

IMAGES OF JESUS  
IN REVELATION

Mark E. Moore

3. The commonest approach to Christology in general and Revelation in particular is through the manifold titles applied to Jesus: Christ (1:1,2,5; 11:15; 12:10; 20:4,6); Faithful Witness (1:5; 3:14); Faithful and True (19:11); Firstborn of the Dead (1:5); Ruler of the Kings of the Earth (1:5); Son of Man (1:13; 14:14); First and Last (1:17; 22:13); Living One (1:18); Son of God (2:18); Amen (3:14); The Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5); The Root of David (5:5; 22:16); Lamb (5:6,8,12,13; 6:1,16; 7:9,10,14,17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4,10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7,9; 21:9,14,22-23,27; 22:1,3); Lord (11:8; 22:20,21); King of Kings and Lord of Lords (17:14; 19:16); Word of God (19:13); Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End (21:6; 22:13); Bright Morning Star (22:16).

Revelation begins and ends with a shout out to Jesus: "The revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1) and "Come, Lord Jesus" (22:20).<sup>1</sup> All too often our interpretations of Revelation fail because we blow past Jesus to the blows of the church. Our anthropocentric interest in "The Tribulation" or end-times chronology blinds us from the very vision designed to sustain us in those times of trial. This essay, therefore, will concentrate on Jesus, specifically the three portraits John paints in chapters 1, 5, and 19. Rather than asking "What will happen?" we will attempt a different and more important question: "Who is HE?"

In essence, this is a study of the Christology of Revelation but done in an idiosyncratic way.<sup>2</sup> We are not delving into the titles of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Rather, we are looking at his portraits and asking how they function in the overall narrative of the book. From the rise of the first curtain, Jesus is center stage, standing in the spotlight with his coauthors, God the Father and the Sevenfold Spirit (1:4-6). Here he bears three titles: Faithful Witness, Firstborn from the Dead, and Ruler of the Kings of the Earth. These three titles represent the three portraits which punctuate Revelation. The Colossal High Priest of chapter 1 is the *faithful witness* to the seven churches. The slain lamb of chapter 5 stands in the midst of God's throne as the *firstborn from the dead*. And the Rider on the White Horse *rules the kings of the earth* in chapter 19. Hence, from the opening doxology, Jesus stands center stage as the lens through which the rest of Revelation's Christology will be read.<sup>4</sup>

DRAGONS, JOHN, AND EVERY GRAIN OF SAND

The Heavenly High Priest, Revelation 1:12-18

The first portrait of Jesus is so striking that it knocks John to the ground (1:17). The portrait is drawn from the well of OT imagery. As the following chart shows, it is a composite of the visionary figures of Daniel 7:9-14 and 10:5-6:

The Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the *hair of his head was white like wool*. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. . . there before me was one like a *son of man*, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. (Dan 7:9,13-14)

I looked up and there before me was a man *dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold* around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like *flaming torches*, his arms and legs like the gleam of *burnished bronze*, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. (Dan 10:5-6)

The figure has the accoutrements of a priest (robe, sash, and candlesticks)<sup>5</sup> but the face, eyes, hair, and voice of Yahweh.

Image from Rev 1	Old Testament Source(s) of the Image	Attribute of:
Seven Lampstands (cf. 1:20; 2:1)	Nunn 8:2, the seven lampstands gave light in front of the temple Zech 4:2, describes an apocalyptic lampstand with seven lights directly connected to the olive tree.	Priest
Son of Man	Dan 7:13-14, He approached the ancient of days and was given all power and authority and was worshiped.	Man
Robe (ροσῆμα)	The Linen Ephod of the High Priest: Exod 25:7, 28:4, 31, 29:5; 35:9; Zech 3:4; Wis 18:24; Sir 45:8. Ezek 9:2, 3, 11, an apocalyptic harbinger of the city's destruction. With his writing kit he marked those in the city not to be destroyed.	Priest Angel
Golden Sash	High Priestly Vestments: Exod 28:4, 39, 40; 29:9; 36:36; Lev 8:7, 13; 16:4 [תַּיִתָּן].	Priest

IMAGES OF JESUS IN REVELATION

Hair white like wool	Dan 7:9, "the hair of his head like pure wool"	God
Eyes of fire (cf. 2:18; 19:12)	Dan 10:6, "His body was like beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the roar of a multitude."	Angel
Feet like glowing bronze (cf. 2:18)	Dan 10:6 [see above], also the four living creatures of Ezek 1:7.	Angel
Voice like rushing water (cf. 1:10, "like a trumpet")	Dan 10:6 "his words like the roar of a multitude"; God's voice is like many waters (Ezek 43:2) and like thunder (Job 40:9). The voice of the four living creatures is also like thunder (Rev 6:1) and the mighty angel has a voice like a lion roaring (Rev 10:3).	God / Angel
Right hand held seven stars (cf. 1:20; 2:1; 3:1)	It may refer to the seven stars of the constellation of Pleiades (Amos 5:8; KJV).	God
Double-edged sword (δικοτομοσ cf. Rev 2:12; Heb 4:12)	"The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). In the OT it was both literal (Judg 3:16; Ps 149:6) and metaphorical (Prov 5:4; Sir 21:3).	Prophet
Face shining	Moses' face shone from God's presence (Exod 34:30, 35; 2Cor 4:6); in a similar fashion, Jesus' face shone at the transfiguration (Mt 17:2; Mk 9:3; Lk 9:29). 2Esd 7:97 (cf. 7:125), the 6 <sup>th</sup> of 7 levels of exalted souls have shining faces. Zion allegorically appears as a woman with a shining face (2Esd 10:25).	Prophet Saints
First and Last (cf. 1:8; 21:6)	Isa 44:6; this is a title for Yahweh, which Jesus assumes in 22:13.	God
Living One (cf. 4:9; 10:6; also 7:2; 15:7)	A title for God in 1:4, 8; 4:8 (c.f. Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1Sam 17:36; 2Kgs 19:4; 3Macc 6:28; Acts 14:15; 2Cor 3:3; 6:16; 1Thes 1:9; 1Tim 3:15; 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22).	God
Keys of death and Hades	The sole prerogative of God (Deut 32:39; 1Sam 2:6; Tob 13:2; Wis 16:13). They were not given to any delegate according to the Rabbis (l. Taan Za) or any creature (PesiqR 42:7, 178a).	God