

WHO'S IT FROM?

Revelation 1:9-20

Introduction

Discuss the receiving of mail - the junk mail, unwanted mail - bills, etc. Much of it goes directly to the garbage or gets stacked up to be soon forgotten about.

But what happens when you find a hand-written envelope with a familiar return address? Or a typed letter responding to a job application or a reply regarding some important event you are looking forward to? How we treat our mail depends a great deal on who the sender is. All it takes is a glance to determine who it is from and how we are going to respond to it.

Chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation consist of letters to seven churches in the area of Asia Minor. We will be looking at them in the weeks to come, but this morning we are going to consider for a few minutes the sender of these seven letters to the churches. The letters themselves may contain some puzzling messages and unusual statements, and many things that are hard to understand, but there is certainly nothing obscure or mysterious about the sender of these letters.

The Apostle John describes clearly who the letters are from. They come from the risen Christ. And what we want to do today is to look at the description John gives of this one who has given us this message and then consider in the light of who He is, what we are going to do about His message to us.

One of the things that becomes obvious as we go through the book of Revelation is that the focus of the entire book is on Jesus Christ. In every chapter, every passage, our attention is drawn to the glory and majesty of the risen Christ.

This morning we are going to consider John's description of the Lord Jesus from three standpoints just as this passage is divided into paragraphs. The first paragraph is vv. 9-11 and in it we see...

I. The Authority of the One Who Sends the Message

Read the verses. v. 9 - describes John's situation and suffering

v. 10 describes John's condition and the occasion of the message. In the Spirit - was this a reflection of John's personal spiritual state or a description of a special movement of the Spirit of God? I believe it is the latter. A.T. Robertson says he "came into an ecstatic condition ... not the normal spiritual condition." Another commentary (JFB) says that he was "in a state of ecstasy; the outer world being shut out, and the inner and higher life or spirit being taken full possession of by God's Spirit, so that an immediate connection with the invisible world is established."

On the Lord's Day – a unique term, found only here in the NT. It is a reference to Sunday, the day of the Lord's resurrection, which was the normal day of meeting and by the time of John's writing had become known as the Lord's day. This was a vision that was given to John by the Spirit of God—not a dream but a special revelation.

vv. 10b-11 show us a bit of the authority of the one sending this message to us. First there is the power and clarity of his voice - like a trumpet. Then there is the authority with which He speaks - v. 11. He speaks in the imperative mood—it is an authoritative command. "Write what you see..." *Emphasize the authority of the one who gave the vision.*

The second paragraph is vv. 12-16 and in it we see...

II. The Glory of the One Who Sends the Message

Read verses 12-16. I don't want to focus on the lampstands at this point. I want you to focus on the person John saw. You see, the image before him was enough to frighten him nearly to death and it ought to make a significant impression on us as well. I don't know that I can adequately explain everything that John saw; in fact, he had trouble explaining what he saw. However, I do want you to grasp some of the glory and majesty of the Lord Jesus who revealed Himself in this passage.

- **"...like a son of man..."** - see Dan 7:13 – *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven."* This is the first reference to Jesus as the Son of Man, a title that Jesus used of himself often while here on Earth.

- **"...a long robe..."** (NIV – *reaching down to his feet*) – this would be indicative of a priest or judge—someone of great importance.
- **"...a golden sash around his chest..."** – this reminds us of the golden girdle which was worn by the high priest.
- **"...white hair and head, flaming eyes..."** – reminds us of Daniel's description of the Ancient of Days in ch. 7 - a description of God *"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire."* (Daniel 7:9 ESV)
- **"...feet like burnished bronze..."** – this might be suggestive of the altar of sacrifice and the life that had to be offered for sin. The altar and the other articles used in the sacrifice were always of bronze. These are only suggestions of possible meanings for this description.

But look at what else John says:

His voice – "like the roar of many waters." The NLT says, "...his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves..." – booming, authoritative. The stars - defined in v. 20...

Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword – indicates the devastating judgement which will fall upon those with whom He is engaged in battle.

His face (countenance) was like the sun - his brilliance. Think of what Paul saw on the Damascus road.

No matter how we understand the various elements in this description of the Lord Jesus, one thing is very clear. The impact that it had on John and should have on us is tremendous. There is glory. There is holiness. There is awesome majesty. And there is terror.

And that leads us to the third paragraph which is vv. 17-18. In this paragraph we see...

III. The Power of the One Who Sends the Message

John was so terrified at the vision before him that he fell down as though dead at the feet of the One he saw. The overwhelming vision of majesty and holiness, of glory and brilliance was more than he could bear.

Application - when is the last time you were overwhelmed by the glory of God? When did you last tremble in fear before the holiness and brilliance of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ? Perhaps we need to ask the Lord to give us a fresh vision of Himself that we might see afresh His greatness, His majesty and His glory.

Let us look at the power He reveals in these two verses. First He reassures John by putting his hand on him with the words "Do not be afraid—fear not."

Then He begins to describe Himself. And in this description we see three important characteristics of the Lord Jesus:

1. He is eternal in his nature - the first and the last - from everlasting to everlasting, he is God.
2. He possesses life in his very nature - He died, yet is alive forevermore.
3. He holds all power and absolute control over the domain of death and the abode of the dead - Hades (hell) - not to be confused with the lake of fire.

What power he has! This is the one who sends this message to the churches.

The final part of this paragraph, vv. 19-20, is not a further revelation of the One who sends us these messages, but rather a short explanation, which we will look at just briefly.

v. 19 – the command – write it down. We also see a brief outline of the book: the things you have seen—that is the past; those that are—that is the present; and those that are to take place after this—that is the future. Those are the things that are contained in this book of the Revelation.

v. 20 – the mystery – something which is hidden but is now revealed. The lampstands are the churches – the seven churches of Asia in ch. 2-3. The stars are the angels of the churches. The word angel is literally a messenger. Some have suggested that the angels or messengers of the churches could refer to the pastors of the churches. The risen Christ is holding the messengers of the churches in his right hand. If indeed this is a reference to the pastors or leaders of the churches that is a great comfort and encouragement to me.

Conclusion

Who's it from? How would you read a letter from someone like we have described? Someone who was dead but is alive? Someone who has power over death and hell and the grave? No one but Jesus Christ can make that claim.

→ Illust.

Harry Houdini became world-famous by escaping from impossible situations. He wriggled out of a straitjacket while dangling upside-down from a cable far above the ground. He freed himself from a federal prison cell after being handcuffed, shackled and chained. But there was one place from which he could not break free.

Houdini promised his wife and friends that if at all possible he would return from the dead. But that promise was never kept. After an unsuccessful attempt to make contact with Harry on October 31, 1936—the 10th anniversary of his death—the magician's wife, Bess, admitted defeat. "I do not believe that Houdini can come back to me—or to anyone else," she said. "The Houdini Shrine has burned for 10 years. I now, reverently, turn out the light. It is finished."

- RBC "Life-Changing Messages from the Risen Lord" - p. 3

No, Houdini could not come back. Only Christ fulfilled His promise to return from the grave. This message to the churches in the ancient world and to us today is the personal communication from One who conquered death so that we might have life. How will you respond to a letter from such a one? I would again suggest that you sit down this week and read through the book of Revelation, especially chapters 2-3, to begin with. As you read, keep in mind that these are not the words of John. Rather, they are the life-changing words of the risen Christ, the one who has all authority and all power and is worthy of all honor and glory.