

Revelation 1:9f

1. We are out of the introduction and now John begins the narrative. Right away there is an interesting construction: “I John, your brother and co-partaker (koinonia) in the tribulation and kingdom and patient-endurance in Jesus”
 - a. Does John see himself as special? Why or why not?
 - b. The three words all strung together are interesting in terms of trying to discern their relationship. How do you see the three as relating to one another? How do they relate to “in Jesus”?
2. John is on the Island of Patmos “through the word of God and the witness/testimony of Jesus”
 - a. Eusebius, the ancient church historian claimed that John was sent there to the island in the 14th year of Emperor Domitian’s reign (95AD) and was allowed to return to Ephesus in 96AD in a general amnesty after Domitian’s death.
 - b. The island had a population and exile likely meant being simply limited to the island. He could bring what he wanted to the island, do what he wanted and be with whomever he chose.
 - c. The reason for his exile is clear. What we’ll see in the book again and again is that faithfulness is the ground for persecution. Why would this be? Does this square with Paul’s admonition to live at peace with everyone? Does this square with the command to love one another? Is faithful Christianity winsome or obnoxious?
3. I was in spirit in the Lord’s day
 - a. There are lots of different ways of understanding “in spirit”. All center around the work either personal or historical of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. Experiential sense: In the OT the Spirit would come upon people and they would prophesy. See Ezek 2:2, 3:12, 14, 24. Similar language is used in the NT too.
 - ii. Theological/eschatological sense of the Spirit’s outpouring in the last days (Pentecost)
 - iii. Validation: that this message comes from God through the Spirit.
 - b. “In the Lord’s day”: This was the common way of referring to Sunday.
4. “I heard behind me a great voice like a trumpet”. The theophany in Exodus 19 was a great voice with trumpet and lightning.
5. The command to write a prophesy in a book is also common in the Old Testament and often it has a context of judgment.
6. Now we get into the vision of “one like the son of man”. We will see that this is a barrage of OT passages thick and rich with meaning and power.
 - a. The passage starts with turning. John turns to “see the voice” and then the turning is mentioned again. This gives it a dramatic effect similar to a motion picture signifying that in a sense from here the “show” begins and the world will not be the same.
 - b. John “sees the voice”. This echoes Ex 20:18 where the people “saw” the thunder, lightning, trumpet (voice). Again, John is clearly depicting Jesus as YHWH.

- c. It is interesting that he turns and first he records seeing the seven golden lampstands. Given what else he's about to describe you'd imagine that the lampstands would be incidental. The seven lampstands here too are a cacophony of OT imagery:
 - i. The Menorah from the tabernacle (Ex 25). This wasn't a candlestick holder, it was a stand that held seven oil lamps at the top each with a wick. It symbolized Israel and the oil as God's Spirit and the light as his presence. It also came to symbolize the temple itself as well as Israel being the seat of God's presence amidst his people.



- ii. There is also another prominent treatment of this in Zechariah 4. Again, the “seven lampstands” symbolize Israel but its light is fed by the spirit and the seven “pipes” feeding the light.
 - iii. Now we have to understand the cacophony of these images and the theology behind Israel and Jesus. Note in the above picture from the Arch of Triumph of Titus depicting the triumph over Jerusalem and note what the artist chose what to depict in order to symbolize the might, and power of Caesar, King of King and Lord of Lords. Now remember what Jesus how Jesus cursed the fig tree and overturned the tables of the temple. Jesus was prophesying the destruction of the temple. He also, if you remember identified himself with the temple as its replacement. Now we see this symbol of Judaism taken over now as a symbol for the church with the meaning carried over. Jesus fulfills the mission of Israel and Jesus’ mission is born witness to by the church.
 - iv. John hears the theophanic voice of YHWH and immediately turns and the first thing his eyes light upon is the church, the place upon which the spirit of God shines its light into the darkness of the world.
- d. Now John sees “in the midst of the lampstand one as a son of man”
 - i. The images from the OT are all coming together so don't worry too much about the staging. The point is theological and pastoral, not directorial.
 - ii. We now bring back Daniel 7 and 10 into the mix. Read Daniel 10 and notice all of the similarities.
 - iii. Before we go further we should ask a question. This image of a powerful, warrior Jesus to defeat the Romans and save the Jews was exactly what everyone in Jesus’

- day was wanting and expecting but Jesus consistently and forcefully rejected this image. Why bring out this image now? Should we see the suffering Jesus hanging on a cross? Why is it OK to shift gears at this point? How are the two images connected?
- iv. This powerful Jesus now stands in the midst of the church/churches. What is being communicated here? Why is this important?
 - e. The clothing of the Son of Man here has both kingly and priestly elements and it seems (like many elements in John) intentionally colluded.
 - i. Part of what the priests did in the temple was to tend to the lamps. This is what Jesus will be doing in this book. Tending would involve replacing and trimming wicks, replacing old oil with new, all to keep the lamps burning brightly.
 - ii. There is also here the collusion of elements of the Ancient of Days to the Son of Man in Daniel 7. The Son of Man is priestly, in maintaining the lamps, but he is also kingly in bringing both vindication and judgment. Again, see the section in Daniel 10-12 culminating in resurrection and the judgment of the raised. (12:2,3).
 - iii. Refined as in a furnace alludes to Daniel 3 and the fiery furnace and the fourth person in the furnace.
 - iv. There is much discussion about what the seven stars means. 7 planets following pagan astrology the assumption that these were gods controlling the destiny of the inhabitants of earth (sometimes called “seven classical stars” because they are the heavenly bodies seen with the naked eye: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the moon, the sun). Of they might symbolize the risen saints (Dan 12:3) or they might refer to the stars depicted in the temple (temple as microcosm of the cosmos). Following 1:20 the seven churches. Whichever is true (or even if all are true) the meaning is clear. This Son of Man controls destiny.
 - v. Equally clear is the sword in his mouth, judgment. See Isaiah 11:4 and 49:2. Again, we have the question of “the sword” and what Jesus said in the garden at his arrest. How can we put these together? Lamb/lion, victim/victor? Notice on whose behalf he acts in Is 11:4.
7. John’s response follows the pattern from the OT. Again, we should ponder this at a number of levels. This is Jesus’ closest friend during Jesus’ ministry, but now the view of Jesus strikes him down, as OT theophanies of YHWH consistently did. Note also on the mount of transfiguration in Luke they were terrified as they entered the cloud.
- a. This is in great contrast to nearly all assumptions of what experiences of “spirituality” are supposed to entail in our current climate.
 - b. John is struck as if dead and the Son of Man touches him with his right hand.
8. The Son of Man’s response to John.
- a. The pattern in Revelation follows very closely with what occurs in Daniel 10.
 - b. The Son of Man clearly identifies himself with YHWH in Isaiah 41:4, 44:6 and 48:12. See the contexts of 41:10, 44:8 and the rest of 48. In each case YHWH acts on Israel’s behalf to save her and to judge the empires that have arisen against her. Again, we see the universalizing of the OT and the transference to the church.
 - c. “The living one and I was dead and look living I AM into the ages of ages”
 - d. “I have the keys of death and hades”