

**7/25/21 “A Vision of the Glorified Christ”
Revelation 1:9-20**

Welcome...

In C.S. Lewis' book *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* the children had yet to meet Aslan (the ruler of Narnia), when Mr. Beaver tells Susan that Aslan is a great lion. Susan is surprised, since she assumed Aslan was a man. She then tells Mr. Beaver, "I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." She then asks Mr. Beaver if Aslan is safe, to which Mr. Beaver replies, "Safe? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King."

Aslan as the King is a metaphor of Jesus and His Kingdom. In our text this morning, John writes the vision He has received of the glorified Christ. The vision John sees is quite different from the Christ that John had experienced as one of his closest disciples. In Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we read of a Christ who is tender, humble, holy, loving, kind, compassionate, and patient. In this vision, we see Christ clothed in royal majesty, splendor and power.

Let's read Revelation 1:9-20...

This vision of Jesus Christ must have been a monumental encouragement to the persecuted, distressed, discouraged, beleaguered believers in Asia Minor. They were undergoing persecution, under emperor Domitian that had resulted in John himself, the author, being exiled and banished to the isle of Patmos.

And in this very difficult time when it looked as if things were bleak for the church, it was a wonderful thing to receive a book which predicted the glory of Jesus Christ in the future - not only that, which defined and described the present glory of Jesus Christ as we see it here in chapter 1. Because this vision of Jesus Christ that we will look at is not a future vision, it is a present vision. It is not one that says this is what Jesus Christ will be like and what He will do in the future, it is one which says this is what He is like now and this is what He is doing now.

So, here in 1:9-20 we see a powerful vision of Christ's present ministry provides great hope and comfort to the suffering church. What hope this brings to people dying for their faith; what encouragement this is to Christians in need of courage and perseverance; what accountability it demands from those who are straying from the truth. We will learn the place (verses 9-11), purpose (verses 12-16, 20) and power (verses 17-19) of this vision of Christ's present ministry to His church. And as we study this vision of the glorified Christ, we will see the glory of Christ is to shine in and through His church, reflecting His glory to the world (2 Corinthians 4:6).

My prayer for you as you look at this vision with me is that it will open your eyes to see the glory of your Lord, the Lord of the church.

I. The Place of the Vision Verses 9-11

We learned in 1:2 that John had been faithful to preach the Word of God and proclaim the testimony of Jesus. What did he learn? First, John learned there is:

A. Partnership in Suffering for Jesus – Verse 9a

Verse 9a...

John had every reason to lay out his resumé to get everyone's attention. "I, John – the author of the gospel of our Lord's life and ministry; the writer of three epistles; one among the three closest apostles to our Lord – sitting next to Him in the upper room; the only disciple to appear at the cross of Christ; the one our Lord gave custody of Mary, His mother."

This is all remarkably true. However, John says, "I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the struggles of life in Christ."

John's own Lord and Savior had suffered, his brother, James, had been martyred. Paul and Peter were also martyred. Antipas (2:13) was killed because of his testimony for Christ. Many Christians share in the partnership of suffering then and now. As 2 Timothy 3:12 reminds us, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

A second lesson we see is that there is

B. Perseverance in Suffering for Jesus– Verse 9b

Verse 9b...

Notice the word tribulation – it means pressure, trouble, affliction don't need to sidetrack our walk with Christ.

Notice also the word kingdom (basileia) in verse 9. Jesus inaugurated His kingdom as a suffering Savior. We enter the kingdom and serve as suffering saints. The pain and the praise go together, reigning and suffering are not mutually exclusive. It is the way of our Lord. It is also to be our way.

Verse 9 says, "I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus." Perseverance (hupomone) means to abide under a heavy load, to endure, to stay with it, hang in there, not throw in the towel or drop out of the race. John's exile to Patmos was no accident. It did not catch God by surprise anymore than any crisis or tribulation we face catches Him off guard or unprepared. It is in Christ, of Christ and for Christ. Jesus provided the needed strength for John, and He will do the same for us. James 1:4 reminds us to let "endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing."

Serving Christ is not be easy. It is costly! Patmos was a 10 x 6 mile mountainous island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). It may have been a penal colony for exiled criminals banished and sentenced to hard labor in the rock quarries. Why was John sent there?

End of verse 9...

But John's exile to Patmos was no accident. It did not catch God by surprise anymore than the martyrdom of the other disciples. It is in Christ, of Christ and for Christ. Christ will provide the needed strength for John, and for us, to endure extreme trials and adversity. He is a faithful Father who will never give up on us. John, like Peter, Paul and the Lord received his greatest revelation and climbed his highest spiritual mountain during a time of extreme suffering and persecution for Christ. It's been said, "God's pain always brings gain." There is partnership in suffering, perseverance in suffering, and third:

C. Praise in Suffering for Jesus – Verses 10-11

Verse 10 begins with, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

"In the Spirit," is a phrase that occurs also in 4:2; 17:3; 21:10 for the trancelike state in which the Spirit gave the visions to John.

“The Lord’s Day” is a reference to Sunday. There is a different Greek construction to refer to the future and terrible “day of the Lord” when Christ returns in wrath and judgment.

In this verse, John refers to “the Lord’s day” –used in the church as a reference to the day the church specially worshiped, for it was the day the Lord rose from the dead.

Ignatius, writing just fifteen years after John wrote this Revelation, said, “the Christians ceased to keep the Jewish Sabbath and lived by the Lord’s Day, on which our life shines, thanks to Him.”

Pliny, the unbelieving Roman governor, wrote around the same time – A.D. 110, and I quote, “The Christians gather on Sunday, the first day of the week, to sing praises to their Lord Jesus.”

Verses 10-11...

When John says ‘behind me’ it is simply an appropriate—if dramatic—way of describing a voice which comes unexpectedly from an unseen person. Given that Jesus speaks next, the voice obviously belongs to him. It is ‘loud’ and ‘trumpet like’: that is to say, the voice is clear, as well as great in volume. And what does the Lord say?

Verse 11...

These were actual historical churches in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. He tells John to write and write he does, one of the most magnificent books of all time.

Now most believe John returned to Ephesus after Domitian was assassinated in 96 AD. However, do not forget that at this point in time John did not know that. As far as he is concerned, his best days of ministry are behind him. This is the end for John.

God was not finished speaking through John. There in the bleakness and loneliness and barrenness of Patmos, God came to John and revealed a powerful vision the glorified Christ. Why?

II. The Purpose of the Vision

Read verses 12-16...

Having described the circumstances in which he received it, John then related the vision itself. This revealing and richly instructive look at the present work of the glorified Son of God discloses three aspects of the Lord Jesus Christ’s constant ministry to His church.

A. Christ Intercedes for His Church – Verses 12-13, 20

Verses 12-13...

When John turns after hearing the voice behind him (1:10), he sees seven golden lampstands. This image is built on Exodus 25:31–40, where God commanded Moses to build a gold lampstand with seven branches - the sacred menorah that became a symbol of Judaism. In 1 Kings 7:49, Solomon placed five each on both sides of the altar of incense. In Zechariah 4:2, 10, lampstands signified “the eyes of the Lord that range throughout the earth.” Here it is not one sevenfold lampstand but seven separate lampstands, referring to the seven churches. Which are to be shining lights for God in the midst of a hostile world.

In the middle of the seven lampstands stands Christ in His role as “one like a son of man.” This is taken from Daniel 7:13, which describes a messianic deliverer who opposes the four beasts and the little horn and is given sovereign power over the nations. The fact that Christ stands in the midst of the lampstands means He is not aloof from his people. He is deeply involved in their situation, superintending and guiding them. Note the language: He is in the middle of them, holds them in his right hand (1:16), and in 2:1 we are told He walks among them (2:1). He is deeply committed and acting on behalf of his followers.

The robe here pictures Christ in His role as the Great High Priest of His people. That He was girded across His chest with a golden sash reinforces that interpretation, since the high priest in the Old Testament wore such a sash (Exodus 28:4; Lev. 16:4).

The book of Hebrews says much about Christ’s role as our Great High Priest. In 2:17–18 the writer of Hebrews notes, “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” In Hebrews 3:1 he refers to Christ as the “High Priest of our confession,” while in Hebrews 4:14 he reminds believers that “we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.”

Our Great High Priest is “able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

As our High Priest, Christ once offered the perfect and complete sacrifice for our sins and permanently, faithfully intercedes for us. As Romans 8:33–34 tells us, “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

Jesus has an unequalled capacity to sympathize with us in all our dangers, sorrows, trials, and temptations. Hebrews 2:18 says “since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” Hebrews 4:15, “We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin”

When Jesus was crucified He was stripped of his garments, but now He wears the robe of righteousness and faithfully intercedes for His church.

1 John 1:9 tells us “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” because as 1 John 2:1 tells us in Him “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Christ faithfully intercedes for His church.

B. Christ Purifies His Church – Verses 14-15

Daniel 7:9 says that the hair of the Ancient of Days “was white like wool,” which in ancient culture represented accumulated wisdom and dignity. Interestingly, white wool was also a major industry in the region of Revelation’s original audience, especially of Laodicea (Revelation 3:18).

The wool and the snow picture dazzling whiteness, as we saw in Mark 9:3 at the transfiguration where Christ’s “garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.” The emphasis here

is on Christ's incredible wisdom, purity, and splendor. White symbolizes both moral purity and absolute victory over the forces of evil. Ephesians 5:25-27, "Christ ... loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."

In Colossians 1:22 Paul explained that Christ "has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." In 1 Peter 1:15-16 Peter reminds believers that God expects them to "like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

Continuing his description of the glorified Christ, John noted that "His eyes were like a flame of fire." His searching, revealing, infallible gaze penetrates to the very depths of His church, revealing to Him with piercing clarity the reality of everything there is to know. Jesus declared in Matthew 10:26, "There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known." Hebrews 4:13, "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The omniscient Lord of the church will not fail to recognize and deal with sin in His church.

This concept is further enhanced in verses 15 when it says "His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace." The bronze altar in the temple was related to sacrifice for sin and divine judgment on it.

Verse 15 concludes with "His voice was like the sound of many waters."

When Christ spoke again, it was no longer with the trumpetlike sound of verse 10. His voice was now "like the sound of many waters," a familiar analogy to the surf crashing on the rocky shores of Patmos in a storm. The voice of the eternal God was similarly described in Ezekiel 43:2, showing another parallel affirming Christ's deity.

The awesome voice of God (Ezekiel) and Christ (here) is proclaiming judgment upon the nations and salvation for His people. Today Christ speaks to His church directly through the Holy Spirit-inspired Scriptures.

Christ intercedes for His church, Christ's purifies His church, and third:

C. Christ Protects His Church – Verse 16

Verse 16a...

As the head of His church (Ephesians 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), Christ exercises authority in His church. In John's vision, Christ is holding seven stars in His right hand, identified in verse 20 as "the angels of the seven churches," which symbolized those authorities.

Verse 16b...

Christ's presence also provides protection for His church. The "sharp two-edged sword" that came "out of His mouth" is used to defend the church against external threats. The sword was the primary image of Roman might, called the *ius gladii*, "the law of the sword." The message here is that Rome is not in control; Christ is. The Old Testament background is Isaiah 11:4 ("he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth") seen through Isaiah 49:2 ("he made my mouth like a sharpened sword").

His word is potent (Hebrews 4:12–13), and will be used against the enemies of His people (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8), so that all the power of the forces of darkness will be unable to prevent the Lord Jesus Christ from building His church.

Verse 16c...

John's vision of the glorified Lord of the church culminates in this description of the radiant glory evident on His face. And as Adrian read from 2 Corinthians 4, the glory of God through Christ shines in and through His church, reflecting His glory to the world.

We have seen the place of the vision, the purpose of the vision, and finally:

III. The Power of the Vision

Notice three effects of this vision:

A. Overwhelming Fear

Verse 17a...

John fell at the Lord's feet as though he were dead! And this is the apostle who leaned on Jesus' chest! (John 13:23) A vision of the exalted Christ can only produce awe and fear.

B. Compassionate Assurance – Verses 17b-18

The Lord reassured John by touching him and speaking to him. "Fear not!" is a great encouragement for any child of God. We need not fear life, because He is "The Living One." We need not fear death, because He died and is alive, having conquered death. And we need not fear eternity because He holds the keys of hades (the world of the dead) and of death. The One with the keys is the One who has authority.

The third effect of this vision is:

C. Steadfast Duty – Verse 19

The One who controls death and the powers of death now turns His attention to John, the chosen messenger for these apocalyptic truths. He has already commissioned John to write in 1:11. This passage goes further and enumerates the content of the prophetic messages. In light of Jesus' cosmic victory over death and the evil powers, John is now commanded to write down what God is revealing to him. John is steadfast in his fulfilling his duty to His Lord.

Verse 19 outlines the book. First, "the things which you have seen," the vision John had just seen and recorded in verses 10–16. Next, "the things which are," a reference to the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3, which describe the present state of the church. Finally, John was to write "the things which will take place after these things," the prophetic revelations of future events unfolded in chapters 4–22. This threefold command provides an outline for the book of Revelation, encompassing (from John's perspective) the past, present, and future.

What a Sunday this was for John! As far as he was concerned, he was stuck on Patmos and would never go home again. At this time for John and now for us, when Christians face their greatest times of insecurity, God reminds

us of His supremacy and provides a marvelous vision of the glorified Christ. God revealed it to John and to us on the Lord's day.

There is partnership, perseverance and praise in suffering for Jesus. Why? Because Christ intercedes for us, He purifies His church and He protects His church. The power of the vision of the glorified Christ should overwhelm us, assure us, and embolden us to be steadfast in our witness for Him.

Ephesians 3:21 says "To Him be the glory in the church." He wants to shine through His church. The glorious, exalted Lord of the church, present to empower, to intercede, to purify, to protect, and to be glorified through His church.

Let's pray...