

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRIST IN REVELATION

by John Campbell

The entire Bible is the revelation of a wonderful person—the all-inclusive Christ. From the first page to the last, He is revealed in types, figures, shadows, allegories, history, poetry, prophecies, parables, signs, plain words, and direct teachings. In this sense the Bible may be regarded as a great biography. The all-inclusive Christ is the center and

substance of this great, divine biography. The Old Testament gives a portrait in types and prophecies, unveiling the person and work of Christ. On the way to Emmaus, the resurrected Christ expounded to the two disciples, in an abstract, “all the Scriptures,” comprising the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:27, 44). The Lord’s word here unveils that the entire Old Testament is a revelation of Himself and that He is its center and content. Likewise, the New Testament begins with “the book of the generation of Jesus Christ” (Matt. 1:1) and ends with “the grace of the Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:21). The first name and the last name in the New Testament is Jesus, indicating that Jesus Christ is the subject and content of the entire New Testament. If we miss the revelation of Jesus Christ, we miss the entire Scriptures. If we receive this revelation, we have the key to unlock the whole of the Bible and, indeed, the person and work of God Himself.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The revelation of the all-inclusive Christ is progressive, conveyed in successive stages. The first stage is the seed of the revelation. The seeds of most of the truths of the divine revelations are sown in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In this book Christ is revealed in a number of profound ways: He is prophesied as the seed of woman and the seed of Abraham. He is typified by the dry land emerging on the third day, the tree of life, the river in the garden, the coats of skin, Adam, Abel, Isaac, and Joseph, among many other items too numerous to mention here. He is also

foreshadowed by the offerings with blood, and He is prefigured in the salvation of Noah and his family. The growth of all these seeds is progressively developed in the succeeding books of the Bible, in which the view of Christ’s person and work is unfolded through many and various means, throughout the Pentateuch, the history of

Israel, the poetic utterances, and the prophecies. The revelation of Christ grows to maturity in the New Testament through the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles. The final stage of the revelation of Christ is the harvest of the matured seed in Revelation. As the last book of the Bible, Revelation is the conclusion, completion, and consummation of the entire divine revelation. It is the destination of the whole Bible. It is to this harvest of the divine revelation that this article is devoted.

Revelation 1:1 begins with “the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Expositors of this book have held different interpretations of this phrase. At issue here is the simple Greek phrase Αποκαλυψις Ιησου Χριστου. The precise meaning turns on the genitive “of Jesus Christ,” which, if taken as the objective genitive, denotes the manifestation, or disclosure, of Jesus Christ, but if taken as the subjective or possessive genitive, denotes Jesus Christ merely as the medium of the revelation. Although certain respected scholars are of the latter school, their arguments are far from conclusive, but in general incomplete.¹ The arguments of language, however, must yield to the actual facts of this book. According to the facts, Revelation is “the revelation of Jesus Christ, and He is the center of the entire book” (Ryrie 1893). In it, Christ is revealed in at least twenty-six aspects (Lee, *Revelation* 43), some of which were reserved by the divine Spirit for disclosure in this book alone. If we read the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, we see many aspects of Christ, but we do not see some of the aspects covered in the book of Revelation. For this reason, we must say that the depiction of Christ in this final book is not only ultimate but

unique. We may use three examples to illustrate the uniqueness of the revelation concerning Christ in this book. First, the four Gospels testify of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ; Acts introduces the ascended Christ; and the Epistles begin to reveal the activities of Christ in ascension. However, it is not until we come to Revelation that we see the panoramic view of the ascended Christ. Nowhere else can we see a clear picture of the scene in the heavens after Christ's ascension, and nowhere else can we see Christ in His universal, heavenly administration. Second, Revelation reveals the ascended Christ as the Lion-Lamb (5:5-6). In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist announced Him as "the Lamb of God" (1:29), but not until Revelation do we see Him as the Lion, the seed for which was sown in Genesis 49:9. Third, no book reveals Christ in His heavenly ministry as clearly as this book. In this book He is the High Priest, walking in the midst of the churches (Rev. 1:13-16) and offering the prayers of the saints as incense to God (8:3-5). Concerning the uniqueness of the unveiling of Christ in this book, Witness Lee writes:

The Christ in Revelation is a "different" Christ from that in the four Gospels. I do not believe in another Christ, but I do believe in a "different" Christ. The Christ in the four Gospels had only two eyes, but the Christ in Revelation has seven eyes....In addition, Revelation 1:16 tells us that "out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword." In the four Gospels words of grace are proceeding out of His mouth (Luke 4:22), but in Revelation a sharp two-edged sword is proceeding out of His mouth....In the four Gospels, John was reclining on Jesus' bosom (John 13:23). In the book of Revelation, however, when John saw such a Christ he fell at His feet as dead; he was full of fear (1:17). (*Economy* 218)

Because of these and many other practical facts, "the revelation of Jesus Christ" must be taken to indicate an all-inclusive revelation, comprising not only the particular, consummate testimony of Jesus and the universal, eternal economy of God, but first and foremost, the unique and ultimate revelation of Christ Himself. It is not only Jesus Christ who conveys the revelation; it is Jesus Christ who removes the veils, and it is Jesus Christ who is revealed. T. Austin-Sparks says, "The centrality and supremacy of Christ is the key and the pivot to all the Scriptures" (8). If Christ is not here revealed "except in a remote sense" (Alford 544), then what becomes of the master key of all our scriptural understanding? Such shortcomings and short-sightedness by venerable scholars can reveal only that the generally received body of scriptural interpretation, and Christology in particular, is woefully short of a conclusion, completion, and consummation. Therefore, most of the readers of the Bible do not have an adequate understanding or appreciation of the ultimate and unique revelation of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Ironside writes, "This book is the unveiling of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is

its one great theme....If you would learn to appreciate Christ more, read this book, frequently and prayerfully" (8). The reader is invited to subordinate inferior issues of theological debate and prayerfully appreciate all that Christ is and does, as revealed in this book.

Christ in the Stage of Intensification

In order to grasp the unique character of the unveiling of Jesus Christ in Revelation, we must locate the position of this book in God's economical work to carry out His eternal plan and purpose. As the Christ, He is the One appointed, anointed, and ordained to carry out the eternal purpose of God. The entire New Testament reveals that the full ministry of Christ for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy is carried out in three divine and mystical stages (Lee, *Co-worker* 9). (These three stages will be covered in full in the next issue of *A&C*.) The first stage is the stage of His incarnation, from His birth to His crucifixion. The commencement of this stage is characterized by John 1:14, which says, "The Word became flesh." In the stage of incarnation, by means of His "becoming," Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man, uniting and mingling the Triune God with the tripartite man. To see the incarnation of Christ is to make a great advance in the divine revelation. Before this stage, Christ was the eternal Word with the Father, the only begotten Son, who possessed only divinity. In incarnation Christ became flesh, joining humanity with His divinity to become the God-man. As the God-man, He expressed in His humanity the bountiful God in His rich attributes through His aromatic virtues, by which He attracted, charmed, and captivated men. In the flesh, Christ accomplished His all-inclusive judicial redemption, and by doing so, He laid a foundation for His organic salvation and set up the procedure to attain His ministry in its following stage.

After His crucifixion and in His resurrection, Christ entered into the second stage of His full ministry. In this stage, Christ was begotten as God's firstborn Son. From eternity, Christ was the only begotten Son of God (John 1:18; 3:16). In His death, the humanity which He joined to His divinity was crucified, and in resurrection this humanity was made alive by the Spirit of His divinity (1 Pet. 3:18) and was uplifted, designated, into the sonship of the only begotten Son of God (Rom. 1:3-4). In this way, Christ was begotten to be the firstborn Son of God (Acts 13:33; Rom. 8:29). At the same time, Christ was transfigured to become the life-giving Spirit. In speaking of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, "The last Adam [Christ in the flesh] became a life-giving Spirit" (v. 45b). This life-giving Spirit, who is the pneumatic Christ, now possesses not only divinity but deified humanity. He also possesses the experiences of human birth, human living, an all-encompassing crucifixion, and an all-overcoming resurrection. Since divinity, humanity, and all the elements necessary for the

accomplishment of God's economy are included in His pneumatic person, He is the all-inclusive Spirit. Therefore, the second stage of His full ministry, the stage of Christ in resurrection, is the stage of inclusion. At the same time Christ was resurrected to commence this stage of His ministry, He also regenerated all the believers to become the members of His Body, making them the many sons of God born of God with Him (1 Pet. 1:3). In His heavenly ministry as the Spirit, Christ gives Himself without measure to save the believers in His life (Rom. 5:10), in order that through their experience of His life salvation, His organic salvation, they may be produced as the church and built up to be the Body of Christ in reality.

As the Spirit of life, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and the Lord Spirit (Rom. 8:2; Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 3:18), the pneumatic Christ through His disciples established churches in many places for His testimony. At the beginning of the church age, the disciples characteristically "continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles," practicing the church life day by day and from house to house (Acts 2:42, 46). After a short time, however, the church became degraded. Although early signs of the degradation of the church can be seen in Acts, it is most apparent in the latter Epistles, those written during and after A.D. 60. In 2 Timothy 1:15, Paul says, "All who are in Asia turned away from me." The churches established by Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit forsook the ministry of the apostles and turned aside to different teachings. To be sure, this was the greatest indication of the degradation of the church! Certain ones rose up to work heresy and damage the apostolic ministry, as did Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander the coppersmith (2:17-18; 4:14-15). Peter also warned of false teachers, destructive heresies, evil ones, mockers, and twisters of the Scriptures already at work in the churches of Christ (2 Pet. 2:1, 15; 3:3-4, 15-16). Likewise, John contended with antichrists, false prophets, deceivers, and babblers (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:1-3, 6; 2 John 7, 9-11; 3 John 9-10) who were perniciously eroding the faith of the believers and poisoning the church. The New Testament contains a clear declaration that the very churches, as the fruit of the judicial and organic work of Christ in His stages of incarnation and inclusion, fell to an exceedingly low state.

The degradation of the church, as a real and clear historical actuality, provides the backdrop for the book of Revelation as the consummation of the Scriptures. That the character of both the appearance and the work of Christ in this book is unique among all the New Testament books attests to the fact that the ministry of Christ needed to progress yet again. Thus, the degradation of the churches marks the commencement of the third stage of the full ministry of Christ, the stage of His intensification. For producing the church, Christ as the life-giving Spirit in His heavenly ministry is sufficiently strong. Under the

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degradation of the church, however, Christ is intensified to be the sevenfold intensified life-giving Spirit to carry out His sevenfold intensified heavenly ministry. In this stage, the final stage of His complete ministry, Christ is intensifying His organic salvation, producing the overcomers within the churches, and consummating the New Jerusalem as the ultimate consummation and goal of all God's work throughout all the ages.

The Sevenfold Intensified Spirit as the Eyes of the Lamb

The book of Revelation is unique and ultimate in its designation of the Trinity, the person of Christ, and the Spirit in the Trinity. John opens this book with a threefold well-speaking of grace and peace from "Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth" (1:4-5). This remarkable title of the Spirit, who now occupies the second place of the Trinity, is repeated in 3:1, 4:5, and 5:6. Interpretations of the expression *the seven Spirits* have been attempted by many expositors, but their contributions have been more often unacceptable and insufficient than satisfying and enlightening.²

The number seven, like so many items in this book, is a sign. In the Bible seven signifies completion in God's operation. In Revelation in particular, it is used in relation to the golden lampstands and the stars, the objects of God's operation in the church age, and with respect to the seals, bowls, trumpets, and other items which are the prophetic vehicles for God's move, especially in the end time. Seven also signifies intensification. Concerning the intensified light of the restored creation in the millennium, Isaiah 30:26 says, "And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days." According to these principles, the seven Spirits of God are the one Spirit who has been intensified sevenfold for God's economical move among the degraded churches:

As seven is the number for completion in God's operation, so the seven Spirits must be for God's move on the earth.

In essence and existence, God's Spirit is one; in the intensified function and work of God's operation, God's Spirit is sevenfold....At the time this book was written, the church had become degraded; the age was dark. Therefore, the sevenfold intensified Spirit of God was needed for God's move and work on the earth (Recovery Version, Rev. 1:4, note 5).

In 4:5 the sevenfold Spirit is the "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne" for God's judgment by enlightening and searching. In 5:6 the sevenfold Spirit is seen again, this time, however, intrinsically united to Christ, the redeeming Lamb: "And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." To receive the consummate unveiling of the person and work of Christ, as provided by this book, we must linger at this scene. We cannot regard this mysterious and remarkable picture of Christ in His ascension as merely incidental. As one of the final views of Christ in the divine revelation, it is rich in symbolism. Here we see Christ the Redeemer, the Lamb, standing in the heavens as the center of God's administration. However the most astounding element of this portrait is the role of the seven Spirits of God: The seven Spirits are the seven eyes of the Lamb. As in Zechariah 3:9, the sevenfold intensified Spirit is intrinsically identified with Christ in a single prophetic metaphor. The eyes of a person cannot be separated from the person. If a person's eyes look at someone, it is the person looking. It cannot be that the eyes look but the person does not. In this sense, the eyes are the person. Thus, by interpretation of the sign, Christ and the Spirit are identified as one.

If we do not complacently accept the notion of identification, we must pursue to know what is the nature and the extent of the identity of Christ and the Spirit as portrayed in Revelation 5. As we have seen, the New Testament testifies that, in God's economy, Christ became and today is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17). Today in His resurrection and ascension, Christ is the "Lord Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18), the pneumatic Christ. Moreover, the Spirit, the unique Spirit in the Godhead, became intensified to be the seven Spirits of God. It is altogether logical to say, therefore, that the Christ in Revelation is the Christ who became the Spirit and who was intensified to be the all-inclusive, sevenfold intensified Spirit for God's move in His administration.

Such a consummate unveiling of Christ seems to blur the distinctions of the three persons of the Godhead, especially as formulated according to the understanding of traditional theology. However, it must be emphasized that the view of the Trinity in Revelation is the view of the Trinity in His economy. The persons of the Trinity are distinct

but not separate, existing and coinhering from eternity to eternity; the Father is the Father, the Son is the Son, and the Spirit is the Spirit. The depiction of the Trinity in His economy, however, is much more complicated. Consider, for example, that in John's formulation of the Trinity in this book, the seven Spirits now occupy the second place in the Trinity, and the Son the third place. The book of Revelation presents the Divine Trinity in His administration, government, activity, motion, move, act, and work. Thus, the Father is portrayed according to what He has done, is doing, and will do; the Spirit is characterized in His intensified operation; and the Son is named according to what He is to God, to man, and to the world (Rev. 1:4-5). Thus, the economical aspect of the Trinity is the governing principle by which we must understand the seven eyes of the Lamb.

The intrinsic identity of Christ and the Spirit can also be seen in the epistles to the seven churches in chapters two and three. At the beginning of each of the seven epistles, the Lord tells us what kind of person He is. Each specific designation corresponds to the condition of the church to whom He speaks and presents Him in the particular aspect which most meets its need. Each epistle begins with "these things says," followed by a title of Christ according to His various supplying aspects (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). At the end of each epistle, however, it is the Spirit who speaks to the churches. Consistently, the closing word to each church is the charge, to those who have the ear, to "hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Thus, these things says Christ, but the Spirit speaks to the churches. This reinforces the emphasis on the Trinity in His economical aspect in this book—the Spirit is the Lord, and the Lord is the Spirit. In the darkness of the church's degradation, the sevenfold intensified, pneumatic Christ is vitally important. This emphasis is also seen in 14:13, where it is the Spirit who speaks out of heaven, and in 22:17 where it is the Spirit, in the place of the Bridegroom, with the bride, who makes the final call to men for their full participation in and enjoyment of the Divine Trinity as the eternal supply.

As the Lion-Lamb, Christ is intrinsically identified with the sevenfold intensified Spirit in and for God's economy. Thus, the Christ in the final book of the divine revelation is the all-inclusive One who has been intensified to carry out God's administration. Such a complete unveiling of Christ is consistent with the central revelation of God. The central revelation of God is that, in Christ the Son, God became flesh; the God-man in the flesh became the life-giving Spirit; and the life-giving Spirit became intensified sevenfold to build up the church to issue in the Body of Christ and to consummate the New Jerusalem.

Jesus Christ—the Witness, the Firstborn, and the Ruler

As we have seen, Jesus Christ is the faithful Witness, the

Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5). In this marvelous greeting at the beginning of this book, the Son is first addressed as Jesus Christ. *Jesus* means *Jehovah the Savior*, or the *salvation of Jehovah*. Jesus is the incarnated Savior, who passed in His humanity through human living and death on the cross. *Christ* refers to the anointed One, the One concerning whom God prophesied in the Old Testament through the prophets and whom His saints through the ages looked for (John 1:41, 45; Luke 2:25-26; 3:15), the One appointed and commissioned by God to accomplish God's purpose, God's eternal plan, who resurrected and ascended to the heavens. Such a compound title—*Jesus Christ*—implies the God-man, the union, mingling, and incorporation of God with man. To God, Jesus Christ is the faithful Witness, the testimony, the expression of God. Without Him, we cannot know God, see God, or gain God. To the church, the new creation, He is the Firstborn of the dead. God's old creation was a work of creation, in which He created all existing things in Christ as the origin and source (Rev. 3:14). His new creation is a work of resurrection, in which He resurrected some of the things of the old creation and brought them into the sphere of resurrection. As the Firstborn of creation (Col. 1:15), Christ is the preeminent One in all creation, sharing the created blood and flesh (Heb. 2:14), and as the Firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), He is the first in resurrection as the Head of the Body, having the first place in the church, God's new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Last, to the world He is the Ruler of the kings of the earth. All the people on earth are His people, and He is the Ruler of all nations. In this marvelous threefold designation, John proclaims and affirms the all-inclusiveness of Christ: He is the preeminent One to God, to the church, and to the world.

The Son of Man in the Midst of the Churches

Revelation may be divided into three general sections, as indicated by the Lord's command to John to write "the things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which are about to take place after these things" (1:19). In the first major section of this book, John was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind him a loud voice like a trumpet. Turning to see the voice, he saw seven golden lampstands, "and in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man" (v. 13). The vision John saw of Christ, the churches, and the responsible ones among the churches is indeed unique in all the Scriptures. To see Christ and the church, to be the up-to-date seers of the divine panorama, we must be "in spirit," our regenerated human spirit indwelt by and mingled with the divine Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). The visions in this book are a matter not merely of mental understanding in our mind but of spiritual realization in our spirit.

In such a position and condition, John saw Christ as the Son of Man walking in the midst of the lampstands. *The*

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Son of Man is a particular term in the New Testament, revealing Christ's intimate relationship and detailed involvement with humanity. As the Son of Man, Christ is a genuine man with humanity, both the very God and the proper man. After His resurrection and ascension, Christ did not put off His human nature. Rather, through these processes He became the Firstborn from the dead, forever "clothed with that glorified humanity which He had perfected and sanctified for Himself" (Murray 38). In relation to the church particularly, Christ is revealed in His human nature because the church is composed of human beings. The Head of the church is not only the Son of God but the Son of Man, and all His dealings with the church are based upon His humanity. Such a title of Christ corresponds with Daniel 7:13-14, in which Christ as the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days on His throne to receive dominion and a kingdom that He might be the centrality and universality of God's economy in His move on the earth. Yet, how much more precious it is that while the Son of Man in Daniel 7 is in the heavens, the ascended Son of Man in Revelation 1 is seen on earth, walking among the churches, caring for them, and personally known to the seer.

Revelation 1:13 says that Christ is "clothed with a garment reaching to the feet." This garment is a priestly robe (Exo. 28:33-35), indicating that in ascension Christ is the heavenly High Priest caring for the churches in the fullness of His divine attributes and human virtues. Among the three Old Testament offices of priest, prophet, and king, the most dear, intimate, precious, and lovely office is that of the priest, for the priest takes care of the people. The priest meets God's need, and he meets the needs of all who come to God. On the one hand, as the High Priest, Christ appears before the face of God in the heavens to intercede for the churches (Heb. 9:24; 7:5-26; Rom. 8:34). On the other hand, He is walking in the midst of the churches to care for them. The priests in the Old Testament were girded at the loins for their ministry (Exo. 28:4), but here Christ as the High Priest is "girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle" (Rev. 1:13b). In biblical imagery the breasts signify love. To be girded at the loins is to be strengthened for the work, whereas to be girded about at the breasts signifies care in love. At the time of this vision,

Christ's work in producing the churches had been accomplished. Now He no longer needs to be girded at His loins for work. Rather, He is in the midst of the churches to maintain, supply, and care for them in love, as seen in the subsequent chapters of this book.

The remainder of the description of Christ as the High Priest in the midst of the churches is full of imagery and rich with divine significance. For the purposes of this article, however, we will emphasize those features that most are in contrast with the general picture of Christ presented in the Gospels. The Gospels present Christ as the Savior, emphasizing His kingship in the kingdom of the heavens, His saving service which He rendered to sinners for God, His proper and normal humanity in which He became the Savior of mankind, and His deity in His humanity. While the Gospels portray, for the most part, the tenderness, mercy, and love of the Lord in His seeking heart and saving spirit, the visage of Christ in Revelation 1 is altogether different. Although He is caring for the churches in love, the majority of the elements of His features are symbols of judgment. One of the main tasks of the priest in the Old Testament was to trim the lamps (Exo. 30:7). To trim the lamp means to fill it with oil and to trim the wick, that is, to cut off the burned portion of the wick. While Christ as our High Priest is supplying the golden lampstands, He is also judging them by His "cutting."

The judging nature of Christ is seen in Revelation 1:14b-16, which says, "His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet were like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace; and His voice was like the sound of many waters. And...out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword; and His face shone as the sun shines in its power." In Song of Songs 5:12 the eyes of Christ are like doves, for the expression of His love, but here His eyes are as a flame of fire. This is for Him to observe and search that He may exercise judgment by enlightening. Christ's eyes are seven in number as the "flaming torches" (Dan. 10:6), the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of God (Rev. 4:5; 5:6). Fire is for divine judgment (1 Cor. 3:13; Heb. 6:8; 10:27). Hebrews 12:29 declares that "our God is also a consuming fire," and Daniel 7:9-10 tells us that His throne is ablaze with flames, out from which issues a river of fire, indicating God's judgment in His absolute righteousness and holiness. The main significance of the Lord's eyes being like a flame of fire is for His judgment. Christ is watching, observing, searching, and judging the churches by enlightening. However, Christ's eyes are also for infusing. With the seven Spirits as His eyes, Christ infuses all that He is into the churches and the saints. His searching is always accompanied by His infusing.

In typology, bronze also signifies divine judgment. Exodus 27 tells us that the altar of the tabernacle was overlaid with bronze, and all its tools and appurtenances were of bronze.

All the gifts brought to the altar were burned, indicating the Lord's acceptance through judgment. That the Lord's feet are of bronze indicates that His earthly and daily walk was tried and tested by His sufferings, even by His death on the cross. Now His perfect and bright walk qualifies Him to exercise divine judgment, first on the church, and then on the whole earth. When He comes to take possession of the earth by exercising judgment over it, His feet will be like pillars of fire (Rev. 10:1).

Two related elements fill out the picture of Christ in Revelation 1. His voice is like the sound of many waters. Ezekiel 1:24 tells us that "the sound of abundant waters" is like "the voice of the Almighty." Such a voice, as in Revelation 10:3, indicates the seriousness and solemnity of His speaking, especially to the church in its slumbering degradation and to the world in its fatal indifference and unbelief. In addition, a sharp two-edged sword proceeds out of His mouth. This is in contrast to the sweetness of His mouth in Song of Songs 5:16 and the words of grace which proceed out of His mouth in the four Gospels (Luke 4:22). Christ's words of grace are for His supply of grace to His favored ones, whereas His discerning, judging, and slaying words are for His dealing with negative persons and things.

Also, the face of the Son of Man in His priestly role shines as the sun shines in its power. Song of Songs 5:10-13 compares Christ's face to dates, doves, balsam, lilies, and myrrh. His face appears lovely for His seeker's appreciation of Him. In 2 Corinthians 4:6 His face reflects God's glory for the imparting of life into His believers. Here, however, His face shines intensely, as the sun and as lightning (Dan. 10:6) for judging by enlightenment. Two other passages in the New Testament compare the Lord's countenance to the shining of the sun, both of which relate to His coming in His kingdom (Matt 16:28—17:2; Rev. 10:1). The Lord's enlightening judgment is for consummating the church age to bring in His kingdom.

It is no wonder that, on seeing this awesome vision of Christ, John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20) and who formerly had reclined on His breast, fell at His feet as dead (Rev. 1:17)! The visage of Christ in this concluding book is intense, solemn, and fearsome. Such a portrayal of Christ, unprecedented in the New Testament, indicates that the nature of the church age had made a crucial turn in the time between the Epistles and Revelation. In the age of Revelation, Christ is intensified in His heavenly ministry to carry out the building up of the Body of Christ in order to conclude the church age and consummate the New Jerusalem.

Christ as the Supply to His Churches

The completed and consummated revelation of Jesus

Christ also discloses the One who is the supply of life and grace to the churches and the believers for their overcoming in the dark age of degradation. Immediately after John fell as dead at the fearsome and intense visage of Christ, the Lord said, "Do not fear; I am the First and the Last and the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever" (1:17-18). Whenever Christ demands, He also supplies. This book reveals Christ as the all-inclusive supply to the churches and the individual saints who answer His call to overcome. The Lord's word in verse 17 is similar to that in 22:13, in which He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." Christ's being the First and the Last means that there is none before Him, and there is none after Him. He is the ever-existing and unchanging One; all things are in the limit of His control, and He will accomplish what He has begun. As the Beginning and the End, Christ is also the origination of all things and the consummation of all things. God's economy and operation began with Christ, and they will end with Christ. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last. In today's terms, we may say that Christ is the A and the Z. Because Christ is the first letter and the last letter, He must also be all the letters in between. The key to our overcoming participation in God's economy is to learn to take Christ as our all-inclusive supply.

The above three pairs as divine titles of Christ reveal His all-inclusiveness, which matches the revelation of Christ in the Epistles. Christ is "theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2), the unique center of all believers in whatever place or situation they are. He is the portion of the saints (Col. 1:12) as their divine inheritance for their enjoyment. Christ is our life (3:4), the Firstborn both in the old creation and in the new (1:15, 18), the One in whom God's fullness dwells (1:19; 2:9), the mystery of God's economy (1:26), and the mystery of God Himself (2:2). Colossians 2:16-17 tells us that the figures of the Old Testament are but shadows of Christ who is the reality of all positive things, and 3:11 says that in the new man, "Christ is all and in all." In the new man there is room only for Christ. He is all the members of the new man and in all the members. In the age of degradation, we must learn to take Christ as the First, the Last, and everything in between.

As the living One, Christ became dead but now lives forever and ever. Christ is life (John 1:4; 14:6; 11:25); He has become our life (Col. 3:4); and as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) He is the reality of resurrection as the resurrection life and power (John 11:25). Therefore, the churches also, as the expression of His Body, should be living, fresh, and strong.

Although the seven epistles in Revelation 2—3 are a record of actual existing churches, they are also, in the principle of the entire book, signs, signifying prophetically the progress

The visage of Christ in Revelation is intense, solemn, and fearsome. This indicates that the nature of the church age had made a crucial turn. In the age of Revelation, Christ is intensified in His heavenly ministry to carry out the building up of the Body of Christ in order to conclude the church age and consummate the New Jerusalem.

of the church in seven stages. At the beginning of each of the epistles to the seven churches, Christ identifies Himself by a particular and purposeful divine title, taken, for the most part, from the imagery of the vision in chapter one. The way He presents Himself to each church is according to the condition of the church revealed in each particular epistle. In each case Christ is the all-sufficient supply to meet the need of the church as a whole and the overcomers in it in particular.

To Ephesus He is the One holding the seven stars—the spiritual ones who bear the responsibility for the testimony of Jesus—and the One who walks in the midst of the lampstands (2:1). In Acts 20 Paul warned the leading ones in the church in Ephesus that from their number some would come in as wolves to devour the flock (vv. 28-30), and in 1 Timothy 1:3-4 Paul charged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to charge certain ones not to teach differently from the apostles' teaching concerning God's New Testament economy. By the time of Revelation 2, however, the differing, problematic, divisive, and confusing teachings had worked their effect, and the love of the believers had grown cold. In such a situation, Christ was still the High Priest holding the shining ones and caring for the churches in order to restore them to their first love. To the suffering church in Smyrna, Christ is the First and the Last, who became dead and lived again (2:8); the ever-existing and unchanging One who entered into death but could not be held by it; the One who, as the vivifying Spirit, is the reality of resurrection. To the unchaste and worldly church in Pergamos, Christ has the sharp two-edged sword, the smiting and slaying word from His mouth for judgment and purification (v. 12). To the apostate church in Thyatira, Christ is the Son of God (v. 18). This church is a prophetic sign of the Roman Catholic Church, beginning from the establishment of the papal system in the early middle ages (Darby 509-510, Miller 5, 243). The apostate church strongly emphasizes Christ as the son of Mary, but He protests that He is the Son of God, the divine and immutable foundation of the church. Assuming the attributes of divine, penetrating, and all-searching judgment, He is the One who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like shining bronze.

To the restored church, He is the One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars (3:1). As a sign, the church in Sardis prefigures the Protestant church, from the time of the Reformation to the second coming of Christ. The reformed church stands faithfully on the judicial redemption of Christ and thus considers herself to be living. However, the Lord knows that she is dead. In Romans 5:10, Paul speaks of the two aspects of God's complete salvation. He says, "For if we, being enemies, were *reconciled to God* through the death of His Son, much more we will be *saved in His life*, having been reconciled" (emphasis added). After being reconciled to God objectively through His judicial redemption, we must go on to be saved subjectively by a thorough life long experience of His life. Because the reformed church, in general, has not appreciated and entered into the experience of organic salvation, Christ sees the work of reformation as not completed before God. For such a church, and indeed for all believers in this condition, Christ recommends Himself as the One with the sevenfold intensified Spirit of God and the shining leaders, for the church to be intensely living and intensely shining. In 2 Corinthians 3:6, Paul says, "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." The sevenfold intensified Spirit is living and can never be replaced by the dead letters of knowledge.

To the church in Philadelphia, Christ is the Holy One, the One who has God's holy nature that sanctifies us; and He is the true One, the One who is genuine and real in every way (Rev. 3:7). Without Him the churches have worldliness, not holiness, and vanity, not reality. He is also the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens, for them to hold fast what they have until the Lord comes. Finally, to Laodicea, Christ is "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (v. 14). *Amen*, from Hebrew, means firm, steadfast, or trustworthy. In Christ as the Amen "we have all Christology in a nutshell" (Kittel 54). The Lord is the firm, steadfast, and trustworthy One, who is true, faithful, and unchanging, to meet the need of the unfaithful, degraded church, which has changed by leaving the Lord as the source and all-inclusive supply. By all the above recommendations of Christ, we can see that He is whatever we need. His qualifications exactly match our need.

At the end of each of the seven epistles, Christ makes a special promise to those who overcome the degraded situation of the churches. A few are of note here, for they are further revelations of Christ as the supply to the churches and the overcomers in them. To the overcomers in Ephesus He promises to give to eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God (2:7). In the Bible the tree of life always signifies Christ as the embodiment of all the riches of God for our food. Here it signifies the crucified and resurrected Christ, who today is in the church, the consummation of

which will be the New Jerusalem, in which the crucified and resurrected Christ will be the tree of life for the nourishment of all God's redeemed people for eternity (22:2, 14). God's original intention was that man should eat of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9, 16), that is, take God Himself in Christ as his life supply. But in the church's degradation, religion crept in with its knowledge to distract the believers in Christ from eating Him as the tree of life. Hence, the enjoyment of Christ as the life supply in the church life today and in the manifestation of the kingdom in the next age becomes a reward to those who overcome all the distractions in the church's degradation. The following note shows us the way to take Christ as our enjoyment today:

Eating the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life. The content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ. The more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be. But to enjoy Christ requires us to love Him with the first love. If we leave our first love toward the Lord, we will miss the enjoyment of Christ and lose the testimony of Jesus; consequently, the lampstand will be removed from us. These three things—loving the Lord, enjoying the Lord, and being the testimony of the Lord—go together. (Recovery Version, Rev. 2:7, note 6)

To the overcomers in the church in Pergamos, Christ promises to give them of the hidden manna (v. 17). Manna is a type of Christ as the heavenly food that enables God's people to go His way. Speaking of Himself as the real manna, Christ said, "For the bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:33). Every morning the Israelites gathered the manna and enjoyed it openly, signifying the open, public enjoyment of Christ. In addition, a portion of manna was preserved in a golden pot concealed in the ark (Exo. 16:32-34; Heb. 9:4). The manna in the golden pot signifies the hidden Christ, who is the special portion reserved for His overcoming seekers and enjoyed in secret. If we seek the Lord today and overcome the degradation of the worldly church to enjoy Christ in the deepest and most intimate way, such an enjoyment will become our portion in the church today and our reward in the coming age.

To those in the church in Laodicea, the Lord promises, "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). To dine is to eat not merely one kind of food but the riches of a feast. Since two preceding promises—those of the tree of life and the hidden manna—employ Old Testament types, the feast here may refer to the eating of the rich produce of the good land of Canaan by the children of Israel (Josh. 5:10-12). The use of these three types in His promises indicates that the prescription for overcoming is the recovery of the enjoyment of Christ as food to us in various aspects. The degradation of the church distracts

God's people from the eating of Christ as their food and turns them to the teaching of doctrines for knowledge (Rev. 2:14-15, 20, 24), but the way to overcome the degradation is to return to the proper eating of Christ as our food supply. Today we must overcome to eat Christ, and we must eat Christ to overcome.

One other reward to the overcomers reveals Christ as a special portion for those who seek Him. To the overcomers in Thyatira, Christ promises the morning star (2:28). In 22:16 the Lord says, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright morning star." At His coming back Christ will be the rising "sun of righteousness" to His people generally (Mal. 4:2). The morning star, however, appears before the sunrise, in the darkest hour prior to dawn. Christ as the morning star is the One who comes in secret to rapture the overcomers. To His faithful ones, He will come before the great tribulation, the darkest hour, prior to His glorious appearing which will bring in His kingdom, when every eye shall see Him. In the kingdom the Lord will appear publicly as the sun to His people in general, but before the great tribulation He will appear privately to His overcomers as the morning star. Christ as the morning star is a portion reserved only for the overcomers. As we wait for the Lord, may we remain faithful to overcome the degradation of the churches and to eat Him as our food supply that we may meet Him in the most secret and most precious way at His coming!

Christ in the Universal, Divine Administration

In the universal, divine administration of God, Christ is the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). As the highest Ruler, Christ rules the whole earth that the gospel may be spread and the church may be produced. He is above all kings and presidents to rule sovereignly over the earth with His authority so that the environment may be fit for God's chosen people to receive His salvation. He is also the King of kings and Lord of lords who leads His army to defeat and judge Antichrist with his false prophet and all his followers from the nations (19:11-16). He is the faithful One to God and to His believers; He is the true One in carrying out God's economy and in caring for those who believe in Him; and He is the Word of God, the definition, explanation, and expression of God. As the Word of God in the Gospel of John, Christ imparts life as grace to God's chosen people, but as the Word of God in the Revelation of John, He executes God's judgment upon the rebellious people. Christ will also be the King in the kingdom (20:4, 6; 2:26-27), ruling over the nations with His overcoming believers.

Unveiling the scene around the throne in the heavens after Christ's ascension, chapters four and five are a unique revelation of Christ as the universal Administrator, the Executor, of God's New Testament economy. At the focus

In the universal, divine administration of God, Christ rules the whole earth that the gospel may be spread and the church may be produced. He is above all kings and presidents to rule sovereignly over the earth with His authority so that the environment may be fit for God's chosen people to receive His salvation.

of this scene is the throne, which is the center of God's administration, and on the throne, the life-giving and redeeming God holds a scroll sealed with seven seals. This scroll is the new covenant, the grand title deed in the universe, enacted with the blood of Christ the Lamb. When Christ ascended to the heavens, the angel announced, "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so that He may open the scroll and its seven seals" (5:5). When John looked, however, he saw "a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (v. 6). As the Lion, Christ is the strong Fighter against Satan, the enemy, as prophesied in Genesis 49:8-9. He is the One who fought, overcame, and became victorious in order to administrate God's economy in the universe. As the Lamb, Christ is the One who shed His blood to take away the sins of mankind (John 1:29). By His sacrifice on the cross He has accomplished an all-inclusive judicial redemption and has dealt with all the problems in His all-terminating death. To the enemy He is the Lion, the Fighter, and to us He is the Lamb, the Redeemer. By defeating Satan and taking away man's sins, Christ removed the hindrances to the fulfillment of God's purpose. Therefore, the slain, resurrected, and ascended Christ alone is worthy to open the scroll concerning God's economy. The opening of the seven seals is Christ's work as the Fighter-Redeemer in the divine administration.

Revelation 7:2, 8:3, 10:1, and 18:1 all speak of "another Angel" or "another strong Angel," a title more than once applied to Christ in this book (Govett 152). In the Old Testament, Christ was called "the angel of the Lord." In numerous passages, such as Genesis 22:11-12, Exodus 3:2-6, Judges 6:11-24, and Zechariah 1:11-12, 2:8-11, and 3:1-7, *angel* is "a theophany, a self-manifestation of God. He [the angel] here speaks as God, identifies Himself with God, and claims to exercise the prerogatives of God" (Ryrie 29). In the same principle, the Angel in Revelation is "an *uncreated* Being of divine majesty and power...It is the Lord Himself" (Scott 219). The modifier *another* indicates that this Angel is unique and special, of "another class, another appearance" (Panton, as per Nee 57). As another Angel, Christ stands on the position of One who has

been sent by God to execute God's economy. As the Angel, Christ seals the chosen Israelites and cares for the redeemed believers to preserve them while He executes His judgment on the earth (Rev. 7:2-17); He offers incense, signifying Christ with all His merits, with the prayers of the saints for their acceptance to God (8:3-5); He executes God's judgment upon the earth, the heavens, and upon men (8:3—9:11); He takes possession of the sea and the land at His second coming (10:1-7); and He comes in His illuminating glory to announce the destruction of Babylon the Great (18:1-3).

In 14:14-16, Christ is One like the Son of Man sitting on the cloud to receive the harvest of the earth. The harvest here is God's people on earth, the believers in Christ, who as God's cultivated land (1 Cor. 3:9) have now ripened by maturing. At His first coming to the earth, the Lord sowed Himself as the seed of life into His believers (Matt. 13:3-8, 24). Those who are the overcomers among the degraded churches ripen first as the "firstfruits to God and to the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4) and are secretly stolen by Christ when He comes as a thief (3:3). Following the events in 14:6-13, the Lord comes again openly to receive the majority of the believers, who have now matured with the help of sufferings.

In God's universal administration, Christ is the One who judges the living and the dead. God the Father has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22) and has ordained Him to be the Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1). Having judged the living before the millennium (Matt. 25:31-46), Christ will judge the resurrected unbelievers after the millennium (Rev. 20:11-15).

Christ in the New Jerusalem in Eternity

As the greatest and ultimate sign in Revelation and in all the Scriptures, the New Jerusalem signifies the organic constitution and universal, enlarged, divine-human incorporation of the processed Triune God with His regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite elect. The final unveiling of Christ in Revelation is in His person and work in the New Jerusalem for eternity (Lee, *Conclusion* 357-364). Christ will be the center, the circumference, and everything in the New Jerusalem.

In the New Jerusalem in eternity Christ will still be the redeeming Lamb. In 22:1 the throne at the center of the New Jerusalem is called "the throne of God and of the Lamb." In eternity we shall be enjoying the redemption which was planned by God in eternity past (1 Pet. 1:19-20) and accomplished by Christ as the Lamb in time. In eternity we shall remember how Christ gave His body for us so that we might become His mystical Body, and how He shed His blood for our sins so that we might be redeemed back to God and have the right to come to Him

and enjoy Him as the tree of life. The throne of the redeeming God is for Christ to execute God's administration in His eternal kingdom for eternity; it is also the throne of grace, because out of it flows the river of water of life with the tree of life in the middle of it and on either side.

In eternity Christ the Lamb will be the universal Husband (Rev. 21:2, 9). For eternity Christ will live a married life with His redeemed ones. He will be the eternal Husband, and all His redeemed ones will be His eternal wife. As the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem comes out of Christ, her Husband, and becomes His counterpart, just as Eve came out of Adam, her husband, and became his counterpart (Gen. 2:21-24). That Christ will be the Husband to His redeemed people also implies that in eternity Christ will retain His humanity, for God's ordination concerning marriage requires that the two parties in marriage have the same life and nature. In eternity, Christ as the Son of Man will have two natures, two essences, and two substances—divinity and humanity. In the New Jerusalem, Christ is the Son of Man with divinity and humanity forever. Therefore, the eternal marriage of the Lamb and His redeemed elect will be a union of the divine and human lives, a mingling of the divine and human natures, and an incorporation of the divine and human persons.

In eternity Christ with God will also be the temple. Revelation 21:22 tells us that the temple in the New Jerusalem is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. Just as the temple in the Old Testament was the dwelling place for the priests, the redeeming God will be the dwelling place of the redeemed saints, who serve the Triune God by dwelling in Him. In the New Jerusalem Christ will also be the lamp. Revelation 21:23 says, "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." God is light, and Christ as the embodiment of God, the One in whom all the fullness of God dwells, is the lamp to contain and express God as light. First Timothy 6:16 says that God dwells in unapproachable light, but because the divine light shines through the Redeemer, Christ the Lamb, this light has become lovable and touchable. Through the redeeming One, the Lamb, God's killing light becomes an enjoyable shining for God's dispensing.

In the New Jerusalem Christ will be the spring of the water of life (Rev. 21:6). In eternity, the flowing Triune God—the Father as the fountain, the Son as the spring, and the Spirit as the flowing river of water of life—will be the eternal supply for dispensing Himself into His redeemed people. Moreover, Christ in eternity will be the tree of life (22:2), the embodiment of all the riches of God as the eternal food supply for His redeemed. This is the eternal issue of God's redemption, fulfilling God's original intention with man that he enjoy Him as his life, his life supply, and his everything. Furthermore, as the tree of life,

Christ will also be the healing of the nations as the peoples of God on the new earth.

God's redeemed people will enjoy Him as the tree of life and the spring of the water of life because in eternity Christ will be the Shepherd (7:17). The most important task of a shepherd is the feeding of the sheep. How sweet and dear it is that in the New Jerusalem Christ will continue to shepherd us into Himself that we may enjoy the eternal dispensing of the Triune God, that we may express Him to the fullest extent for eternity.

The revelation of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation is all-inclusive. Jesus Christ is the all-inclusive, excellent, marvelous, mysterious, and wonderful One, who is the focus of God's New Testament economy. In the dark age of the degradation of the church, we must overcome by returning to the appreciation and enjoyment of Christ Himself as our everything in the church life today for the accomplishing of God's economy. **A&C**

Notes

¹Robertson (283) argues that the subjective genitive is attested by the subsequent phrase, "which God gave to Him" (1:1b). But Robertson himself notes that the Father's giving to the Son and the Son's speaking from the Father are according to the principle set forth in the Gospel of John, for which Alford cites John 7:16, 14:10, and 17:7-8. The Son speaks that which He receives from the Father "by his hypostatic union with Him" (Alford 545). This is an excellent exposition of "God gave to Him," but it still speaks nothing as to the content of the revelation. Hort argues at length that the grammar itself demands that this book is "the unveiling of the hidden Christ to man" (4), comparing 1:1 to Galatians 1:16. In principle, Walvoord concludes that the theology of Revelation is more specifically Christological than eschatological (30). We agree. The grammar of Revelation 1:1 is simply insufficient for a complete interpretation. The content of Revelation must be understood from the practical facts of the book.

²The reader is encouraged to read the thorough treatment of this matter in the October 1996 issue of *A & C*, "The Seven Spirits of God." For the purpose of this article, some of the more relevant conclusions are repeated here with a particular emphasis on the person and work of Christ in the economical Trinity.

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