

Revelation 1: 12; "In the Midst of the Golden Lampstands", Sermon # 11 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered on March 19th, 2006 by Pastor Paul Rendall in the Afternoon Worship Service.

Here we have the first real section of the vision; John having stated that he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, we now find him hearing a "voice like a trumpet," coming from behind him, and stating Who it is that is speaking to him, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. He is immediately given instructions to write down what he sees in a book, and then when the vision is completed, to send it to the seven churches.

The very first thing that John does when he hears this voice is to turn to see Who it is. And he sees not only this Awesome Personage, but he sees Him in the midst of 7 golden lampstands. We are given the understanding of what these golden lampstands represent down in verse 20. The seven lampstands are the seven churches. They are golden lampstands because they are precious in Christ's sight and of great value to God because of the value of Christ's truth and grace which is found in His Church. I have already told you that 7 is the number which represents perfection and completion in the Scriptures when used in a prophetic sense like this. Here, the indication is that these 7 churches are to be representative of all the true churches in every generation in the Church age. The purpose of a lampstand is to hold up the light. The purpose of every true church is to do the same. "You are the light of the world," Jesus says. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." In the book of Revelation we are going to find a number of items seen by John which are items which we would have seen if we were standing in the Tabernacle of Old Testament times. This is the first one; the golden lampstands. It is spoken of in Exodus 25: 31 as "a lampstand made of pure gold." The Church in all generations is one lampstand. But even as Exodus 25: 32-39 indicates that that one lampstand had six branches that came out from it, and one lamp for the middle, even so the one universal Church has in it, 7 lamps burning which represent the complete number of the local churches in all generations in the church age, which are represented here in this vision by the 7 churches of Asia Minor to which John is immediately writing to. For Christ to "stand" in the midst of them must mean that He is the ruler over the whole Church and each individual church during the whole Church age. This is pictured for us in these verses by what He looks like, what He is wearing, and what His voice is like.

So the question that we want to answer this afternoon is "What will Christ's rule over the Church be like during the course of the whole Church age?" It is to exercise His prerogatives as King over His Church and King over the nations. You know what the word prerogative means don't you? It means "a prior, peculiar, or exclusive right or privilege; especially such a right attaching to an office or position, as that of a sovereign or king." It is the right that a king has to use his sovereign power in certain ways. So Christ's rule over the Church will be to take His stand in the midst of His churches to act as a King exercising the following prerogatives.

1st- He has the prerogative to act as a holy and wise judge in all matters requiring discernment and experience. (Verses 12-14)

2nd- He has the prerogative to act as Commander-in Chief who will order and direct His forces in the spiritual battle. (Verse 15)

3rdly- He has the prerogative to use the words of His mouth as a sword (Verses 15b and 16)

1st- He has the prerogative to act as both a High Priest and King and to rule in both these offices. (Verses 12 and 13))

The picture given to us of Jesus Christ here in these verses is not one of what He physically looks like now in heaven. It is a picture which represents what His present and on-going spiritual reign and rule as a King are to look like, who has accomplished redemption and is going to apply it to all of God's Elect. The picture is of One, "like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band." This has somewhat perplexed commentators because it appears to be the dress of the High priest in the Old Testament. And yet, clearly, the whole indication of the passage is that here is Christ the King. But I say, why not both? In Zechariah 6: 13 it says, "Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Jesus Christ is our great High Priest "who has passed through the heavens," it says in Hebrews 4: 14. He is a High Priest who is "seated at the right hand of Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and the true temple which the Lord erected and not man," it says in Hebrews 8: 1 and 2. That is what John is seeing; a High-Priest who is reigning and ruling in righteousness. Based upon His finished work, He has been crowned with glory and honor by God the Father. He has been given all authority in heaven and earth. And "from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." And He ever lives to make intercession for His saints.

He is described as "being girded about the chest with a golden band or girdle." When men in Old Testament times were going to do some physical work, they would gird up their loins around the waist for it. But if it were a priest or a king, and they were ministering or ruling, they would often gird the robe higher around the chest; right around the area of the heart. In the case of our Savior and Lord, this should speak to us of His great faithfulness in regard to the issues of our hearts. He is always mindful of what affects the hearts of all of His people, both individually and as a church. He knows how to impute His righteousness to His believing saints when they are discouraged by their own heart-attitudes and actions which don't seem to be measuring up to the perfection of what God's law demands. He is girded to bring to pass in the life of a church and each of its people, a faithful application of His purposes in grace toward them; to build them up and to do them good, to command all the blessings of salvation be applied to them at the proper time and in the right way. I think of what it says of Him in the book of Hebrews, Chapter 4, and verse 15; "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." This should be a great encouragement to all of us who are struggling with sin. The Lord Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses, He knows the strength of temptation, and the strength of Satan's power, and He knows how to help us in the midst of the battle, how to teach us to stand against ourselves and our sin and the wiles of the Devil, and He will give us grace to help us to stand. This is where your faith

comes in to play, dear believer. Faith looks to the Lord Jesus as the Strong Redeemer and the Mighty King. Faith knows that the victory is found in seeking Jesus.

This leads me to say, 2ndly, that Jesus Christ has the prerogative to act as Commander-in-Chief who will order and direct His forces in the spiritual battle. (Verses 14 and 15)

I believe that this is why you see Him described as One "whose head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow." He has experienced temptation and has been victorious. He has been through this world and felt its allurements and has overcome. He has had to face the deceitful words of the Devil and triumphed over him by the words of the Scripture handled rightly. He handled it by the power of righteous resistance to sin and a lack of self promotion. Jesus stands in the midst of His churches in order to teach them this same right way to glorify God. He stands ready to lead you into the spiritual battle and through it. He teaches His brethren how to bear the cross and swing the sword. He teaches us how to triumph through sufferings. The description of Christ's being white headed is much like the description given of the Father in Daniel 7: 9 and 11 and 13. "I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool." That is a picture of the wisdom of God the Father in His purposes and decrees as He had brought them forth from all eternity. And the greatest of the Father's purposes was to dethrone sin and Satan from this fallen world and bring down all anti-Christian forces, and establish His Only-Begotten Son on the throne of this universe. "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame." "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him." Now Jesus has been raised to become the One who has fulfilled these purposes and will receive the rewards of His battle and labors. He has "overcome and has sat down with His Father on His throne." (Revelation 3: 22) Now that He has led the charge into the battle against sin, the world, and the Devil, and has overcome, He bids us to do the same, on behalf of His kingdom and for His glory.

In this spiritual battle His eyes are a flame of fire. He will discern all things clearly and with holy penetration. He will discern where the weaknesses are in our spiritual armor and show them to us. He will show us the places in our hearts and in our actions where we have been failing to do His will, and then will reinforce and under gird and enable us by His grace to face the doubts and fears that we have about engaging the enemy in battle. It says that "His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace." Do you not see, my brethren, that this means that Christ as the great Captain of our salvation has led the charge against the forces of darkness that oppose Him; and He is still with us as we walk through the fiery furnace of this life? Remember Shadrach, Meshack, and Abed-Nego, Daniel's three friends who were thrown in a fiery furnace because they would not bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar's golden image? When they were cast into the furnace the king said, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" "They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." "Look! He answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." They were in the midst of the fiery

furnace of persecution, but not harmed. These men were walking with Jesus and He was with them in this awful form of persecution. This is the way that it is for all Christians when they face persecution and live, or face it and die, because Jesus' feet have already been refined by the fire of the persecutions, sufferings, and death that He endured at the hands of evil men. He has gone before us in the battle in order to win the victory so that we might be able to overcome in our spiritual battles as well. He is with us in them. His power is perfected in our weakness.

And 3rdly- Christ has the prerogative to speak to speak powerfully to save and to judge. (Verse 15b and 16)

It says, "His voice is like the sound of many waters." I don't know how many of you have ever been to Niagara Falls, but at that majestic place you can hear the sound of many waters and stand in awe as thousands of gallons of water cascading over the crest of rocks into the channel of the river below. It is a spectacular sight and a tremendous sound. You can even take an elevator down to the lower level and stand behind the falls as it comes down. It is an awesome experience. Well Christ's voice is like this. It is powerful, it is majestic, and it will accomplish all that He is concerned to accomplish, with individuals as well as nations. It is irresistible when His grace comes to any person's heart. Listen to Psalm 29: 3 - "The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, yes the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon, He makes them also to skip like a calf....." "The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh." "The voice of the Lord makes the deer to give birth, and strips the forests bare: and in His temple everyone says, "Glory!" This is a tremendous description of what the Lord does in nature; but it is also a great description of what He can do in the salvation of a sinner from his sin. You say, "How so?" If you will reflect that in Revelation 17: 15 that "waters" represent peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues; and then apply it that way to the "waters" of Psalm 29, you can see that the voice of Christ is over many peoples, by means of the gospel. In Revelation 17: 1 it says that there is a great harlot that sits on many waters. But through Christ's power the false doctrine of the false church shall be destroyed by the preaching of Christ's word. It says in Psalm 29 that Christ's voice has the power to break the cedars, and cause them also to skip like a calf. Dear sinner, Christ has the power to break the stoutest heart of the person who resists His gospel. And when He does, we begin to see what we have really needed all along is His salvation. And when we do realize that we have found salvation in Christ, we skip for joy to realize that He has given us eternal life. His voice is like the sound of many waters; the sound of the cheering of many people, countless millions who have found grace and mercy and peace through the death and resurrection of God's Son. It is the sound of victorious shouting in the tents of the righteous, because Christ has done valiantly for them. His voice has a weight of glory and power in it, to save and heal the most sin sick soul. What is more refreshing, curing, and invigorating than to sit beside these waters and realize that Christ only has to speak the word and we are healed. He has only to speak the words of Judgment and it comes. But we will save this until next Sunday when we shall speak of John's reaction to His Lord in this vision.