

changing, weary life of this world, carry in their minds and in their hearts a picture of the home which they indeed have never seen, but which is real and sure and glorious and eternal, prepared for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and love and serve him.

Our lesson for to-day strikes the key-note of the book. We are not shown heaven first; we are not shown the future first. Before either of these is opened we are shown Christ, the first and the last, the center and end of all things. The lessons for the past year have been chiefly occupied with the life of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, in his mortal body. We now get a sight of him as the Risen One in glory, and the picture is drawn by the same pen which we have followed through the year, that of the one companion of our Lord on earth to whom it was given to see him in his glory.

To see this, John was withdrawn from the great world. He was shut up in Patmos (an inhospitable island, inhabited by convicts sent thither by the Roman government) for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. What was the condition of things in the world he had left?

The civilized portion of the earth was then under the sway of one central authority. The Roman Empire was still strong and vigorous, and the reins of government were held, nominally, at least, by one hand. The Roman Caesar was a sort of divinity to his subjects, whatever might be his personal character. This character was often far from being an estimable one. Claudius was weak in intellect; Caligula, verging on insanity; Nero, an actor and a tyrant; and Domitian, who at this time occupied the throne, is said to have beguiled his leisure moments by catching flies. Paganism still remained supreme. The Christians were despised and persecuted, and the Christian Church was in danger from false teachers—traitors threatening her from within, as well as foes from without, while the one remaining apostle was withdrawn out of sight and shut up in an ocean prison.

But what was shown him there?

#### 1. *A divine yet human Ruler.*

The 't line in the description of him whom John saw (into which I can enter but briefly) is this: "One like unto the (or, rather, a) Son of man." Here is the man whom God had ordained (Acts 17. 31), the King whom he had set up (Psa. 2. 6). The destiny of mankind is in the hand of One who is their "bone" and their "flesh." 2 Sam. 5. 1. He is clothed in the long garment worn by priest, judge, and king, with the golden girdle of authority.

But how about his inherent fitness for this dignity? Six points are mentioned:

1. The hoary head of wisdom and ripe experience. Verse 14. Here is no novice on the throne, but one who is called the "Everlasting Father." Isa. 9. 6.

2. The fiery glance of discernment. Verse 14. No corruption can exist in his empire unknown to him. No wrong-doing can ever be hidden from him.

3. The walk of absolute purity and righteousness. Verse 15. The term "*chalcolibanus*," rendered "fine brass," was no doubt familiar to the people of Asia, and expressed the idea of entire refinement and separation from every particle of dross. Comp. Psa. 72. 2.

4. The voice of infinite strength and unbounded modulation, verse 15, which could shake the earth and the heavens, and yet could gently whisper in the heart of a child.

5. The word of power, like a two-edged sword. Verse 16. The Roman general Pompey boasted that he could call up an army by stamping his foot, but the word proved an empty boast. Christ's word shall "not return to him void." Isa. 55.

6. The countenance of dignity and beauty, verse 16—not hidden from the popular gaze, but shining on all who will look up to it, yet so dazzling that even the beloved disciple when he beheld it "fell at his feet as dead."

This is he, "The First and the Last" and the "Living One" (Psa. 31), "who was dead and is alive for evermore," who holds in his hands the reins of the world's government.

This vision brought such joy to the apostle that before describing it he bursts into a song of praise. Verses 5, 6. Why was this? Because he could say, "Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Joy to all who can say the same!

#### 2. *A Church watched and cherished.*

The first thing John saw was seven golden candlesticks—the number corresponding primarily to the principal churches of Asia, and ideally to the Church as a whole. It was in the midst of these that the glorious One stood. The little communities of Christians scattered here and there throughout the Roman Empire would have counted among men as the most insignificant part of it. But their true place was next the King, in his immediate presence and under his personal guardianship. Joy to those who are Christ's!

### Berean Methods.

#### Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Draw a map showing the location of the seven churches and of Patmos. Describe John, an old man in exile at Patmos. The vision which he then beheld: 1. The time—"the Lord's day." Show how early the first day of the week began to be observed, and find an allusion to it in Paul's life. Acts 20. 7. . . . 2. The apostle's condition—"in the Spirit." . . . 3. The voice, vers. 10, 11. . . . 4. The candlesticks. Show how they were a type of the Church. . . . 5. The glorified Saviour, his appearance. . . . 6. The effect of the vision. . . . The teachings will naturally group around the account of the vision which John beheld. In the Analytical and Biblical Outline is one line of teaching on this subject—"The Glorified Saviour." These points may be presented, the illustrative texts read, and the truths enforced. . . . Another line, somewhat similar, is given in the Thoughts for Young People.

References. FREEMAN. Ver. 18: Keys, 502.