

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapter 2:12 – 3:6

April 27, 2016

Beyond doubt, the leading character of Revelation is our Lord Jesus Christ. But we do not see Him in the humble human form portrayed in the gospels. Instead, as if His splendor is too great to convey with ordinary descriptions, John uses several *figures* to depict aspects of the Lord. Let's look at them.

1:13-16

Robe and sash: Jesus as judge.

White hair: Age and wisdom.

Eyes like fire: Penetrating vision into the heart of man.

Feet like bronze: Brass as type (figure) of judgment.

Voice like many waters: Majesty and awe.

Sword coming out of mouth: This figure reappears in 19:15, where the sword is identified as the weapon He will use to smite His enemies.

But the sword, proceeding from the Lord's mouth, also represents the Word as in Heb. 4:12-13: *"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.... all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."* Here the sword is not a weapon but a scalpel to lay open the inner man for judgment – believers and unbelievers alike (Rom 14:12, 1 Peter 4:5). *"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

We need not wait for the day of judgment for this surgery. Honest searching in the Word will bring conviction of faults, and confession will bring healing and reconciliation with God and our brothers and sisters.

Face shining like the sun: This is almost certainly not figurative but a physical radiance of the Lord's glory, first glimpsed at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17, Mark 9, Luke 9).

5:6

Lamb appearing as if it had been slain: Just as Jesus invited Thomas to put his hand into the wound in His side (John 20:27), He will display for eternity the proof that He has indeed died and risen again.

Jesus is called the **Lamb** 26 times in Revelation. In this final scriptural record, His meekness is exalted and His sacrifice remembered.

Seven horns: Omnipotence (and, yes, lambs do have horns).

Seven eyes: Omniscience; representing the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10).

12:5

Male child who will rule nations: The Messiah destined for the throne of David.

14:14

Harvester: Gathering the wheat and the chaff (Matt. 3:12)

19:9

The Lamb as bridegroom: The eternal union of the Lord and His sanctified Church.

19:11-16

The mounted conqueror: The promised but long delayed Day of Lord comes with inescapable judgment.

Many diadems on head: *"For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations."* (Ps. 22:28)

Robe dipped in blood: Perhaps from the harvest of Chapter 14.

Word of God: *"In the beginning was the word ..."* (John 1:1)

King of kings and Lord of lords: Absolute sovereignty.

21:22-23

Temple: *"Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.... he was speaking about the temple of his body."* (John 2:19,21)

Lamp of the city: *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men."* (John 1:4)

Notes on 2:12 – 3:6

2:12 Pergamum was the northernmost of the great coastal cities that also included Ephesus and Smyrna.

2:13 Pergamum was a center of pagan and imperial worship; thus, the place “where Satan dwells.” Antipas was likely martyred for refusing to worship the emperor.

2:14 Teachings of the Nicolaitans and of Balaam have now entered the church.

The mention of Balaam may seem perplexing at first. Did he not bless the children of Israel, as directed by the Lord, rather than curse them as desired by the king Balak? He did, yes, but Numbers 31:16 says he later helped entice the Israelites to the adultery and idolatry recorded in Numbers 25.

2 Peter 2:15 and Jude 11 charge Balaam with seeking to profit from wrongdoing. This may refer to Numbers 22:15-19. The Lord has clearly revealed His mind to Balaam earlier in verse 12. But when a delegation of princes arrives, Balaam offers to consult the Lord again, seemingly to ascertain if He has changed His mind so Balaam can collect a princely fee.

Viewing Pergamum in the historical prophecy scheme, this would be the time the church was being established as the official religion of the Roman empire with salaried priests. Is it possible that those priests were led to tailor and temper their message to be more acceptable to their new patrons? Is it possible even today that monetary gain and the attention of princes can tempt Christians to “revisit” established truths just as Balaam re-sought the will of God that he already had received?

2:17 The meaning is unclear, but perhaps “hidden manna” refers to the deeply personal spiritual sustenance given to the believer in times of trial. A white stone was a token of victory, a “yes” vote, or a sign of welcome given to a guest.

2:18 The inland city of Thyatira was known for its many craft guilds, particularly dyers of cloth (such as Lydia, Acts 16:14).

2:19 Fitting for a city of craftsmen, the assembly at Thyatira was known for its ever increasing

service and works. The historical/prophetic view places Thyatira during the long reign of the Catholic church in western Europe. This period saw widespread conversions (both genuine and nominal), construction, and unity of church and society to an unparalleled degree. But medieval writers tell us of rampant corruption in the church: money-seeking officeholders, licentious monks, etc. When virtually every person in the community bore the name of Christian, whether they truly believed or not, many disgraceful patterns of living and teaching were tolerated.

2:20 It is not known if Jezebel was the actual name of the woman in Thyatira, or if she is called that because of her resemblance to Ahab's notorious queen. She also corresponds in many ways to the picture of Babylon in Chapters 17-18.

2:24 What some call the deep things of Satan, or depths of Satan, likely refers to special knowledge available to those who turn from God – the very thing promised to Eve in the garden.

3:1 Southeast of Thyatira, Sardis was also known for cloth dying. Its metallurgists were the first to separate gold from silver to produce coins of unprecedented purity.

3:1 The outward reputation of Sardis belies its inner reality. The Reformation was a turning point for the church when many truths of Scripture were rescued from the crypt of tradition, most notably the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. But the new movement failed to make its “works complete.” It failed to discard many empty rituals, allied itself with government through state churches, and preserved the non-scriptural distinction between clergy and laity.

3:2 Sardis occupied a strong military position but had twice been conquered in its history. In both cases, the city's watchmen had fallen asleep and failed to detect the approach of the enemy. The command “Wake up” may allude to this.

3:4 As in verse 24, the Lord speaks encouraging words to a faithful minority keeping faith within a corrupted system. “*I will never leave you nor forsake you*” (Heb 13:5).