

SERMON NOTES
Revelation 1:1-20
“The Christ of Christmas in His Glory”

Intro:

- **USA Today:** *“More US Christians mix in ‘Eastern,’ New Age beliefs”*
- **Mixing Christianity with Eastern mysticism and New Age beliefs is becoming increasingly common in the US**
- ***65% of Americans have adopted some elements of Eastern religions and New Age thinking and practices – such as finding ‘spiritual energy’ in mountains or trees or rocks // or believing in astrology // or believing in reincarnation // or practicing yoga as a spiritual exercise***
- **Americans for the most part are resistant to authority and don’t like being told what to think or believe or do**
- ***Eastern religions are becoming increasingly popular with many Americans because you can believe whatever you want to believe***
- **Eastern religions are all about spiritual experiences with very little emphasis on theology and doctrines**
- **Christianity teaches that we have but one life to live in this world and that salvation is through Christ alone**
- **Satan is dedicated to opposing those truths**
- ***How does Satan lead people astray?***
- **Two chief lies today:**
- ***(1) Death is not final, and there is no eternal judgment after we die – you can be reborn in this world again and again through reincarnation***
- ***(2) Jesus Christ is one of the ways to God – but there are also many other ways – you can choose your own path to God – and if you don’t quite get there in this life – no problem – there are many other reincarnations to come***
- **Without actually disproving any of the truth claims of Christianity – Satan simply portrays Christianity as narrow and exclusive and intolerant**
- ***And the one question Satan wants people to avoid asking is: What is truth?***
- **Satan has replaced that question with: *Which is more tolerant and progressive and open-minded? One way to God or many ways to God?***
- ***“Preach the Gospel to all nations” becomes “live and let live”***

- **“Salvation in Christ alone” and “One Way” become “whatever”**
- **The root of the problem is that many people – including many professing Christians – are confused as to who Jesus Christ is**
- *Sure, they say, Jesus belongs in the Religious Hall of Fame – right along with Buddha and Moses and Mohammed and Confucius and the Dalai Lama*
- **The great need of the Church of Jesus Christ is a fresh vision of the glory of Jesus Christ**

I. THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

(1) *The Centrality of Christ*

- Revelation was written to encourage suffering and persecuted Christians that real power rests with Christ the Lord and not with any human ruler – *and that Christ will overcome evil and establish the reign of God in all its fullness in human history*
- The title of the book is: **The Revelation of Jesus Christ** – meaning both *the revelation about Jesus Christ and the revelation from Jesus Christ*
- **Jesus Christ is both the central character of the book and the agent revealing God’s plan for the consummation of His Kingdom**
- The book of Revelation shows us something of what those final last days will look like leading up to the Second Coming of Christ and the consummation of God’s Kingdom in the new heavens and new earth
- But we must not miss the centrality of Christ in the Apocalypse
- ***Revelation is first and foremost a proclamation by and about Jesus Christ***
- *Many churches are drifting into a Christless Christianity in which Jesus Christ is no longer central in the life and proclamation and mission of the church*
- In many American churches you could attend for several weeks before hearing a sermon that focused on Jesus Christ or His Cross and Resurrection
- *And not just in liberal churches, but even in many evangelical churches you could hear practical and relevant and interesting messages that have little to do with the Person and Work of Jesus Christ*
- Christianity is ever in danger of becoming just another religion – emphasizing morality and ethics and social justice and love of neighbor and service to humanity and family values and spiritual disciplines

- *And Christianity does indeed include all of this and more*
- **But at its core Christianity is all about Jesus Christ and the Good News of what He has done for our salvation**
- *Everything else flows from the reality of Christ saving us and Christ living His life in us and empowering us and transforming us to become like Him*

(2) The Person of Jesus Christ

Revelation 1:4-5 Grace and peace from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne; ⁵and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the commander of all the rulers of the world.

- *Here is a clear reference to the Trinity: God the Father, Yahweh, I AM WHO I AM – the Eternal God who is and who was and who is to come // and the Holy Spirit – the sevenfold Spirit in all his fullness // and Jesus Christ – who has always existed as the eternal Son of God and who became a man when he was born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem*

- **Jesus Christ is called by three titles here:**

- (1) The Faithful Witness** – Everything Jesus Christ has told us about God and about eternal life and heaven and hell and the end of the age and the coming Judgment – **is all true**
 –**Jesus Christ is the Truth**
 –**Jesus Christ is the Logos – the Word of God – in human flesh**

John 1:18 ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. But his only Son, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart; he has told us about him.

- *In the midst of many different truth claims by different religious faiths – Jesus Christ is the embodiment of Truth – **Jesus Christ is the Faithful Witness***
 - *Everything he tells us about God is true – because He is God in human flesh*
- (2) The Firstborn from the Dead** – Jesus Christ was the first to rise from the dead never to die again
 –*Elijah raised a widow's son to life – as did Jesus – and then, of course, Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave after 4 days*
 –but they all died again
 –**Jesus rose from the grave as the Conqueror of death – he was raised in an immortal body – never to die again**

–Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Ruler over Death and the grave

–No other man can make that claim because no other man has conquered the grave

–Eternal life is found in Jesus Christ – and in him alone – because Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life who arose victorious over the grave

John 11:25-26 ²⁵Jesus told her, ***“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. ²⁶They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish.***

(3) Ruler of the kings of the earth

- The title seems out of place when applied to a first-century carpenter’s son and itinerant Rabbi who was executed on a Roman Cross
- *At the time John wrote Revelation, John himself and many other Christ-followers were being persecuted by Rome*
- Everyone living at that time would have said that Caesar was the ruler of the kings of the earth
- *Looks can be deceiving*
- Yes, Caesar ruled the earth from his throne in Rome – but even while he did so – ***Jesus Christ was reigning at God’s right hand as Sovereign Ruler and Commander of all earthly kings and kingdoms***
- Jesus Christ is still reigning at God’s right hand as Ruler of the kings and generals and presidents of the earth
- ***And one day he will return to this earth to make manifest to the whole world the Sovereign Power and Authority which is already his***

Daniel 7:13 - 14 (NIV) ¹³“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

(3) The Work of Jesus Christ

Revelation 1:5-6 All praise to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. ⁶He has made us his kingdom and his priests who serve before God his Father. Give to him everlasting glory! He rules forever and ever! Amen!

- *All praise to him who loves us*
- **The Faithful Witness and Firstborn from the dead and Ruler of the kings of the earth – loves us**
- *Taking that truth to heart is the beginning of our healing – beginning of our salvation – beginning of a whole new life and destiny*

1 John 3:16 (NIV) ¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

- *He laid down his life for us to free us from our sins at the price of his blood*
- *Jesus said that everyone who sins is a slave to sin – but if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed*
- Many people today like to think of human beings as basically good people who occasionally make mistakes
- *Jesus said at the root of human misery and broken relationships and social problems is a sin problem – bondage to sin*
- **We are slaves to lust // slaves to anger // slaves to greed // slaves to worry & anxiety & fear // slaves to the opinions of others & the need for approval // slaves to selfish ambition // slaves to sex & pornography // slaves to alcohol & drugs & overeating // slaves to career advancement // slaves to filthy language and filthy thoughts // slaves to resentment and bitterness // slaves to self-pity // slaves to the love of money and possessions // slaves to prejudice & judgmental attitudes**
- **There is no political or economic or educational solution to these problems of human nature**
- *Only Jesus can free us from our sins*
- **The sacrificial death of Jesus on the Cross does not merely forgive our sins – important as that is – but by his once-for-all-time sacrifice he loosed us // unchained us // released us // set us free from bondage to sin**
- *Our chains are gone – we’ve been set free*
- *And that’s not all: He has made us to be a kingdom and priests to our God*
- **Believers share in the priesthood of the Great High Priest and we will one day share in His reign in the Kingdom of God on the earth**
- *Jesus not only sets us free from our sins – he causes us to share in his destiny*
- **The Ruler of the kings of the earth will include us and involve us in His reign**

Revelation 5:9-10 ⁹And they sang a new song with these words:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were killed, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

¹⁰ And you have caused them to become God’s kingdom and his priests. And they will reign on the earth.”

- *C.S. Lewis portrays this truth powerfully in The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*
- Aslan came to Narnia not only to save Edmund but also to free Narnia from the tyranny of the White Witch
- *And when Aslan defeated the White Witch by his sacrificial death and resurrection and destroyed her in battle – then what did he do?*
- He set the two sons of Adam and two daughters of Eve on the four thrones at Cair Paravel to reign over the land of Narnia
- When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them dominion over all the earth
- *Adam and Eve lost that dominion to Satan when they disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden*
- Jesus Christ came to earth not only to free us from our sins – but also to free us from Satan’s tyranny and to restore dominion of the earth back to the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve

Daniel 7:26 - 27 (NIV) ²⁶“But the court will sit, and his (Antichrist’s) power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. ²⁷Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him (the Son of Man).’

(4) The Coming of Jesus Christ

Revelation 1:7 ⁷Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him—even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will weep because of him.

- **“And every eye will see him”**
 --Only a few shepherds and some stable animals witnessed his coming at Bethlehem
 --He came to his own Jewish people as their kingly Messiah and Savior – and most of his own people did not recognize him

--His deity was so well veiled by his human flesh that most of the peoples of the earth did not recognize him as the Son of God

- *Today as well, many people do not see the glory and uniqueness of Jesus Christ*
--they may regard him as one of many prophets or one of several ways to God – but not as the Way, the Truth and the Life
--they may regard him as a godly man – but not as God in human flesh

- *But one day – when He comes back with the clouds of heaven and his mighty angels with great power and glory – every eye will see him for who he is*
--and how will people respond?
--the peoples of the earth will mourn
--Why? Because those who rejected him will see the grave error of their unbelief and disrespect toward Jesus Christ
--seeing Jesus for who he truly is will be a cause of great rejoicing for believers, but a cause of great sorrow and regret for unbelievers
--one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

- *The son of man standing before the Jewish religious rulers and before Pilate 2000 years ago offered no resistance – like a lamb being led to the slaughter, he was led away to be crucified*
--in obedience to the Father’s plan of salvation, Jesus willingly sacrificed his life as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world
--but the Lamb is returning to earth as a Lion
--and you don’t want to be on the bad side of this Lion
--because this Lion of the tribe of Judah is anything but the wimpy, tolerant, non-judgmental, namby-pamby figure that many people today imagine him to be

II. THE GLORY OF THE SON OF MAN

Revelation 1:10-13 ¹⁰It was the Lord’s Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard a loud voice behind me, a voice that sounded like a trumpet blast... ¹²When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. ¹³And standing in the middle of the lampstands was the Son of Man.

(1) Christ the Head of His Church

- *When John turned around to see the majestic voice that was speaking to him, the first thing he saw was seven golden lampstands – and then he saw the Son of Man standing in the middle of the lampstands*

- We know from verse 20 that the seven golden lampstands are the seven churches mentioned in verse 11
- *Jesus Himself is the Light of the World – but the churches are His lampstands*
- There is not one lampstand with seven candles, but rather seven separate lampstands
- *Each local congregation is its own lampstand and witness for Christ*
- The number 7 is symbolic of the whole church – the church universal
- *Thus Revelation is written for 7 specific congregations in the province of Asia and for the universal church at all times and in all places*
- *As the strengths and weaknesses of these churches are evaluated by Christ Himself in chapters 2-3, it is evident that these were far from perfect churches*
- 5 of the 7 were in need of serious correction by Jesus
- *Yet the glorified Son of Man is found in the midst of the lampstands – the perfect Head fully identified with His defective body*
- Many people today are interested in Jesus but want nothing to do with His church
- *All churches have their flaws and inconsistencies and hypocrisies and prejudices and often reflect the likeness of the world more than that of Christ*
- **Nonetheless, where is Christ to be found? Among the lampstands**
- *There is no use looking for him in purer surroundings – it is his will to identify himself with and wed himself to the church*
- **If you want Christ – you will find him among the lampstands**

(2) Christ the High Priest

Revelation 1:13 And standing in the middle of the lampstands was the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest.

- *The first thing John notices about this Son of Man is his clothing – he was clothed in the garments of the high priest*
- **Jesus is the bridge between holy God and sinful man – specifically, by offering his own body as a sacrifice for sins – Jesus bridges the gap between us and God**

(3) Christ and the Ancient of Days

Revelation 1:14 ¹⁴His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow.

- *If you were here last week, you will remember this description of the Ancient of Days*

Daniel 7:9 (NIV) ⁹“As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool.

- ***The Ancient of Days is the Almighty, Eternal God***
- **The glory and holiness of the Ancient of Days and the glory and holiness of the Son of Man are one and the same**
- ***Applying the description of the Ancient of Days to Jesus is a claim to Deity***

(4) Christ in His Heavenly Glory

Revelation 1:14-16 And his eyes were bright like flames of fire. ¹⁵His feet were as bright as bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves... And his face was as bright as the sun in all its brilliance.

- Daniel saw a vision of a man – an angelic being -- so glorious as to be terrifying in his appearance...

Daniel 10: 5-6 ⁵ I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. ⁶His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

- Take the most awesome visions of angelic beings and the glory of God in the OT – and combine them all into one supreme vision – and what you have is the vision that John saw of someone like a Son of Man – ***namely, Jesus Christ***

(5) The Eyes of Christ

Revelation 1:14 And his eyes were bright like flames of fire.

- *Nothing escapes his vision // nothing impure can stand before his gaze // there is no hiding or covering up sin before these eyes that are like blazing fire*
- **The Son of Man is absolutely pure – and He is purifying**
- ***His fiery gaze both penetrates and purifies***
- He doesn't look AT us – He looks INTO us
- *His holiness penetrates us // purifies us // transforms us*

- **The Son of Man is a consuming fire – consuming that which is impure within us until we are able to worship the Father in spirit and in truth**

(6) The Word of Christ

Revelation 1:16 and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth.

- *The Son of Man wages war and overthrows the forces of evil with this sword*

Revelation 19:15 From his mouth came a sharp sword, and with it he struck down the nations. He ruled them with an iron rod, and he trod the winepress of the fierce wrath of almighty God.

- *Of course, this is symbolic language*
- **Jesus does not literally have bronze feet, fiery eyes and a sword sticking out of his mouth**
- ***But make no mistake – the word of Christ is a powerful weapon***

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV) ¹²For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

- ***You can either submit to the Word of Christ – yielding your will to the Word and obeying the Word – and thus be purified and renewed and transformed by the Word – or you can resist and disregard and disobey the Word – and thus be judged by the Word***
- **Be careful here: for you can study the Scriptures without hearing and obeying the Word of God // *you can listen to sermon after sermon without hearing and obeying and being changed by the Word of Christ***
- **You don't want to trifle with the sharp two-edged sword that comes from the mouth of the Son of Man**

(7) Christ the Eternal God

Revelation 1:17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, **“Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last.**

- **John responds to this revelation of the glory of the Son of Man by falling down prostrate at his feet “as though dead”**
- ***The next verse makes clear – this is Jesus – the same Jesus who was born in Bethlehem – the same Jesus who was baptized in the River Jordan – the same***

Jesus who fed the 5000 – the same Jesus who was crucified under Pontius Pilate – the same Jesus who came back to life 3 days later

- *Here Jesus identifies himself with these stunning words: “I am the First and the Last”*

Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end,” says the Lord God. “I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come, the Almighty One.”

- *These words are spoken by Yahweh – I AM WHO I AM – the Alpha and Omega – there is nothing before Alpha and there is nothing after Omega*
- **God is the One eternal Reality – He alone has the singular honor of being First, Last and Always**

Isaiah 44:6 (NIV) ⁶ “This is what the LORD says— Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: *I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.*”

- *There is only One Being who is eternally self-existent – only One Creator God who can say “I am the first and the last” – namely, the Lord Almighty*
- **And yet here Jesus identifies himself to John: *I am the first and the last***
- **And again at the end of the book:**

Revelation 22:12-13 **“See, I am coming soon, and my reward is with me, to repay all according to their deeds. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”**

- *No other man in human history – outside of an insane asylum – ever dared to utter such words*
- *Coming from the mouth of any other religious leader or any other great man – the words would be absurd – the height of presumption and audacity*
- *Yet here they are – coming from the mouth of Jesus of Nazareth – words that can be properly spoken only by Deity: **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End***
- *Either it is true – or it is blasphemy*
- *Either spoken by a God-Man – or by a godless man*
- *As C.S. Lewis said: A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher... You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord*

and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

(8) Christ the Ever-Living Lord

Revelation 1:18 ¹⁸ **I am the living one who died. Look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.**

- *Who is this magnificent Son of Man manifesting the very glory of God?*
- **The very same Jesus who died for our sins and was raised from the dead**
- *He is the Ever-Living One – though he had died as the sacrifice for our sins – he is alive forever*
- **Because of his victory over death – Jesus holds the “keys of Death and Hades”**
- *Hades was a Greek Deity who ruled over the realm of the dead*
- **No longer – Jesus the Ever-Living One has power over life and death – and He rules over the living and the dead**

- *The Ever-Living One is the Resurrection and the Life – and the true Life-Giver*
- **Other religious leaders can tell you how to live – and they can give you their best guess as to what happens after you die – and they can claim to point you toward eternal life**
- **But they cannot actually give you life – because they themselves are dead**

- **Only the Ever-Living Lord can give you life – can make you spiritually alive now – and give you everlasting life in heaven**
- *He gives you life by giving you Himself – His own Life – living in you as you receive Him into your heart – His life enters you and makes you alive –*
- *Dead religious leaders can't do that // Dead moral teachers can't do that*
- **Only the Ever-Living Lord can give you life**

John 10:10 (NIV) **I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**

- **How about you?**
- **Have you received this life that can be found only in Jesus Christ?**

- *Receiving this life is only the beginning*
- **The goal of our salvation is not only forgiveness of sins and life everlasting – but it is fellowship with Jesus Christ – and ultimately sharing in His glory**

- **We are never more alive than when we are fixing our gaze on the glory of Christ and worshipping Him accordingly**
- **Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe // the Alpha and Omega // the First and Last**
- **He came from heaven's glory to this earth as a baby // lived a fully human, God-reliant, Spirit-filled life // died as the Sacrifice for our sins // *Came back to life the third day // and lives forever as the Ever-Living Lord - holding the keys of Death and Hades***
- **Your eternal destiny depends on what you do with Jesus Christ**
- **He is worthy of our saving faith - surely - but much more - He is worthy of our reverent submission and obedience - worthy of our devotion and worship and service - worthy of our love and affection - worthy of being Treasured in our hearts as the Supreme Joy of our lives**

Prayer

"Revelation Song"