

Revelation 1:12-20 | A Glorious Vision of Christ

Remember the context

- These churches needed to be reminded of the greatness of Jesus—the glory of Christ
- The world seemed out of control for God's people
 - Personally for John
 - Globally under the Roman Empire
- The church seemed insignificant, irrelevant and powerless
 - A contrary kingdom with a contrary Lord
 - Unpopular, outnumbered, targeted
- “The Christians were a pitifully small group, persecuted by mighty foes. To all outward appearance their situation was hopeless. **But it is only as Christ is seen for what he really is that anything else can be seen for what it really is.**” –Leon Morris¹

I. The example of John (verses 9-10)

9 I, John, your brother and **fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance** which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos **because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.**

10 I was **in the Spirit** on the Lord's day, **and I heard** behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet

- John was suffering for being faithful (**because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus**)
- John was seeking the Lord in His suffering (**in the Spirit**)
- The result was clear revelation (like the sound of a trumpet)
- And great comfort
- **Questions:**
 - What do you suffer for?
 - What do you seek when you suffer? (or, whom?)
 - What does that get you? (or, what do you hear as a result?)
 - **I.e. The truth of the glory, power and majesty of Christ above all!!!!**

II. The center of the church (verses 12-13^a, 20)

12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw **seven golden lampstands;**

13 and **in the middle** of the lampstands one like the son of man...

20 ... the seven lampstands are **the seven churches.**

7 = number of completeness

- The churches were actual churches in real places, but they represented all churches

The **lamps** symbolize churches as lights in a dark world

- Philippians 2:15 (NASB)
Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom **you appear as lights in the world**

Jesus is there

- **Matthew 28:20; John 14:18**
- The vision reminds the church (we who are the church) of what it is all about
 - Jesus at the center
 - Jesus as the source
 - Jesus as the goal

¹ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Revelation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1987), 57.

- This is the church's secret
 - This is all we have going for us
 - We need to be faithful and attentive to this reality
 - To, for, around (The gathering and the scattering)
- The church is meant to be centripetal
 - Tending to move toward the center
- What is at the center of your church going—spirituality—your life
 - Your needs?
 - Your agenda?
 - Your pain?
 - A person?
 - A politic?
 - A preference?

Jesus is the one who is **in the middle** of the lampstands

- The churches
- Our lives as "the church"

III. The vision of Christ's glory (verses 13-16)

13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, **clothed in a robe** reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and **His eyes** were like a flame of fire.

15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of **His mouth** came a sharp two-edged sword; and **His face** was like the sun shining in its strength.

= Jesus as God

His clothing

- **a robe** (God in glory)
- Isaiah 6:1
In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.
- **a golden sash** (OT priest)
- Hebrews 4:14-16 (NLT)
14 So then, since we have **a great High Priest** who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe.
15 This **High Priest** of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.
16 So let us come boldly to **the throne of our gracious God**. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

His head and His hair

- Daniel 7:9
I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool.
- Deity and purity

Psalm 51:7 (NASB) – The Prayer

Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Isaiah 1:18 (NASB) – The Promise

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.”

Jesus is fulfilled promise and answered prayer concerning purity (forgiveness)

- o 1 Corinthians 5:21

His eyes

- Deity and judgment
- Daniel 10:6 (a Theophany)
His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, **his eyes were like flaming torches**, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.
- Fire in scripture speaks of judgment
- Hebrews 4:13
Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed **before his eyes**, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

His feet

- Daniel 10:6 (a Theophany)
His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, **his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze**, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.
- Deity and sovereign strength
 - o Cf. Roman empire of **Daniel 2** (strong but brittle—fractured, not adhered)
 - o Jesus seen in contrast to these flawed feet
 - o He is the sure and lasting foundation
- **Bronze** is an alloy of iron and copper
 - o Iron is strong, but it rusts
 - o Copper won't rust but is pliable
 - o Combine the two and you have the best qualities of each—strength and endurance
 - o The everlasting Kingdom
- All other kingdoms in the world have feet of (stand on) something less
 - o OG context = great encouragement

His voice

- Another picture of deity
- Ezekiel 43:2 (NLT)
Suddenly, the glory of the God of Israel appeared from the east. The sound of his coming [voice] was like the roar of rushing waters, and the whole landscape shone with his glory.
- o Context was a future promise of Israel to deal with false gods and restore His presence and glory to them—His feet standing in the temple
- o OG Context (Caesar)

His right hand

- o 7 Stars (see verse 20)
- o Represents leaders (**messengers**) in the churches
- o Right hand is the picture of **strength and protection** (Jesus is the head of the church)
- o Isaiah 41:10 (NASB)
Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely **I will uphold you with My righteous right hand**

His mouth

- The Word of God
 - Eph 6 (offensive)
 - Rev 19:21 (effective)
 - Isaiah 11:4 (NASB) (righteous judgement)
But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
**And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.**
 - Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)
For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

His face

- Cf. Daniel 10:6 (like lightning)
- Speaks of Glory
- Speaks of the hope of Israel
- Numbers 6:22-27 (NASB)
22 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,
23 "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:
24 The Lord bless you, and keep you;
25 The Lord make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
26 The Lord lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace.'
27 "So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them."
○ Jesus is the fulfillment of the promised blessings of God!!!

★The 7 stars represent the leaders of the seven churches—They are in His hand

- **You do not see stars when the sun is shining**
 - and **in the middle** of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man (v. 13)
 - **His face** was like the sun shining in its strength. (v. 16)

Verse 17

- When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man
- And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last
 - We have already been told that Jesus is holding **the 7 stars in His right hand**...
 - How can He also touch John and do both with the one hand?
 - John is talking in symbols and it is the symbolism that is important, not the possibility of our reconstructing the picture²
 - Here is the sovereign ability of our Lord:
 - At the same time, He holds **the whole church** in His hand (the whole world!), and takes action for **the needs of the individual**
 - Both truths are glorious and pictured here

Only Jesus!!!

- Verses 17^b-19

Remember: We will suffer

- But what for?
- And how? Or, Who will we turn to and what will we hear and see when we do?
- May it be Christ and only Christ who sustains us and upholds us with His righteous right hand

² Morris, 59.