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## The Portraits of Jesus

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#### I. Jesus Christ is the focal point of the book of Revelation.

- A. The theme of this book is the revealing of Jesus Christ in judgment and salvation, which is described as His “coming with clouds” in 1:7. This theme is seen throughout the book.
1. John calls attention to this “coming” at the beginning of the Revelation with the word “behold” (1:7), to draw the attention of the reader to Jesus.
  2. The “coming” of Jesus is emphasized within the letters to the seven churches.
    - a. The church at Ephesus (2:5).
    - b. The church at Pergamos (2:14,16).
    - c. The church at Thyatira (2:25).
    - d. The church at Sardis (3:3).
    - e. The church at Philadelphia (3:11).
  3. Throughout the book, this image of Jesus coming in judgment on the unrighteous is burned in the mind of the audience.
    - a. The wrath of the Lamb “has come” (6:16,17).
    - b. The wrath of God “has come” (11:18).
    - c. The hour of God’s judgment “has come” (14:7, 15-20).
    - d. The judgments of the Lamb “have been manifested” (15:4), which carries the same idea of “coming” or “appearing.”
    - e. Jesus statement “Behold, I am coming as a thief.” This is in the context of judgment (16:5,7,15).
    - f. The theme of judgment throughout Revelation focuses upon the figure of Babylon (17:1; 18:8; 19:2,11).
  4. The final consideration of Revelation is aimed at this particular “coming” in the last chapter (22:6-21).
    - a. The time context nails the events as occurring within a very short time frame.
      - 1) God revealed to His servants “things which must shortly take place” (22:6).
      - 2) John was instructed not to seal this prophecy because “the time is at hand” (22:10).
    - b. Three times within this chapter Jesus stresses the fact that He was “coming quickly” (22:7,12,20).
    - c. John prays that the Lord would indeed come as He had promised (22:20).
- B. What is a “coming”?
1. The definition of *e[r]comai* translated “coming” in 1:7.
    - a. The general meaning is to come or to arrive.

- b. Commonly the word conveys the idea to *appear, make an appearance, come before the public*.<sup>1</sup>
  2. The idea then is a visitation and appearance of God upon the earth; usually in wrathful judgment upon those He is visiting and deliverance of His faithful. The language is figurative to call attention to God's power. However, the "coming" of God is usually connected to an earthly show of rule through the providential direction of armies against cities or nations.
  3. The "comings" of God in the OT are common and are usually connected with cloud imagery which may represent the power and majesty of God<sup>2</sup>, or as some see it the "Glory-Cloud" of Jehovah<sup>3</sup>. We see can see God...
    - a. Coming like clouds upon Israel and Jerusalem (Jeremiah 4:13-14, Ezekiel 34:12-13; Joel 2:2; Zephaniah 1:15).
    - b. Coming on a cloud to Egypt in judgment (Isaiah 19:1; Ezekiel 30:3-4,18; 32:7).
  4. The "coming" of Jesus passages, as revealed in the Gospels, are numerous and are an important consideration to the study of Revelation. These passages will be considered during the discussion on the "Son of Man" figure.
- C. Which "coming" is under consideration in Revelation 1:7? Is this the final judgment, a judgment on Rome or on Jerusalem?
  1. Context should determine which "coming" of Christ we are to understand.
    - a. The time context eliminates a distant or final "coming" of Jesus.
    - b. Revelation 1:1,3 emphasize that the events described in the book "must shortly take place" and that the "time is near."
    - c. Whatever "coming" v.7 is describing, we have to interpret the meaning without doing injustice to the time context.
    - d. Remember, John is writing to the people of his day, not to an audience living 1000 or 2000 years later.<sup>4</sup>
  2. Consideration of the phrase "even they who pierced Him."
    - a. The appearance of Jesus described in 1:7 has a definite target of those who crucified Him.
    - b. While the Romans are the ones to have officiated the crucifixion of Jesus, clearly the Jews were the ones responsible for His death.<sup>5</sup> Concerning Jesus, the Jews...
      - 1) Desired His death (John 11:53; Matthew 26:4; 27:1).

<sup>1</sup> Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Ogden, Arthur M., *The Avenging of the Apostles & Prophets*, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Chilton, David, *The Days of Vengeance*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>4</sup> Even 100 years later from the recording of Revelation by John stretches the natural meaning of these time verses. The sense of immediacy within Revelation is clear; and the readers to whom this Apocalypse was sent would have expected these events to be fulfilled in their lifetime. This time context is a death nail to the dispensational view and is a very big problem for those who interpret Babylon to be Rome. But, don't let me be too dogmatic. ☺

<sup>5</sup> Gentry, Kenneth L., Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell*. Read Gentry's discussion on "The Theme of Revelation" for a discussion of this verse (pp. 121-132).

- 2) Paid to have Him arrested (Matthew 26:14-15, 47; 27:3-9).
  - 3) Paraded false witnesses to testify against Him (Matthew 27:59-62).
  - 4) Tried and convicted Jesus (Matthew 27:65-66).
  - 5) Sent Him to the Romans (Matthew 27:2, 11, 12; Acts 3:13).
  - 6) Invoked the blood of Jesus on their heads (Matthew 27:24-25).
  - 7) Demanded a robber be released instead of Jesus (John 18:39,40).
  - 8) Demanded that Jesus be crucified (John 19:6, 15).
- c. In the spirit of their prophet-murdering fathers, the generation of Jews in Jesus' day would be called to suffer the consequences of their rejection of those who were sent by God (Matthew 23:32-38). The rejection of Jesus by the Jews would be the ultimate transgression for which they would be severely punished. But, what kind of punishment would be fitting enough? A desolation and destruction of their holiest of cities, perhaps?
3. Consideration of the phrase "all the tribes of the earth will mourn."
- a. The word "tribes."
    - 1) "Tribes" from *fulhv* which in the NT always refers to the Jewish tribes of Israel <sup>6</sup> (i.e., Acts 13:21; Romans 11:1; Hebrews 7:13;).
    - 2) The word is used elsewhere in Revelation clearly identifying the tribes of Israel (7:4; 21:12). The Jews were one of the few civilizations who were a tribal nation. The meaning would not naturally include everyone on earth.
  - b. There is a striking parallel between Revelation 1:7 and Matthew 24:30. It is my contention that both are referring to the same coming of Jesus in the clouds—the coming in judgment on Jerusalem.
    - 1) An argument could be made from the observation that there have been many "comings" of God and/or Christ. Why say this is a coming in judgment on Jerusalem and not some other city or people?
    - 2) Three questions I would raise...
      - a) From what is recorded, how many "comings" did Jesus foretell?
      - b) Whom did Jesus hold liable for His crucifixion?
      - c) Who are the tribes under consideration?
- D. Revelation should be read with the idea of this coming of Jesus. We witness the visions John has of Jesus coming in judgment and salvation. Though Jesus is mentioned throughout the book of Revelation, for the purposes of this lecture, we will consider Jesus as...
1. The Son of Man.
  2. The Lamb of God.
  3. The Mighty Angel.

## II. The Visions of the Son of Man

- E. The figure of Jesus within Revelation as the Son of Man is dominant throughout the book.

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<sup>6</sup> Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

1. The Son of Man figure appears in the first vision of John concerning the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 1:10-20.
  2. The Son of Man figure next appears later in the judgment scene where He is harvesting (probably the faithful saints) in Revelation 14:14-16.
  3. Finally, the Son of Man figure appears in Revelation 19:11-16 as the victorious King. Even though the term “Son of Man” does not occur in this passage, it is clear the figure in chapter one has emerged from judgment and tribulation as the conquering Lord.
- F. Discussion of the term “Son of Man.”
1. “Son of Man” was the term Jesus most often used to describe Himself. The way our Lord uses the term “Son of Man” is more than just saying that He is, in part, a product of humanity. Rather our Lord’s use of the term can be categorized into three distinct contexts with few, but notable, exceptions.<sup>7</sup>
    - a. In the contexts where Jesus asserts His authority while on earth. Examples...
      - 1) His authority over the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).
      - 2) His authority to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6).
    - b. In the contexts where Jesus emphasizes His suffering and dying on the cross, as well as His resurrection. Examples...
      - 1) His teaching the disciples concerning His death, burial and resurrection (Mark 8:31).
      - 2) Jesus speaks of His betrayal (Luke 9:44).
    - c. In the contexts where Jesus promises His coming in judgment.
      - 1) This is the context in which the term “Son of Man” is most often found.
      - 2) There is a strong connection between these types of “Son of Man” passages and the coming of Jesus in the book of Revelation. Notices these similarities...
        - a) The Son of Man comes in glory (Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Luke 21:27; Revelation 5:12, 13).
        - b) Comes in power (Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 9:1; 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; Revelation 5:12, 13).
        - c) Comes with angels (Matthew 16:27; 24:31; Mark 8:38; 13:27; Luke 9:26).<sup>8</sup>
        - d) Comes in His kingdom (Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 21:31; Revelation 11:15; 12:10).
  2. Consideration of the “Son of Man” passage in Daniel 7 and the book of Revelation.
    - a. Clearly there is a connection with the figure of the Son of Man to Daniel 7:13,14.
    - b. In Daniel, the Son of Man is...

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<sup>7</sup> Consult the articles on the term “Son of Man” in both the old and newer sets of *ISBE*. On a personal note, this is a very interesting study I wish more brethren would pursue.

<sup>8</sup> For a comparison of angels in Revelation, just turn anywhere in the book you are bound to find an angel or two.

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- 1) “Coming with clouds.”
  - 2) Given “dominion and glory and a kingdom.”
  - c. We see an interesting twist in the interpretation of this vision. Instead of the Son of Man, we see in v. 27 “the people, the saints of the Most High” to whom the kingdom is given.
    - 1) This seems to suggest the Son of Man is representative of the faithful.
    - 2) What connection is there to this and to John calling the disciples “a kingdom of priests” (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; cf. 20:4,6)?
  3. The connection between the “Son of Man” passages and the book of Revelation.
    - a. What these passages have in common is a declaration or affirmation of the authority and power of Jesus.
    - b. We are to understand His coming with His kingdom not as an establishment of His rule, but instead it is a visible and irrefutable demonstration (through the act of judging) of His rule both in heaven and on earth.
    - c. Isn’t this the real issue of Revelation? Who is in power and whom shall we serve? The Revelation was given to shed light on the events of judgment to give assurance to the disciple the Jesus Christ is Lord.
    - d. So within the Apocalypse we see a progression of the Son of Man figure.
      - 1) At the beginning of the book, the Son of Man warns the churches to remain faithful during this time of tribulation.
      - 2) Near the middle, the Son of Man harvests (protects the faithful) in the midst of judgment.
      - 3) Close to the end, the Son of Man appears victorious having defeated the enemy.
  - G. The first “Son of Man” vision (Revelation 1:10-20).
    1. First John hears the voice without seeing the figure.
      - a. He hears “a loud voice, as of a trumpet” (v.10).
      - b. The voice identifies Himself as “the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last” (v.11)
      - c. The voice instructs John to write what He sees to the seven churches (v.11)
    2. John then turns to see the figure connected to the voice.
      - a. He first sees seven golden lampstands (v.12), which we later learn are the seven churches (v. 20).
      - b. He then sees the figure of “One like the Son of Man” standing in the midst of the lampstands (v. 13).
      - c. He is clothed with a garment down to the feet (v.13).
      - d. Girded about the chest with a golden band (v. 13).
      - e. His head and hair were white like wool and snow (v.14).
      - f. His eyes like a flame of fire (v.14).
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- g. His feet were like fine and refined brass (v.15).
  - h. His voice as the sound of many waters (v.15).
  - i. He held seven stars in His right hand (v. 16).
  - j. A sharp two-edged sword came from His mouth (v. 16).
  - k. His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength (v.16).
3. John's reaction to seeing the figure is to fall at His feet as dead (v.17).
    - a. This is the reaction of man in the presence of Divine Power (Ezekiel 1:28:3:23).
    - b. Notice the interesting twist in Daniel 8:17,18 where Daniel falls before an angel, and the angel addresses Daniel as "son of man."
  4. The Son of Man speaks to John.
    - a. Tells John not to be afraid (v.17).
    - b. He is "The First and the Last" (v.17)
    - c. He tells John "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore" (v. 18).
    - d. He has "the keys of Hades and of Death."
- H. The second "Son of Man" vision (Revelation 14:14-16).
1. The context of this vision is sandwiched between the proclamations by the three angels (vs. 6-13) and the beginning of the bowls of wrath in chapter 15.
  2. John "looks" and he sees "One like the Son of Man" (v. 14).
    - a. He is on a white cloud (v.14).
    - b. He has a golden crown on His head (v.14).
    - c. He has a sharp sickle (v.14).
  3. An angel announces the harvest is ready and the time has come to reap (v.15).
  4. John sees the reaping of the earth (v.16).
  5. It is important to note a contrast in the following verses (vs. 17-20), where we see an angel gathering grapes to be thrown in the winepress of God's wrath.
- I. The third "Son of Man" vision (Revelation 19:11-16).
1. Though the term "Son of Man" does not occur in these verses, there is a clear association between the figure here and the "Son of Man" figure in chapter 1.
  2. The context takes place after the overthrow of Babylon (18:1-24) and the heavenly victory celebration (19:1-10).
  3. This is the Son of Man emerging victorious from battle.
    - a. He is seated on a white horse (v.11).
    - b. He is called Faithful and True (v.11).
    - c. It is said, "in righteousness He judges and makes war" (v.11).
    - d. His eyes were like a flame of fire (v.12).
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- e. On His head were many crowns (v.12).
  - f. He had a name only He knew (v.12).
  - g. He was clothed in a robe dipped in blood (v. 13).
  - h. His name is called The Word of God (v.13).
  - i. The armies of heaven follow Him on white horses (v.14).
  - j. A sharp two-edged sword comes out of His mouth to strike the nations (v.15).
  - k. He is to rule with a rod of iron (v.15).
  - l. He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of the Almighty God (v.15).
  - m. On His robe and on his thigh are written “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (v. 16).
4. There is no question any longer for those who may have doubted. After seeing the destruction of Babylon, we indeed see Christ as King and Lord!

### III. The Visions of the Lamb of God

- J. The figure of the Jesus as the Lamb of God is predominant in Revelation being mentioned in 26 verses.
- 1. The picture of the Lamb is pictographic of His sacrificial death on the cross for the sins of the world. This theme is shown throughout the Bible.
    - a. Isaiah envisions Jesus as the Man of Sorrows and describes him as “as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7).
    - b. John the Baptist declared of Jesus, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).
  - 2. Relationship to the Lamb in the book of Revelation.
    - a. He is standing in the midst of the throne of God (5:6).
    - b. He is worshiped (5:8,12,13).
    - c. He opens the scroll with the seven seals (6:1).
    - d. The men of the earth cower in His wrath (6:16).
    - e. Stands with the 144,000 (7:9; 14:1,4).
    - f. Will lead the faithful to living fountains of water (7:17).
    - g. Has the Book of Life (13:8; 21:27).
    - h. The preparation of the marriage of the Lamb (19:7,9; 21:9).
    - i. The Lamb and God are the temple of the New Jerusalem (21:22).
    - j. The Lamb and God are the light of the New Jerusalem (21:23).
    - k. The Lamb and God are the source of the pure river of water of life (22:1).
    - l. The Lamb and God have a throne (22:3).
- K. The Worthy Lamb (Revelation 5:1-14).
- 1. The context is set in the throne room of God.

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- a. God is sitting on His throne holding a scroll that is sealed with seven seals (v. 1).
  - b. A call is made by a strong angel to anyone worthy to open the seals (v. 2).
  - c. John is saddened because no one is found worthy (vs. 3,4).
  - d. Then the scene shifts...
2. The announcement of the Lion is made (v. 5).
    - a. Notice that John does not see the figure of the Lion, but only hears the announcement of a Lion, which fits the pattern frequently found in Revelation.
    - b. The Lion of the tribe of Judah.
    - c. The Lion who is the Root of David.
    - d. The Lion who prevailed to open the scroll.
3. The vision of the Worthy Lamb (v. 6).
    - a. John then looks to see the Lion, but almost paradoxical sees the Lamb.
    - b. He is standing in the midst of the throne, of the four living creatures and of the elders.
    - c. He is the Lamb having been slain.
    - d. He has seven horns.
    - e. He has seven eyes.
      - 1) John interprets this symbol for us as “the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”
4. The Lamb takes the scroll from the right hand of God (v. 7).
5. A series of praise and worship is offered to the Lamb (vs. 8-14).
    - a. The four living creatures and the 24 elders worship the Lamb first (vs. 8-10).
      - 1) They fall down before Him.
      - 2) Each has a harp.
      - 3) Each has golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
      - 4) They sang a new song (vs. 9-10).
        - a) They declare the worthiness of the Lamb and His ability to open the scroll.
        - b) They emphasize man’s redemption to God through His blood.
        - c) They describe those who received this redemption as being those from “out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation”
        - d) The redeemed are now a kingdom of priests and they will reign upon the earth. Notice the future tense. They are not reigning now, but they will.
    - b. Now the multitudes of angels join the worship (vs. 11,12).
      - 1) They declare the worthiness of the Lamb.
      - 2) The Lamb received power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing.
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- c. All of creation now joins the worship of the Lamb (vs. 13,14).
    - 1) Notice the escalation of the worshipers, starting with those centered around the throne, expanding to the angelic hosts of heaven and then to all creation.
    - 2) They bless God and the Lamb for all eternity.
  - L. The Lamb is our Savior who died for us, and by doing so led us in victory over Death.