

The Awesome, Exalted Christ

Easter Message 2014 (contd)
Revelation 1:4-15 4-27-2014

Summary: The solution to the problems in church and in your life, and the key to preparing for tribulation is fixing your attention on the attributes of Jesus Christ. He is the Great Son of Man, glorious, sovereign, eternal King who will be worshipped by the entire created order and whose dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. He is with His churches, tending to them because of His deep and profound love for them that drove Him to lay down His own life to purchase them. He is the awesome Judge of all mankind, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the beginning and the end, the Almighty. His fiery gaze penetrates every heart. His feet crush all His enemies in perfect purity, staggering might, overwhelming glory, deadly holiness. And His awesome voice commands us with commanding, divine authority and infinite power. He grips the very universe in the palm of His hand. And in His right hand He holds the destiny of every person and every church. He is supreme in sovereignty, and the words coming out of His mouth level everything in His path like sharp, double-edged romphia broadsword. And His face shines with the fullness of the glory of God.

Introduction	2
Caretaker of the Church	3
He Who Controls the Spirit.....	3
The Lively Dead Church	4
Liveliness vs. Life	4
How to Spot the Spirit	5
Reliable Witness	5
Supreme Ruler	7
Loving Redeemer	7
Love	7
Redemption	8
Triumphant Conqueror	8
Son of Man	8
The Ancient of Days	9
One with the Ancient of Days	9
White Hair	10
Mighty Judge	10
Molten Bronze Feet.....	10
Summary	11
Application Questions (James 1:25)	11

Revelation 1:4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. 7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

10 On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11 which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.” 12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone “like a son of man,” dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his

4
4
5

10

eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. 19 “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Introduction

Last week we celebrated the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ with a study of Revelation 1. The book of Revelation is a great place to go on Easter because it gives us the “so what” of the resurrection. What are the practical, day-to-day implications of the resurrection of Jesus Christ for how we should live? Chapter 1 describes the glory of the risen Lord, and then each letter to the churches in chapters 2-3 begins with a reminder of whichever attributes of Christ from that chapter 1 vision are the key to solving the problems in that church. I thought it would be worthwhile to take one more week to look at this passage because...

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all behold the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

We who behold are being transformed. When you behold (look at, gaze upon) Jesus’ glory, that has a transforming effect on you. You become like what you fix your attention upon. If you focus your attention on TV, you will become like what you are watching. If you fix your thoughts on this world, you will become like this world. But the more you focus your thoughts and attention and affections on what Jesus is like, the more you will become like Him. And so the way Jesus addresses all the problems in all the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 is by calling their attention to whichever of His attributes they need to focus their attention on to solve the particular problems they have in that church.

The solution to the problems in church #1 was to see Him as the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days from Daniel 7. Church #2 really needed to see Him as the Alpha and Omega and Giver of life. Churches 3 and 4 needed to see Him as Judge. Churches 1 and 5 need to understand Him as the Caretaker of churches. Church 6 had to know Jesus as the one who holds the keys of David. Church 7 had to get a glimpse of Him as the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

Churches have a lot of problems. And we come up with a lot of humanly derived efforts to solve our problems. But the best way to solve a problem in a church is to figure out which attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ speak to that issue, and get the people in the church to fix their attention on those attributes.¹

¹ Now, there are a lot of problems churches face that are not addressed in these chapters and a lot of attributes of Christ that are not in chapter 1. The specific purpose here is to solve the problems that need to be solved to prepare these churches for what is coming - the great tribulation described in the rest of the book. Sometimes people treat Revelation 2 and 3 as if it were a totally different book that is unrelated to the rest of Revelation. If you do that, you will miss the whole point of the book. Each letter points ahead to what is coming.

So there are plenty of other attributes of Christ that are crucial for Agape to learn that are not in this chapter. These are just a handful of attributes that are especially crucial for preparing us for trouble and hardship and testing and persecution.

Caretaker of the Church

And one of the most crucial attributes is this one: Jesus Christ is the type who really, really, really cares for His church. When John hears His voice and turns to see Him, all John sees are the lampstands, which are the various churches (v.12). If you want to see Jesus, look among the churches, because that is where He is. If you want to be near Jesus, be near the church. When people see the problems churches have (like the ones in ch.2-3), and they decide to just drop out of church and worship on their own – they need to realize, they are distancing themselves from Jesus. It is a like a self-inflicted excommunication. But excommunication, whether voluntary or not, has a devastating effect. Jesus could not have been more clear – if you love Him you will love His church – even though there are lots of problems. The solution to those problems is not to run away. The solution is to run all the harder toward the Caretaker of churches.

He Who Controls the Spirit

Revelation 1:4 ... Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ

Several times in Revelation we see this reference to the seven spirits. Scholars debate the significance, but I am convinced this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. It is imagery that comes from Zechariah 4. In Zechariah's time the Jews were facing the seemingly impossible project rebuilding the Temple. It really did not seem like they had the authority, nor the ability nor the resources to even begin to do such a project. And so God gives Zechariah a vision.

Zechariah 4:2 He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights.

This lampstand had seven oil lamps, and from the wording in the Hebrew it sounds like each of the seven lamps had seven lights (wicks). And there is a great big bowl at the top full of oil that runs down little canals to each of the wicks. And there is so much oil in the bowl that it is plenty to supply all 49 wicks. In this kind of literature the number 7 is a symbol for completeness, so $7 \times 7 = \text{completeness squared}$.

What does that vision mean? The angel gives the interpretation in verse 6.

6 Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.

Of course you don't have enough power or resources to complete this task. This task is not going to be completed by natural human resources. The strength and power will be supplied by the Spirit of God, flowing through His people, and it will be more than enough. Does that mean the people didn't have to put forth effort or use human ingenuity or planning? No, they did all that, and the power to do it came from the Holy Spirit.

So when John describes the Holy Spirit with the phrase **seven spirits of God**, it is not to imply there are multiple Holy Spirits. The point is to remind us of Zechariah 4 so that we realize that He is the source of all empowerment for the functioning of a church as a church.² The only way for the church to accomplish what God calls us to accomplish is by working in the power of the Holy Spirit. Human wisdom, human power and strength and ingenuity and effort, apart from the empowering, enabling, guiding ministry of the Holy Spirit, is worthless.

"That's great, Darrell, but why are you focusing on the Holy Spirit? I thought the book of Revelation was the revelation of Jesus Christ."

It is. Take a look at 3:1. Remember, each letter starts with a reminder of the attribute of Christ that is needed to solve the problems in that church. Look how Jesus starts this letter:

² There are some other aspects to this as well. In 5:6, the seven spirits of God are identified as the eyes of the Lamb. This points to the omniscient awareness of the Lamb as the Holy Spirit sees all things everywhere at all times.

Revelation 3:1 To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

The seven spirits refers to the power of the Holy Spirit to enable a church to function and bear fruit as a church. The power to do that comes only through the Holy Spirit. And guess who holds the Holy Spirit in His hand? Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will empower a church only at the bidding of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lively Dead Church

Ok, so what was the problem in Sardis that required the solution of seeing Jesus as the one who sends the Holy Spirit? What sort of church was this? If we summed it up in one word I think we could say, *lively*. This church was buzzing.

1 I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive

What would you picture if there were a church in the area with a reputation of being full of life? They must have been a lot more active than other churches. I don't know if that means they had a lot of programs, or they were busy in their community, or if their worship service was really upbeat with energetic, exciting, contemporary music - lots of energy – the people singing really loud and lots of enthusiasm. We don't know how they did it exactly; we just know that this church was known for really being a lively fellowship. Maybe some of the struggling little churches around Asia Minor sent their elder board to come visit the Sardis church to find out how they do it.

Whatever it was that made Sardis such a lively place, it was not real.

1 I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

What comes to your mind when you hear that? What does a dead church look like? Maybe you picture a place with outdated décor, where the music is kind of dry and boring and slow and poorly done. Or there are no new people coming, and the attendance is dwindling. But that cannot be what Sardis was like, because a church like that would never have a reputation of being vibrant and full of life.

Liveliness vs. Life

Sardis was a popular, vibrant, lively, attractive, wealthy church. So why does Jesus say they are dead? It is because liveliness is not the same as spiritual life. They were like the fig tree in Matthew 21:19 that had leaves but no fruit. From a distance a tree like that looks healthy, but for all practical purposes it is dead. A church can have thousands of people involved in hundreds of programs, and be as dead as doornail. In fact, it was probably the very fact that they were dead that led to their popularity and reputation for liveliness. Notice this church does not seem to have any problems. There are no Jewish accusers, no apostolic impostors, no heretics or false teachers, no prophetic ecstasy, no government persecution. It was the church that offended nobody. The pastor was no doubt just all smiles all the time. And everyone thought this church was full of life – everyone but Jesus. Jesus says, “You're dead.” They are like Samson in Judges 16.

Judges 16:20 he did not know that the LORD had left him.

And he did not find out the Lord had left him until he found himself being overpowered by his enemies – and then it was too late. That happens to churches. They think they are alive and healthy because there is no fighting, no strife, no controversies, no problems. And they don't realize – the reason there are no fights is because there is nothing there worth fighting over.

We need to remember, churches are not lamps – they are only lampstands. The fire is the work of God, fueled by the oil of the Holy Spirit. We could be the world's greatest, shiniest, most spectacular lampstand, but if there is no oil and no fire, we are nothing. We do not have the ability to generate that on our own. Lampstands without oil and fire are dead.

How to Spot the Spirit

This is such an important word for our day because there is a lot of confusion about the Holy Spirit. Everyone agrees that we need the Spirit, and anything that is not from the Spirit is worthless, but people are all over the map when it comes to how you discern which things are from the Spirit and which things are from the flesh. Some of our Charismatic friends get caught up in miracles, so that they start to think that unless it is miraculous, it's not from the Spirit. Churches like that end up being just like Sardis – really lively, lots of amazing things happening every week, but dead.

Other people think in order for something to be of the Spirit it has to be spontaneous. So if we are right in the middle of a worship service, and suddenly Sam gets an impulse to do some song or reading that we hadn't planned to do, and he just makes the adjustment on the fly – that is the from the Spirit. But if he just prays three weeks ahead of time, asks for guidance, and then puts the songset together the best he can and we follow the plan exactly – these people would say, “that's of the flesh.” Churches that believe that way just recruit musicians who are skilled at improv, and that particular skill is labeled “spiritual.” A pastor who is gifted at extemporaneous preaching is considered more spiritual than a pastor who is gifted at research. My question for those churches is, “Why do you assume that the Holy Spirit is so limited that He can only work through spontaneity, and isn't capable of working through planning and preparation?”

So how can you tell for sure if what is being done in a church is the work of the Holy Spirit? If the level of busyness is not an accurate indicator, and you can't tell by the number of miracles or by spontaneity vs. planning and structure – then how can you tell? What is the secret to being a Holy Spirit powered church? Let's see what the Lord who sends the Spirit said to this dead church:

Revelation 3:2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.

If we repent of sin, and we obey what is written in the Word of God, and we remain alert – always on guard against the schemes of Satan that are revealed in Scripture – if we do that, the One who holds the seven-fold Spirit in His mighty hand, the Lord Jesus Christ, will send the Spirit into our church and fill it up with power.

Is human ingenuity good? Yes, as long as it is used to think up ways we can put the commands of Scripture into practice. Human ingenuity is a terrible thing if it is used to bypass Scripture and do it our own way. Same thing with human wisdom and human effort and planning and spontaneity. If it is a substitute for God's Word, that is of the flesh. But if it is used for the purposes of putting God's Word into practice, Jesus said He would send His Spirit to make that effort bear spiritual fruit.

Why did God set it up that way? Why does God make it so our efforts won't be Spirit-powered unless we are striving to obey Jesus? Because the Father's great objective is to bring glory and honor to His Son, and so He says, “I will only give you My Spirit if the Son is pleased to send Him.”

Reliable Witness

What else can we learn about Jesus? Back to chapter 1. Look how He is described in verse 5.

Revelation 1:5 ...Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness

That means His Word is utterly reliable. That is a precious truth, because the vast majority of everything we believe, we believe based on someone's testimony. The people in our culture like to imagine that most of what they believe, they believe because of scientific proof. That is not true. We all believe that light travels at about 186,000 miles/second. We all believe that to be true, but raise your hand if you have personally conducted the measurements to check the accuracy of that belief. No one. Yet we all believe it. How many of you have conducted the lab work to determine if there is actually any protein in a steak, or carbs in a potato? Has anyone verified with empirical observation with your own eyes to

prove that the United States does indeed have a national debt? None of us have done any of that. Yet we are full convinced all those things are true – why? Because we accept reliable testimony.

The truth is, every one of us is completely dependent upon reliable testimony in order to make it through life. When you make the most important decisions in your life – 99% of the factors you take into consideration are things that you accept as true based on what other people have said or written.

So what happens when the people you trusted for your information turn out to be unreliable? It ruins your life. That is how people become wackos. They come in contact with some source of information that they believe to be reliable, but that source is not reliable and is telling them wrong things. When that happens you believe things to be true that aren't true, and you start interpreting all the other data in light of those false ideas, and before long your entire outlook on life is hopelessly skewed. (And by the way, one of the most common culprits is your own feelings and impulses. You have a gut instinct that things must be a certain way, and you trust that as reliable, and it isn't.) Once you get to the point where you are interpreting things through the grid of false ideas, it is almost impossible to recover. Because if someone tries to correct one wrong thing you believe, you say, "What you're saying can't be right because that would contradict 12 other things that I know to be true." There are so many things you think you know to be true that aren't true, all of them keep you from being corrected on any one of them.

That is why God designed us to have such an aversion to being lied to. When you find out someone you trusted intentionally lied to you, why does that bother you so much? It is because so much of life is dependent on knowing what is true and what is real. When someone steals that from you, that is a great evil.

You wonder how intelligent people can believe in evolution? It is because some people they consider reliable have assured them that it is true. That is why everyone has the world view they have. You and I are Christians because we accept certain testimony to be reliable. None of us saw the empty tomb. None of us witnessed Jesus walking on water. We have examined the character of the men who wrote the historical accounts and have come to the conclusion that we can have a certain amount of confidence in their testimony. And some unbelievers mock us for that, but what they don't realize is the same is true of them. We all live our lives based on the testimony of those we believe to be reliable.

The problem is, no matter how trustworthy a person might be, none of the people you trust in this world are infallible – including scientists and professors. We all make mistakes, we all misinterpret data, we all miscommunicate, and we all have massive limitations in our overall understanding of the world. There is not a single person on the planet who knows even one billionth of the information there is to know. Whatever you learned in school about science – some of it might be wrong. The things that you believe because of my sermons – some of it might be wrong. Some of your political opinions might be wrong – you will get to heaven and God is going to say, "Uh, no – you were way off on that point." You will find that the sources you thought were so reliable, it turns out they weren't as trustworthy as you thought. Some of you were raised by parents who were way off, and you had to spend years of your life getting reoriented after being pointed in the wrong direction by them the whole time growing up. That puts you at a disadvantage in life, doesn't it? For some people, the best teacher they can find is an unreliable teacher who is giving them bum steer after bum steer. That makes it really hard to live life.

So what an incredible, glorious, wonderful blessing it is for us that we have the Guide who Scripture calls the Wonderful Counselor, who is a 100% reliable witness! We might have one obstacle or another in understanding exactly what He is telling us, but once we understand it, we can absolutely take it to the bank. We can literally stake our lives on it.

How sure are you about the things you were taught in school? You have some opinions about global warming – would you stake your life on those views being right? The story is told of the tightrope walker who pushed a wheelbarrow along a tightrope above Niagara Falls. Then he asked the crowd, "Do you think I could do it with a person in the wheelbarrow?" And they all said, "Yes! We know you can!" Then he asked for a volunteer, and no one spoke up. They believed, but not enough to stake their life on it. Everything Jesus ever tells you, you can stake your life on it. You can even stake your eternal existence on it. If you were playing poker and you had such a good hand, you said, "I'm sure I'm going to win." And someone says, "Are you so sure that you would be willing to bet \$5000?"

“Yes! I’ll put \$5000 in the pot.”

“Would you also include all your savings and your car and your house? So if you lose, you are literally left with nothing?”

“Um, well, I don’t know about that...”

“Would you be willing to bet your soul, so that if you lost this hand, your soul would go immediately to hell forever?”

The words of Jesus Christ – every one of them, are so reliable, that you could bet your eternal soul on them. He is the faithful, reliable, trustworthy witness.

And understanding that was the key to solving the problems in church #7, which was the worst of all of them. That was the church that trusted themselves. They diagnosed their sins to be virtues. When you are convinced what you are doing is right, but in reality it is sin, the only way out of that is to understand that Jesus Christ is a more reliable source of truth about right and wrong than your own feelings or ideas.

Supreme Ruler

So Jesus is the Caretaker of the church and the Reliable Witness – what else?

5 ... the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Who do you think will be elected the next president of the United States? Whoever it is, that person will be subordinate to King Jesus. Another title that would be fitting for the president would be “underling.” They will have to give an account to their King and Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. But Jesus is accountable to no one. He answers to no one. He rules over all according to His pleasure and will alone, and is governed by nothing outside of Himself. His every desire is law for every creature, and no one dictates any law to Him. And that is crucial to know going into the time of the Great Tribulation described later in the book – as well as any lesser tribulation. When powerful people are making decisions that adversely affect you – whether it be the president or Congress or your boss at work or your husband or pastor or whoever – it is crucial that you understand that Jesus Christ is the rulers of the rulers of the earth, and the Boss over all bosses and Authority over all authorities. He is far more powerful than your biggest problem.

Loving Redeemer

Love

5 ... To him who loves us

It is crucial that you also know that about Jesus. If you see His eyes of fire and His sword of judgment and you do not have confidence that He loves you, you will never have the right attitude or perspective about Him. Jesus loves the whole world, but He has a special love and care for **us** (His followers), and that love protects us from His wrath. James 1 says the Scriptures are like a mirror that shows us our flaws. Reading the Bible and listening to it being preached can be a brutal experience of conviction as the sins of our hearts are exposed. But do you want to hear the good news? When you walk out of church crushed to pieces by God’s Word, that is a great sign – and here’s why: Of all the churches, the worst one that got the harshest rebuke from Jesus was #7.³ But after rebuking them, look what He says to them:

Revelation 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.

³ Church #7 was the worst of all the churches in chapters 2-3. They get zero praise and harsh rebuke from Jesus. Jesus found positive things to say about some really bad churches in the other letters, but cannot find a single positive thing to say about this one. He tells them that they make Him nauseous. But then at the end of His strong rebuke He says this:

If Jesus didn't love you, you would walk out of church feeling fine. You would feel no conviction at all. He would withdraw His Spirit, so that nothing would penetrate your heart, and you would not feel convicted. If you walk out feeling broken and crushed because I was just insensitive or harsh in my delivery, that is just my fault. But if you walk out feeling broken and crushed because you are convicted by God's Word, that is a sign that He still loves you! It is proof that you are a true son or daughter.

Hebrews 12: 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined ... then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

Redemption

He loves us, and it is because of that love that He paid the price to free us from our enslavement to sin.

5 ...To him who loves us has freed us from our sins by his blood

In the Old Testament, the prophet Hosea had an unfaithful wife who left him and sold herself into prostitution, and Hosea ended up having to shell out money to buy her freedom. We did the same thing to Jesus. We sold ourselves into slavery to sin, and the only way out was for Him to pay the staggering price of His own blood to purchase our freedom. That is what "redeem" means – to pay the price to free a slave. And when He did that, He didn't just accept us back as lowly slaves on probation.

6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father

We saw last week that He is a Priest and King, and now He has made us royal priests as well. He placed us in the most glorious of positions and entrusted us with high, important, glorious responsibilities.

Triumphant Conqueror

Next, Jesus is the triumphant conqueror. Verse 7 is the real triumphal entry.

7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.

He will appear in the sky in spectacular, awesome glory with millions of angels and all of His glorified saints, and all those who rejected Him will be crushed with regret. Christ wins. He is the triumphant conqueror, and if you want to see Him conquer, just read the rest of the book of Revelation.

Son of Man

All of that and we have not even gotten to the vision yet. That starts at verse 12.

13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man"

Son of man is a title that comes from Daniel 7. And it was by far Jesus' favorite way of referring to Himself. He called Himself by that title over 80 times. Jesus used that title over 80 times; guess how many times other people used that title to refer to Him. Zero times. No one else called Him that. They called Him the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, Son of David, Lord, Master – but not Son of Man. Why? Probably because of all the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, the one in Daniel 7 that calls Him the Son of Man was one of the hardest to understand.

For one thing, the Son of Man in Daniel 7 is described in terms that can only apply to God Himself.

Daniel 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.

Only God travels on the clouds in the Bible. It happens many, many times in Scripture and it is always God.

14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Obviously that has to be God. God made it clear in Scripture that He would never, ever share His glory with anyone else, and He certainly would not call all peoples, nations, and languages to worship anyone other than Him. That would be idolatry and God hates idolatry. This is not only God, but it is God in His highest, most magnificent glory.

But if it is God, why would He be called Son of Man? That is a designation for a human being. Which is it? Is He God or is He a human being? No doubt there were endless debates: "I think it's got to be a reference to God."

"I don't agree – I think it's clear that He's a human being..."

Not only is He human, but look at verse 13.

13 ...He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

Everyone agrees the Ancient of Days is God, and there is only one God. So if the Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days, then clearly we are talking about someone else besides the Ancient of Days.

The Ancient of Days

The Ancient of Days is described back up in verse 9. The context is this – earlier in the vision Daniel is shown these beasts that represent the great kings and kingdoms of the earth, who reject God. Then in verse 9, God is going to judge them, and it is an awesome scene.

9 "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow

That refers to His purity – no sin or evil or contamination of any kind – absolute perfect holiness.

9 ... the hair of his head was white like wool.

That is a reference to His wisdom.

9 ... His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. 10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him.

Everything around Him is on fire. That is the fire of judgment.

Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

What a scene – absolutely breathtaking.

So you have the Ancient of Days with the white robe and head and hair white like wool – that is God. Then you have this Son of Man, who comes with the clouds and is worshipped by all of creation who approaches the Ancient of Days. Who in the world could that be? The Jews were left scratching their heads on that one.

One with the Ancient of Days

Rev 1:13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man" ... 14 His head and hair were white like wool

You see what is happening in this vision? Jesus is finally relieving the tension of Daniel 7. How can the Ancient of Days be God and the Son of Man also be God? Because the Son of man and the Ancient of days...are one. The Son of Man is the Messiah, and yes, He is human. But He is also Almighty God, and one with the Father (and the Holy Spirit). Three distinct persons; one God. And so everything that is true of the Father is also true of the Son. (If you ever have to prove to someone that Jesus is Almighty God, the easiest place to do it is Revelation 1.)

White Hair

So Jesus has head and hair white like wool. Proverbs 16:31 says, "**A white head is a crown of glory.**"

Leviticus 19:32 You will rise up before the white head, and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God; I am the Lord

Jesus died at age 33 and after the resurrection was recognizable in that 33-year-old body. But when He appears in His glorified state, He appears as an old, old, old man. He is the oldest person in existence. All the millennia of human history and all the ages of eternity past are all in the memory of this great man.

“Don’t they have any of that Just for Men hair dye up in heaven?”

No. Because things will be as they should be, and old age will be honored. You do not paint a crown of glory.

Old people are wise, because they have experienced a lot. Jesus Christ is the ultimate sage. He has experienced everything that has ever happened. He personally witnessed it. And He has never forgotten anything. He knows everything from personal experience, and He knows the significance and interpretation of everything. He knows how everything fits together, and the purpose of everything. He knows everything that has ever happened, what is happening now, and what ever will happen. He even knows everything that would have happened if things had been different. He knows what is best – the best ends and the best means to reach those ends. And he knows every heart, every motive, every thought, every sin. And He will judge it all with crushing authority and power.

Mighty Judge

Molten Bronze Feet

15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace

References to molten metal appear in passages that are describing the glory of God.⁴ If you have ever seen brass being poured it is an awesome thing. I had a sculptor tell me about it once. She said it is scary. It is very dangerous. If the crucible cracks (which happens, even with our modern equipment), and the molten brass runs on the floor, people can really get hurt.

And it is incredibly bright – you can hardly look at it. This shows not only that the awesome, glorious, resurrected and glorified Christ is dangerous in His wrath if He is against you, but also that He is pure and holy and glorious. No dross, just solid, pure, unmixed, beautiful, gleaming brass.

The image Daniel saw in his vision in chapter 2 represented the mightiest of human empires. It was huge and intimidating, but it had feet of clay and iron that were smashed, toppling the whole image. John is contrasting Jesus with that. He is like the mightiest of superpowers, except instead of a foundation made of iron and clay, Jesus’ foundation is brass. Brass is very hard stuff. That is another thing that sculptor told me – that even a hollow brass sculpture is basically indestructible. Jesus is never going to topple like the great kingdoms in Daniel’s vision. He stands on immovable, indestructible feet. He is vulnerable to nothing. And if He crushes you under His feet, you are thoroughly crushed.

⁴ Ezek.1:1, 27, Dan.10.

Summary

What is the solution to the problems we have in the church, and the problems you have in your life? What is the key to preparing for suffering and trouble and the Great Tribulation of the end times? It is in fixing your attention on the attributes of Jesus Christ. The Great Son of Man, glorious, sovereign, eternal King who will be worshipped by the entire created order and whose dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. He can be found moving amongst His churches, tending to them because of His deep and profound love for them – love that drove Him to lay down His own life to purchase them. He is the awesome Judge of all mankind, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the beginning and the end, the Almighty. His fiery gaze penetrates every heart. His feet crush all His enemies in perfect purity, staggering might, overwhelming glory, deadly holiness. Those feet that once walked through the streets carrying His cross to Golgotha – the feet that were covered with dust that no one bothered to wash at the last supper, will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (Rev.19:15-16). And His bone-rattling, soul-shaking voice commands us with commanding, divine authority and infinite power. He grips the very universe in the palm of His hand. And in His right hand He holds the destiny of every person and every church. He is supreme in sovereignty, and the words coming out of His mouth level everything in His path like a sharp, double-edged *romphia* broadsword. His judgments are devastating - nothing escapes. And His face shines with the fullness of the glory of God. No wonder John collapsed.

And Jesus said, I am the First and the Last. In Christ is the scope of all history. Christ had no beginning. He never came into existence. He was always there. He is the first and the last. Everything begins and ends with Him. He was prior to the earliest thing and outlasts the most enduring thing, and He holds the keys of all opportunity, as well as the keys to the grave itself. He is the source of life, the Author of life, and has even been to the grave and back. He decides who dies and when. He decides who lives and in what way. He decides when and if to release someone from the grave. The eternal destiny of every person is 100% dependent upon what this man, seated on the very throne of God, decides. Behold, your God!

Benediction: Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.

Application Question (James 1:25)

- 1) Which attributes from Revelation 1 do you most need to focus on at this time in your life (Reliable Witness, Supreme Ruler, Judge, Son of Man, Caretaker of the Church, Loving Redeemer, Triumphant Conqueror, Royal Priest, Authoritative Voice, Holiness, Glory, Giver of Life, Determiner of Destinies, etc.)?