



SWEDENBORG CHAPEL

CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM
50 QUINCY STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

(617) 864-4552

WWW.SWEDENBORGCHAPEL.COM

The Glorified Christ

By: Rev. F. Robert Tafel

2000

Scripture: John 17:6-9, Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lamp stands, and among the lamp stands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 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. 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. 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. Revelation 1 :12-18

The imagery of John 's vision of the risen Christ is rich with symbolic meanings; it is bold and dramatic, and memorable. More importantly, it is an invitation to us to be daring and imaginative in our picturing our Lord risen and powerful, yet close enough to touch and

real enough to feel.

Have you ever thought of John's vision in this way? Very often we can become caught up in the symbolism and overlook the primary reason for John's vision: to recapture the faith of the early Christians in danger of being overrun by martyrdom and the materialism of the Roman empire.

Rooted in one of the most brutal periods of human history the images of John's vision of the Lord symbolically and correspondentially relate eternal values of the spirit.

The details of John's vision of the Lord describe his Divine humanity in memorable images: the golden girdle about his breast an emblem of the power of the divine love, the head like white wool and snow, an image of pure divine wisdom, the eyes like a flame of fire emblematic of the zeal and determination of the Lord's providence, and the face shining like the sun in full strength portraying the power of divine love and wisdom in action providing life and regeneration and vitality to human spirits in a similar manner as does the earth's sun give energy and life to the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

A dramatic, powerful vision is that of John on the Isle of Patmos! Considered in its historic sense and meaning to John, we can only imagine its uplifting power. It is Sunday, the Lord's day, and John is imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos for being a Christian leader. He surely is concerned for his fellow Christians. What will become of the small, fragile communities? Year after year they were weighing heavily on his mind. Then this particular Sunday, above the roar of the surf on the rocks below, his spiritual senses are suddenly opened. He hears a trumpet

call like the sound of many waters. And the captivating vision was begun.

His inspired vision of the risen Lord was for a purpose, a reason. Emanuel Swedenborg found rich correspondential meanings in John's book and set them forth for us in his book, *Apocalypse Revealed*. We have touched on them. The girdle, hair, eyes, etc.

But what we gain from the vision and its meanings very likely will depend upon and be related to our individual state of regeneration. Yet one clear and common value underlies the vision: we are invited to picture our Lord in our mind's eye in bold and powerful forms. In images which picture our Lord risen in his divine humanity powerful, yet close and personal. How do we picture the Lord? John's vision invites us to ask ourselves how we see the Lord.

In this sense of imagining our Lord's presence, John's vision is timely and valuable. Do we not, like John when isolated on the Isle of Patmos tend to overlook the watchful presence of our Divinely-Human Lord? In business meetings; when engulfed in the cares and concerns of our daily routine; at times when we are in a hospital; when facing personal or national crisis.

The Lord is standing, has been standing all the while, in the midst of our life in our loneliest and most desperate times. Helping us to solve problems. Reminding us of lost or forgotten details, facts or things. Providing for us as best he can given our degree of freedom.

And he is present with us in our regeneration. In guiding and leading us to more loving attitudes and behavior and relationships.

Inspiring us with higher and better understanding of truth. Nourishing our spirits and restoring our souls even while we journey in the fearsome valley.

Our sense of the Lord's presence is related to our image of him. Our idea of God, our picture of how he is and how he functions can influence how we respond to his influx, his inflow into our life. Emanuel Swedenborg was among the first to show how important our idea, our concept of God is: How important it is to have a right idea of God can be established from this, that the idea of God constitutes the inmost of thought with all who have a religion, for all things of worship have respect to God. Also, because God, universally and in particular, is in all things of religion and worship, so, without a right idea of God, no communication with the heavens is possible.

Divine Love & Wisdom: 13

The way we picture God, our mental image of him and our concepts about how he acts in the world and in our life to a very large degree affects our relationship with the Lord. In the Swedenborgian Church, we affirm our concepts about God in our statement of faith:

We worship the one God, the Lord the Savior Jesus Christ. In whom is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Who for our salvation came into the world and took our nature upon him. He overcame the hells, and so delivered mankind. He glorified his Humanity, uniting it with the Divinity which it was begotten. Without this, no one could have been saved: and they are saved who believe in him and keep the commandments of his Word: to love one another as he loves us.

Such is the way we reaffirm our ideas of the risen Lord. Hopefully, at the same time, we form and reform our mental picture of God! As the

loving Lord of life who once walked our planet with a growing band of followers who came to know God the creator as a very real and warm and loving presence.

Those disciples saw the Lord ascend up into the heavens, according to the account in the first chapter of the Book of Acts. They saw their Lord as he was when he was with them. John on the Isle of Patmos saw the Lord in a very different way. He saw him ascended and glorified and united with the Father. How do we see the Lord?

Let us pray.

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About Us....

The Church of the New Jerusalem (*Swedenborgian Church*) exists to help people to be open to the Lord's presence and leading, and to facilitate their spiritual well-being. We invite you to participate with others who are seeking to deepen their inner life and spiritual journey.

The Church of the New Jerusalem bases its teachings on the Bible as illuminated by the works of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), a Swedish scientist and theologian. Swedenborg envisioned a new Christianity coming into being, revitalized by the Spirit of the Lord. Our congregation is a unique Christian community combining traditional worship with this progressive spiritual outlook.

Swedenborg believed that “true worship consists in fulfilling uses and, therefore, expressing compassion in action.” As a church we seek to be true to his vision of Christianity as an active and vital force that calls us to live out our faith in service to one another.

In keeping with our mission we offer several opportunities for growth and outreach including, but not limited to, our Sunday Worship Service. Please take a moment to speak with our pastor, Rev. Kevin Baxter, if you would like more information about our programs.

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