

Rev. 2:1. Watchman, What of the Night?

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon emphasizes the nearness of Christ to His churches, watching over them, supplying their need, mourning over their sins, and cheering them with the promise of victory and recompense.

Scripture: Matthew 28:20, John 13:30, Hebrews 4:14, Revelation 2:1, Revelation 4:5

Topics: "Light in Darkness", "Christ's Presence"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the significance of Christ's presence among His churches during the dark times of the world, as depicted in Revelation 2:1. He describes the night that envelops both the Church and the world, highlighting the need for divine light and guidance. Bonar explains that Christ, as both Priest and King, walks among His churches, watching over them, supplying their needs, and mourning their sins. He reassures believers of His constant presence and the promise of victory for those who remain faithful. The sermon calls for acknowledgment of Christ's authority and the importance of shining His light in a dark world.

Transcript

"Him who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." --Revelation 2:1.

The mention made of 'stars' and 'candlesticks' (or rather 'lamp stands') shows that it is night. It is the world's night; it is the Church's night. It is night all around. Day needs no lamps nor stars; night does both, for the outside earth and the inside chamber. Accordingly, both are provided, and shall continue burning, with more or less of brightness, until the day dawns, and the day star arises. The 'night' was far spent in the apostle's days; but it was not over, nor is it over yet. Just before the Son of man was betrayed, it is written, 'It was night' (John 13:30)--as if, in every sense of the word, night was reigning then; so, before the Son of man shall come again, when Antichrist, the representative of him who is 'the ruler of the darkness of this world,' shall be at his height, there shall be night--deep, dark night--night for the Church and for the world.

These seven epistles take this for granted. They are written for saints and for churches who are enveloped in this night. They are representatives of the Church universal, in all ages and lands. Their symbols speak to us in these last days. They tell us our need of stars and lamps; of light coming from above, or out from the holy place where the seven-branched candlestick was; of light kindled by God Himself, and by the Great High Priest, before whose throne are the seven lamps of fire ever burning (Revelation 4:5).

I. WHO is He who thus walks? He gets many names and designations in this book of the Revelation--'Son of man;' 'the First and the Last;' the 'First-begotten of the dead;' the 'Faithful Witness;' the 'Root and Offspring of David;' the 'bright and morning star;' the 'Prince of the kings of the earth;' the 'King of kings, and Lord of Lords.' He appears before us in priestly clothing; yet He shows Himself also as King. It is as Priest and King that He appears in the midst of His churches--as such they are to acknowledge Him. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we see Him specially as Priest; in the book of Revelation, as King--King of saints, King of nations; and all throughout this latter book it is kings and nations that are spoken of, warned, threatened, and judged. He stands forth as King of nations, as Prince of the kings of the earth--thus declaring His connection with nations and kings; declaring also the duty of kings and nations to acknowledge and serve and glorify Him--to lay their honors and their treasures at His feet; declaring also the sin of those who would not have Him reign over them, and also the fearful judgments on all such.

It is with the sins and the judgments of nations and kings that this book has specially to do; all because He is so specially announced in it as 'King of kings.' A nation's laws ought to acknowledge Him as such; the king's scepter ought to have that name inscribed on it; the national resources ought to be consecrated to Him; and all government ought to recognize Him as the source of authority and power, the fountainhead of wisdom and counsel. Earth does indeed disown Him; men reject His yoke, His authority, His sovereignty. We see not yet all things put under Him; but not the less does the Father claim for Him the homage and the crowns of earth; and not the less is the sin of earth's kingdoms for refusing His authority. He is, in all senses and in all His characters, the rejected One--rejected by His own Israel; by His professing Church, by the world to which he came--rejected as Prophet, as Priest, and as King.

II. WHERE does He walk? Among the seven golden candlesticks. These candlesticks are on earth, and He is in heaven; yet He walks among them, as He said, 'Lo, I am with you always.' It is with His churches that He ever is; not with these seven alone, but with His whole Church (complete, yet manifold; one, yet seven), through all ages, in all the earth. The seven epistles are the utterances of this Glorious One while walking. He looks, and He speaks. He comes up first to one candlestick, and then to another, and then to another. It is in the midst of His many churches, or His one Church (for both are true), that He is ever walking.

III. WHAT does this walking mean? It seems to say that He has come down from heaven, that He has left the throne where He was sitting, and is now moving about among His churches on earth.

(1) He is near--A present Christ is specially taught us here--Jesus in the midst of His saints and His churches, as in the upper chamber of Jerusalem. He is near to all of them, even the backsliding; and near to Laodicea and Sardis, as to Ephesus and Philadelphia.

(2) He watches over them--'I know your works'. His eye, the eye of the watchful Priest and King, the eye of the watchful Savior and Shepherd, is upon them. He inspects them, oversees them, cares for them, values them, delights in them, takes a personal interest in their welfare.

(3) He supplies their need--This need is constant, but He is as constant--unwearied, long-suffering, faithful, loving. All his fullness is at hand for each of them. He sees if their light grows dim, and seeks to rekindle it, and make it burn the brighter. Nothing is lacking on His part to meet all need--to strengthen all weakness.

(4) He mourns over their sins--He is faithful to notice sin, and to warn against it--just as He is faithful to pardon it when confessed. His holy eye detects the sin. His loving, tender heart mourns over it. There is

no anger, no fury here. All is gentleness and grace. He mourns over Ephesus for leaving her first love; over Pergamos for allowing sin; over Sardis for death; over Laodicea for lukewarmness. He feels these things profoundly. He is not indifferent to them, as if he did not care whether His lamps burned bright or not. He mourns over every sin; He longs to supply every need.

(5) He cheers them with the promise of victory and recompense-- As if He would say to each, 'Fight on, for I am with you!. Faint not, for I, with all my fullness, am near! Shine on, for I delight in your brightness, and will enable you to shine. And my reward is with me, to him who overcomes!'

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