Lord to use as special servants and messengers to his people. The apostolic simplicity is in striking contrast with the pomposity of the majority of those who claim to be their pupils and fellow servants, and who delight in the titles of "Reverend," "Right Reverend," "Very Reverend," "His Holiness," "Doctor of Divinity," etc. And in proportion as the spirit of the world is quenched by the spirit of Christ – and in proportion as the Lord's people are zealous in seeking and finding "the old paths" (Jer. 6:16), in that same proportion do these human titles which seem so much to the world and to Babylon come to appear vain, inappropriate, deceitful.

Instead of adding loud and boastful titles to his name, as Reverend, Bishop, Overseer of all the Churches in Asia Minor, we find John introducing himself as "Your Brother," as the companion of all saints in tribulation and in the Kingdom, and in the patient endurance of Jesus Christ. He was sharer with Christ, as a member of his body in his afflictions, in his endurance, and prospectively a joint-heir in his Kingdom, and in all this he was the brother of all fellow-disciples, sharers of the same sufferings, and prospectively of the same glory. It is generally understood that John had already been severely persecuted, and that at the time of this vision he was in banishment on the little island in the Mediterranean Sea called

Patmos – a penal island where convicts were worked in the quarrying of marble, etc. Yet John himself, with remarkable modesty, passes over not only his previous service for the truth, which had brought him his persecution, but also lightly passes over the persecution itself, merely noting that he was in the island of Patmos because of his fidelity to the word of God and the testimony that Jesus was the Christ.

This simplicity, this absence of boastfulness so noticeable in the writings of all the apostles, commends them and their words to our attention, and marks them as being in the ministry not for the gratification of vanity, or seeking earthly rewards of any kind; but simply as the servants of God, who delighted to do his will, and to tell the good tidings, to the utter ignoring of themselves, excepting in so far as mention of themselves and their affairs might be necessary and helpful to the Church. All of the Lord's followers do well to **[R2826 : page 188]** note this characteristic of the Master, and of those whom he specially chose to be his followers and our exemplars. In proportion as we attain to the Lord's spirit it will similarly manifest itself in our sentiments and conduct.

John's attention was first attracted by the trumpet-like voice of Christ from behind him. The fact that the location is mentioned at all implies that it has a special symbolic meaning. It signifies that the beginning of this message was not in John's day, nor from some future time, but that the things to be revealed had already commenced, and were already to some extent in the past; – the voice from behind going clear back, as some of the features of the book show, to the time of our Lord's earthly ministry. The trumpet voice directed that its message should be written and sent to the seven churches named. Ancient MSS. omit the words, "saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and," and also the words, "churches which are in Asia." There were seven churches in Asia Minor corresponding to

those mentioned by name in this connection; but while this revelation may have been applicable to them in some manner or degree it was evidently in but a small measure. Those seven churches of Asia Minor we understand were chosen of the Lord as symbols representing seven different epochs in the history of the one true Church of Christ, from Pentecost day until the gathering to the Lord of the last grain of wheat in the end of this Gospel harvest.

Turning to see the one who addressed him John beheld seven golden candlesticks (lamp-stands), and standing in the midst of these one having the resemblance to *a* son of man – not *the* Son of man. It is to this particular point that the Committee which selected this as the International Lesson for this date sought to draw attention – the revelation of Jesus to John, it to some extent resembling his revelation to Paul, considered in our last lesson. In truth, however, there is considerable difference, for what John saw in the way of light and stars and lamps and brightness was merely a mental vision, while that which Paul saw while on the way to Damascus was a very literal light, which permanently injured his eyes. What John saw in *vision* was not understood by him to be the Lord's glorious body, nor even a representation of it, except in the sense that it was a *symbolical* representation.

For instance, the head, with its white hair, corresponding to the Ancient of Days of Daniel's vision (Dan. 9:27), is not to teach us that our Lord in glory has the form of a man, and hairs that are white, but merely suggestive and symbolic of venerableness, of knowledge, experience, wisdom. The fiery or electric glance of the eyes should similarly be understood symbolically to represent penetrating intelligence, and ability to see and to know everything pertaining to his people, his Church. The mouth, from which proceeded the sharp two-edged sword is not to tell us that this is the appearance of our Lord in glory,

but merely to symbolize to us that his words in his Church are to be as the sword of the spirit, which the Apostle declares to be sharper than any two-edged sword, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart, dividing and classifying his people, and separating from his elect every impure thing and every unacceptable element. His voice, as the sound of many waters, might be understood to mean that the Lord could and did speak to his Church sometimes as the voice of musical rippling waters of the brook, and sometimes as the roaring of the sea; or the many waters might be understood as signifying peoples, nations and languages, as elsewhere explained in this book, and that thus our Lord, present with his Church, would speak to her and through her by many tongues, in many languages, – the latter view seems to us the more reasonable.

The hand, in which were seven stars, is similarly to be understood as a symbolical part of the vision, representing the Lord's *power* in his Church. The stars, as he explains (vs. 20; chap. 2:1,8,12,18,etc.), are the angels or messengers or special servants of the Church in each epoch. The intimation is that the Lord would recognize in his Church, in each of its seven stages or developments, one representative to whom he would specially address himself, and through whom he would specially instruct the Church, and whom he would specially hold or keep as his instrument by his own power or hand. This would not necessarily mean that one individual of the Church must be used of the Lord, even should he become unfit for the service, but would imply that one servant would be recognized in each epoch. If that servant for any cause or in any manner seemed to be an unsuitable one another might take his place, and be the star or messenger of the Church of that epoch.

The whole body was covered, hidden from sight, with a robe, only the head, the hand and the feet being exposed to view, thus agreeing with the explanation given us by the Apostle Paul

(1 Cor. 12:12-31) in [R2827 : page 188] which he represents the whole Church as being the body of Christ and members in particular, but pointing out that some of the members of the Church may occupy the position of an eye or an ear or a tongue, and others the position of feet. Thus the Lord would be present with his people by his spirit dwelling in them, using different members of the body to accomplish for his body different services. The feet, described as like furnace-refined copper would represent those members of the body of Christ who serve, in the sense of carrying forward, financially and otherwise, the Lord's work. Copper is a symbol of humanity,\* and this copper being furnace-refined would seem to say that those who belong to the body of Christ, and whom the Lord would use in his service, "the feet" members of the body, must, in their contact and dealings with the world, be refined, purified, clean – "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord's house." The feet would thus represent the living members of the body, all down through this age; and the refining process to each and all will be fiery trials.

\*See [Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices](#).

[R2827 : page 189]

Thus understood, the figure of a son of man (a human figure) in the midst of the seven candlesticks, etc., symbolically represented Christ standing criticising, judging, directing, in the midst of his Church, upholding his chosen stars or ministers, and represented in the various members by his people, is an impressive picture or symbol, full of instruction, leading us to expect the Lord's guidance in all the affairs of his Church, and to realize that things are not happening to her haphazard. To so recognize that the Lord's people in every part of this age have been "feet" members of the body, carrying forward his work, is not to contradict our previous application of [Isa. 52:7](#), which

merely represents the "feet" members of the present time, and identifies them as the ones who declare unto Zion, "Thy God *reigneth*" – in this manner distinguishing these from their predecessors in the pilgrim way.

Seven, as a symbolic number, represents perfection or completeness, and thus the seven candlesticks, the seven churches, represent the complete Church, and this union of seven as one was most beautifully typified in the golden candlestick (lamp-stand) of the "~~\*Most~~ Holy" of the Tabernacle and subsequently of the Temple. That candlestick or lamp-stand was one, but there were seven branches or lights; while in this symbolical picture of the Church in Revelation each is represented separately, and our Lord's messages are directed to the seven churches of the seven epochs separately; nevertheless, in reality the Church is all one. (1 Cor. 12:12.) The union and the separateness are merely as we view the matter from two different standpoints. It is the one high priest who cares for all the lamps, and the one holy oil that in every stage of the Church has given light to all of the consecrated class, the "Royal Priesthood," who have access to the "Holy ~~\*Place~~" and are seated with Christ in heavenly places (conditions). – Eph. 2:6.

[\\*See page 210 A TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR.](#)

It is not strange that John in vision fell down as dead at this glorious symbolical representation of Christ. John may be considered as a representative of the Lord's consecrated ones, who in his presence feel their own deadness. Upon all such he places his hand (his power), and to them gives his message, "Fear not, I am the first and last, I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." – Vss. 17,18.

Not all, but only those who fall as dead before the Lord, who recognize their own nothingness, who, in the language of

this symbolical book, are beheaded, or lose their own wills, accepting the will of the Lord instead (Rev. 20:4) – these alone are ever able to fully receive this message from the Lord appreciatively. From these *fear* is cast out; and they alone may know that our Lord was the first-born of all creation, and the last; that he was the beginning of Jehovah's work, and the end of it, and that all beings and things were made by or through him, and that "without him was not one thing made that was made." (John 1:3.) These also may know, fully appreciate, understand, that the Lord now liveth, and in order to appreciate this they must understand that he was dead for parts of three days – not merely apparently dead, but actually *dead* – his soul poured out unto death, made an offering for sin. – Isa. 53:10-12.

For these also is the wonderful message that this Redeemer, now glorified, has all power in respect to our race – the keys, the authority, the control, not only of *hades* (the great prison house of death), but also the power or control over death in its every degree; so that it is his privilege to raise up so many as will obey him out of the degradation and imperfection of this dying condition, up, up, up, to perfection of life, where death will have no power. These may know, also, that the time for the exercise of this power by the Redeemer is nigh at hand, and that the privilege of deliverance from the tomb and from death into the full liberty of the sons of God, into abundance of life and freedom from the bondage of corruption, will be extended to every creature of Adam's race.

But to others this message is dark and meaningless or worse. Misled by error they believe that Jesus was not really dead, but fully alive always; mistaught that death holds no one, but all are alive in either bliss or torment, they see no force, beauty or significance in the key and its power; and thinking of hell (*hades*) as a torture chamber, filled with devils and their victims, they feel as tho the unlocking of its portals would be



undesirable. Surely, all of the favored ones may say, "Blessed are our eyes for they see, and our ears for they hear!"

John was instructed to write, to make clear, to make plain to us and to all of God's people, the things already brought to his attention, and other things subsequently to be brought to his attention; to the intent that all of God's people might be enabled to comprehend with all saints the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God, which passeth all understanding, and which can only be received through revelation from God. And here let us note the force of John's expression (vs. 3) to the effect that there is a blessing upon those who read this revelation, even tho they do not understand, and a special blessing upon those who hear and understand the words of this prophecy, and keep or conform their lives to the things that are written therein.

-----