

Introduction

The other week, without warning, I suddenly realized I am about to enter the seventies. I don't feel that old, I hope I don't look that old, but the fact remains, I am an old man. Childhood is a distant memory as is youth, and even middle age is swiftly being lost in the mists of history. It just does not seem possible I am standing on the threshold of a new era, and the mind ponders, "What will this decade bring?", "Shall I die during it?" Will the Lord come before the world knows 2024?" John must have been thinking about "what is going to happen?" when the Lord gave him the Revelation. It is a magnificent unveiling of God's thoughts, purposes, and works concerning His Son. Part of that disclosing is the titles and appellations of the Lord.

Whither it is the start of a new year, or a new era of ones life, there can be nothing greater than having a manifestation of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. The hymn writer had expressed it so fully:

Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him?
Is not thine a captured heart?
Chief among ten thousand own Him;
Joyful choose the better part.

Captivated by His beauty,
Worthy tribute haste to bring;
Let His peerless worth constrain thee,
Crown Him now unrivaled King.

Draw and win and fill completely,
Till the cup o'erflow the brim;
What have we to do with idols
Who have companied with Him?

To the saint in fellowship with God there is no sight as glorious as the manifested perfections of the Son of God. It is:

- a) His comfort which can console in life's darkest hours. (1 Thess. 4:13-18)
- b) His strengthening which can support in the weariness of life. (Psa. 55:22)

Christ in Revelation

In this divine declaration there is recorded for the readers and hearers multiple titles, appellations, and indicated manifestations of the Lord. He is called, "Jesus Christ" (ch. 1:1); "The Faithful Witness" (ch. 1:5); "The first-begotten of the dead" (ch. 1:5); "The Prince of the Kings of the earth" (ch. 1:5); "The Lamb as it had been slain" (ch. 5:6); "The King of saints" (ch. 15:3); and twenty-four other titles.

There is also a telling of His activities such as: the Lord is the One who "holdeth the seven stars in His right hand" (ch. 2:1); "hath the seven Spirits of God" (ch. 3:1). Also His experiences such as: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (ch. 1:18). There are also intimated manifestations of the Lord. He is seen as the tender hearted Shepherd leading his own to fountains of living water (Rev. 7:17). He stands in absolute triumphant stance with one foot on the sea and one on the land (Rev. 10:2). Amid the falsity of the pagan adulterous religions He stands as Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14), and when it comes to military might and moral right, He is King of Kings (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). In unflinching justice He judges and executes judgment as He sits on the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15), and in fulness of affection He is the manifested husband of His bride (Rev. 21:2).

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Revelation is dealing with the celestial world with all its authority and glory, and in that sphere of unsurpassed superlatives, Christ is seen preeminent. He is the object of exalting praise by countless multitudes who, with adoring wonder, exalt Him as the Redeemer (Rev. 5:9-14), the one who alone is worthy to take and open the book (Rev. 5:5).

Knowing such a glorious person was about to be manifested, what title or descriptive term would I have used first? I am sure I would have written: "And from God Almighty"; or "From the Lion of Judah"; but the Holy Spirit has referred to the Lord as: "The faithful and true witness, and the First Begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth" (ch. 1:5). The first title is: "The faithful and true witness".

In meditating on these three I begin to understand that there are several reasons for this order. One is they are sequential. Had the Lord not been the "Faithful Witness", it would have meant that at some point or points in His life He failed and sinned. Had such been the case (and to clarify myself, the Lord could never sin), He would have been an unfaithful witness, therefore, could never have been the Firstborn from the dead nor the Prince of the Kings of the earth.

Of all the times when the Lord bore witness to the truth the Holy Spirit, in the epistles, makes particular attention to one specific time, and speaking of Him records: "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. 6:13). Pilate interrogated the Lord as to His Kingship. To confess as to being such was an automatic death sentence for treason, but being the faithful witness the Lord confessed to its reality (Jn. 18:37). Furthermore, as the faithful witness the Lord had corrected Pilate's wrong perspective on his judicial abilities (Jn. 19:10-11).

Earlier the Lord had been surrounded by false witnesses, and in that dark hour He, like a blazing light, shone as a faithful witness. The chief priests knew the scriptures, and knowing that, Moses wrote: "If a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing (adjuration, a court setting), and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity" (Lev. 5:1). The chief priest said: "I adjure thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63). To this the Lord must answer regardless of the consequences. As the faithful witness He responded: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

As we look forward to whatever days lie ahead of us, there will be times when we, like Peter, John, Moses, David, and Aaron will fail in our witness for God.

- a) Like Peter, there will be times when we will deny when we ought to be bold (Matt. 26:74)
- b) Like John when with the disciples forsook the Lord and fled (Mk. 14:50)
- c) Like Moses when he got angry with the people of God and spoke unadvisedly (Num. 20:10; Psa. 106:33)
- d) Like Aaron when he responded to the pressure of the people and did that which he had to lie about (Ex. 32:1-23)
- e) Like David when he was slothful and unfulfilling of his responsibility of leading the people to victory (2 Sam. 11:1).

Which of us could point an accusing finger at any of them for have we not failed in the same ways?

How then can I approach God? Rather than getting down because of past failures, I approach God in all the perfections of that lovely "Faithful Witness" who never failed, but was superlatively perfect in every work and deed. As the Faithful witness His life corresponded with His words and teachings, and never brought a shadow or shame on the Father or God. He never had an expression or activity that He had to put a spin on; never was there a covert action in His life; He never needed a sacrifice to approach God nor ever ask for forgiveness; much less being able to say: "He restoreth my soul". In His life, not only was every word and deed beyond reproach, void of inconsistency, nor was His power curtailed due to personal sin.

He is the Faithful Witness in perpetuity therefore, every statement and judgment He made are as steadfast today and forever as they were the moment He made them.

- a) His words of invitation: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give your rest” (Matt. 11:28) have lost none of their welcoming genuineness.
- b) His prophecy concerning the coming world happenings are as sure today as the moment He spoke of it (Matt. 24:4-31).
- c) To the individual saint in the midst of a pathetic casual church functioning with Him outside, He calls with sincerest clarity: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with Him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20).
- d) His words of overwhelming victory ring with undimishing triumph: “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev. 1:18).

As we look forward to the unknown we can thank God we know who holds the future, and our beloved Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever, the unchangeable great I AM. Thank God we do not have to wait to get to heaven to exalt His glorious name, but even now, can lift our prayers and praises to Him in anticipation of that coming day when we shall do so in fulness of freedom and wonder. As the hymn by Ray Price states:

But until then my heart will go on singing
Until then with joy I'll carry on
Until the day my eyes behold my Saviour
Until the day God calls me home.

. . . . Rowan Jennings