

The Real Jesus Revealed

Revelation 1:12-20

We no doubt all have a picture in our mind of what Jesus looked like, but even if we are close in our estimation, we would really only have an idea of what He looked like as a Man. What do I mean? The way Jesus appeared as a Man is not really the way He looks today - or the way He has looked throughout eternity. His appearance while on the earth was only a temporary shell so that He could walk and live among us. Who He really was, was actually disguised in the costume of a human body. So, what does Jesus REALLY look like? We are going to see, and it may not fit your preconceived notion!

Jesus is now glorified. The closest we can get to what that was like was on the Mount of Transfiguration. Remember Jesus pulled back His cover for a short moment and allowed Peter, James, and John to see Him for Who He really was although still not in full heavenly glory. Even John, who had seen that, will be taken aback by what he sees. I hope we are as well.

It reminds me of the man who fell in love with a famous opera singer. The more and more he heard her sing, the more he loved her - until he finally asked her to marry him. The problem was he had fallen in love with her voice more than with her! He was in for a big surprise on their honeymoon night. As she began to get ready for bed she first took off her makeup, then her wig, next she removed her false eye, and then came off her prosthetic arm, and finally she took out her false teeth. Upon seeing who she really was, he cried, *For heaven's sake woman, 'Sing! Sing!'* He didn't really know who she was until all the earthly decorations came off, and by then it was too late! The good news is the more we see Jesus without the earthly decorations, and see Him for Who He really is, the better it gets!

The first thing John describes seeing in verse twelve is seven golden lamp stands. To the Jewish mindset, this would have immediately made them think of the menorah in the Temple. But Jesus will tell us it represents the seven churches in Asia.

In the next verse, John sees the Lord standing right in the middle of the churches. That is exactly where we want Him to be! I want Jesus standing right in the middle of Calvary Chapel or we are wasting our time! John begins a lengthy description of what Jesus now physically looks like, and it is exciting because we know what to expect when we finally get to see Him! Look at his description: first He had on a full-length garment down to His feet, and His chest is wrapped in a golden band. A full-length garment signifies majesty and authority, while gold in Scripture represents kingliness. Hence, we see Jesus not only in majesty and authority, but also as the King over all creation in His glory!

Verse fourteen says His head and hair were like wool and as white as snow. This tends to make us think of someone earthly who is old and not as strong, but in heaven it is a sign of power and glory! Notice also His eyes were like a flame of fire. It is interesting that fire not only illuminates but also purifies. When the Lord gazes upon us, it burns through all our disguises and also purifies us.

The next verse declares His feet were like fine brass. Brass in Scripture is the metal of judgment. We now see Jesus as the Judge of all mankind who will mete out pure and refined judgment for all upon His return. There are a lot of people who have trouble with Jesus coming back to judge, but that is exactly what the Bible says He is going to do! The Bible says that the world (the unsaved) will be judged by their deeds and condemned, while Christians will simply be judged in regards to what eternal reward or lack thereof they will receive. But we will ALL be judged! Next His voice is like many waters. What a description of how the Lord's voice sounds! I have never stood next to Niagara Falls, but have heard recordings of waterfalls. This was that times ten! I am sure it would have been louder if John's ears were able to stand it! As a matter of fact, we know the entire vision was through a filter, because the Bible says we will not be able to see God in His full glory until we have our new bodies! John did not yet have his new body.

Verse sixteen says He has seven stars in His right hand--which will be explained in a minute--and out of His mouth comes a two-edged sword. It goes on to say that His countenance is like the brightness of the sun. Now you know

why Paul was blinded when he saw the Lord for real and not just in a vision! The Bible tells us that the sword is how God describes His Word, so the two-edged sword coming out of His mouth showed that Jesus was speaking forth the Word of God. The language points to this not simply as the Word of God but as God's Word in judgment. This further demonstrates what Jesus will be doing upon His return. Remember when Jesus came the first time it was as a Lamb to die. Next time it will be as a Lion to conquer! It is noteworthy that this sword is a two-edged one as contrasted to the standard single-edged. On the latter, only one side was sharpened, but on the former, both sides were sharpened. Why is this significant? Because it shows us that God's Word is not only sharp and powerful in one direction, but in every direction in which it turns or is used. It gets you coming and going!

In verse seventeen, John fell as though dead. I understand this! We ALL would have done the same at such a sight and in the presence of such power. When ANY of us truly see the Lord in His glory, we won't be able to help but fall as dead men. When we understand how pure, holy, and great He really is, we will collapse before Him.

The term *the First and the Last* is how Jehovah or God Almighty identifies Himself in Isaiah chapters 43-48. He says He was dead and is now alive forevermore. When did Jehovah ever die? On the cross! Showing clearly this is Jesus speaking. Why is this important? First of all, it tells us that Jesus IS Jehovah or God Almighty. Secondly, it completely refutes the false teaching that Jesus is not God, OR that Jesus was just a good man, a prophet, or an angel, as Jehovah's Witnesses and others claim. He says He holds the keys to Hades and death. That is, Jesus declares He not only has authority over all creation but over life and death. What is Hades? Scripture tells us that Hades is the temporary holding tank of the unsaved dead until Judgment Day.

Here again, in the nineteenth verse, is the premise we pointed out in our first lesson showing the three-part break-up of the book of Revelation and how John was to write it down: the things which were, (Chapter 1), the things which are, (Chapters 2 and 3), and the things which will be (Chapter 4 to the end).

The Lord now reveals, in verse twenty, what the vision means that John was seeing. The stars in His hand were the seven angels to the seven churches, and the seven lamp stands represented the seven churches. The word angel is interesting here. It literally means messengers - the messengers for the seven churches. That has led some to believe this may not be talking about actual angels speaking to the churches, but the pastors of these churches. Why? They are the weekly messengers to each church. There is no way to know for sure what this means, but I like the idea of it being the pastors! Because as a messenger to Calvary Chapel Knoxville, the Lord is holding ME directly in His hand! I like that!

Do YOU see Jesus for Who He really is? Do you see Him as more than simply another religious man or spiritual leader? Or do you see Him as God Almighty and the only way to heaven? How you view Jesus will not only determine your life down here but where you will spend eternity. Has He opened your eyes to see Him for Who He really is? It is interesting to me that verse twelve says when John heard the voice of the Lord, he turned to see the voice that was speaking to Him. The question is do YOU hear His voice? If so, it is time that you too turn to see the voice that is speaking to you. The way to turn is to call out to Him.

Group Study and Personal Application Questions:

1. No matter what kind of image we may have of what Jesus looked like, why is that not important compared to what He looks like today? Consider what Peter, James, and John saw.
2. V12 – What was the first thing John describes seeing and what would the Jewish reader immediately thought of? What is represented by what John sees?
3. V13 – Where is Jesus standing in John’s description? Why is that important in light of your own church?
4. What does the full-length gold garment Jesus is wearing say about Him?
5. V14 – What the significance of Jesus’ hair being like wool and white as snow?
6. Jesus eyes are described as being like a flame of fire. What are two characteristics of fire and how is that significant when thinking about Jesus gazing at us?
7. V15 – What is the symbolic meaning of brass in the Scriptures? Because it was refined, what kind of judgment can everyone expect from Jesus?
8. What is the difference between the kind of judgment unbelievers will receive and that of believers when we all stand before Him?
9. V16 – John saw a two-edged sword from the mouth of Jesus. What does the language indicate concerning what Jesus spoke? Why is it significant that it is a two-edged sword?
10. V17 – What was John’s response to seeing Jesus? How would you respond if Jesus appeared this way to you?
11. V18 – Jesus identifies Himself as the First and the Last and He who was dead and is alive forevermore. Why is it important to know that it was Jesus speaking? (Two reasons)
12. Why is it important that Jesus holds the keys to Hades and death?
13. V19 – The three phrases used in this verse depict time. How are the chapters of Revelation broken down according to these phrases?
14. V20 – Stars are used symbolically in the Bible to refer to angels. Given the meaning of angels (messengers), what two ways can this be applied for us today?

We can so easily get wrapped up in our life and the things going on around us that we lose sight of what Jesus is really like or whom He is. John’s description of his vision brings that back into focus.

- What areas of your life do you see needing change to hold Jesus in the place He rightly belongs? Are you actively seeking to *hear* His voice each day?