

A VISION OF JESUS — HIS VIEW OF THE CHURCH

2: Who Jesus Is Changes Everything

Revelation 1:4-8

Last week we began a series in the first three chapters of the book of **Revelation**. In **Revelation 1** we are given a VISION OF JESUS and in **Revelation 2-3** we are given HIS VIEW of seven specific churches in Asia Minor at the close of the 1st century AD.

The vision of Jesus is first because without Jesus there is no Church — there are no churches. Without Jesus the Church at large and the local church has no identity, no idea of what they're supposed to look like, no idea what they're supposed to be or do.

THIS IS HUGE — who Jesus is changes everything. Everything Jesus has to say to those churches begins with is what He has made known about Himself. The things that Jesus had to say to those churches at the end of the 1st century AD need to be said to the local churches in the 21st century AD.,

Let's pick up in **Revelation 1:4** and see who Jesus is.

Revelation 1:4 (ESV) ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come,

Fallen man has based his opinion of Jesus on mere speculation that is born from fallen, finite wisdom. The Jesus of speculation is a good teacher, a prophet, and example to follow, an enlightened master, a founder of a religion that is just one of many roads to God.

QUOTE: C.S. Lewis — *There are a dozen views about everything until you know the answer. Then there's never more than one.*

God hasn't left us to speculation. The fourth verse of the first chapter of the last book of the Bible is divine revelation. Here is the truth about Jesus. No more views to sift through.

Many believe that Jesus once was, but now He isn't. He's dead and buried along with every other religious figure. According to **Revelation 1:4** that is very **wrong!** Jesus is **the one who is!** Jesus exists today as the ruling, reigning, risen Savior, King of kings and Lord of lords.

We're told that Jesus is not only **the one who is**, we're told that Jesus is the one **who was**. Jesus is the eternal, pre-existent God. Jesus pre-existed all of creation.

Genesis 1:1 (CSB) *In the Beginning God created...*

John 1:1 (CSB) ¹*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

There was a time when there was nothing but God — and God had no beginning. He is eternally existent! In speaking of the promised Messiah, the prophet Micah said

Micah 5:2 KJV *whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

Jesus is also the one **who is to come**. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father — exalted

far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, (Eph. 1:20b-21a)

and He will rule and reign forever.

far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come (Eph. 1:20b-21)

Hebrews 1:8 (ESV) ⁸*But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.*

This is our Jesus — without beginning and without end! Absolutely, utterly, incomprehensible! And yet, even though we can't intellectually comprehend the eternity of Jesus, His pre-existence, His resurrection from the dead, living now and who is to come forever and ever — we can experience, in life changing ways, all that flows from His incomprehensible nature!

Jesus loves us with a love that was, and is, and is to come!

Jeremiah 31:3 Yes, I have loved you with an **everlasting** love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you

God drawing you to Himself today by His lovingkindness is birthed from a love that **was** — **and is and** is to come.

His mercy/compassion is from everlasting ([Psalm 103:17](#)). The mercy and compassion that we desperately need hour by hour — minute by minute — every day of our lives — comes to us from a reservoir that has no beginning and no end.

Jesus sustains us with power that was, is and is to come.

Isaiah 40:28-29 The Lord is the **everlasting** God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. **He does not faint or grow weary....** ²⁹ He gives power to the faint,

The supply of power that we so desperately need for life between the already of the cross and the not yet of forever is inexhaustible because it comes from the One *who is, who was, and is to come*.

METRO — Jesus — the One *who is, who was, and is to come*. And that changes everything. Rather than trying to interpret God on the basis of our emotions or circumstances — we now interpret our emotions and our circumstances in light of who He is.

Revelation 1:5 (ESV) ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness,

Jesus is God, eternal and pre-existent. He is also *the faithful witness*.

Jesus said ([John 18:37](#)) that He came into the world to bear witness of the Truth. He said that the night before He died. Jesus is *THE faithful witness* to the truth of God. Jesus is *THE faithful witness* to who God is. Do you want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus Christ.

***John 1:18 (NKJV)** ¹⁸No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has **declared** Him.*

***John 14:9 (CSB)** ⁹Jesus said to (Philip) The one who has seen me has seen the Father.*

***Colossians 2:9 (ESV)** ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,*

***Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature....*

Who Jesus is — *the faithful witness* — changes everything! Even as the Father sent Jesus to bear witness to the truth, Jesus sends us on the exact same mission.

***John 20:21 (CSB)** ²¹....As the Father has sent me, I also send you.”*

He not only sends us to be faithful witnesses; He promises us the power to be faithful witnesses.

***Acts 1:8 (ESV)** But you will **receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

METRO — It’s all about Jesus who is *the faithful witness*. Who Jesus is informs, defines and directs us in our mission! And we are participants in the life of the one who is *the faithful witness*. Even as the life of the vine flows into the branches — the life of *the faithful witness* flows into us. He hasn’t left us to ourselves and our finite resources. Jesus said that apart

from Him we can do nothing. Paul the apostle said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!”

Revelation 1:5 (ESV)the firstborn of the dead,

This does not mean that Jesus is first to be raised from the dead. In the Old Testament (1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 4; 2 Kings 13) and in the Gospels there are the accounts of several people being raised from the dead before Jesus was raised from the dead. But none of them were raised to never die again. Firstborn refers to pre-eminence, not to order. Of all those raised from the dead, Jesus is pre-eminent — the highest of those raised from the dead! His pre-eminence is based upon the fact that Jesus is the first to die and be raised with a new glorified body to never die again. Those who were raised from the dead in the Old Testament didn’t rise with a glorified body and live forever. They were raised and lived longer and then died. The same is true of those in the Gospels Jesus raised from the dead. Jesus is the *firstborn of the dead* because He was the first to die and then rise from the dead with a glorified body to never die again.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the *first fruit* of what is to come (**1 Corinthians 15:20**). Jesus is the PROTOTYPE. He is like the one who goes into the water first and says, “come on in the water’s fine.” Because Jesus lives, we will live! Like Jesus — we will rise to never die again! Barring the rapture of the church we’re going to die — we’ll be laid in a grave — but we will be raised never to die again!

2 Corinthians 5:4 *For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-57 *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised **imperishable**, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this perishable body **must put on the imperishable**, and this mortal body **must put on***

immortality. ⁵⁴When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵ “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

METRO — It's all about Jesus — *the firstborn of the dead* — and who Jesus is changes everything! Jesus risen and forever alive with a glorified body is what every Christian is headed for!

Who Jesus is *changes us* from living for the temporal — the here and now — to living for the eternal. Paul concluded those amazing words in **1 Corinthians 15** with that very important word, *Therefore*.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore

Because of the certainty that we will be like Jesus; raised with a glorified body and will live forever in the presence of the Lord

1 Corinthians 15:58 be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Here's a great diagnostic: Do you say that one day you will be raised like Jesus, ask yourself: Am I *steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

Revelation 1:5 (ESV)and the ruler of kings on earth.

METRO — It's all about Jesus because there is no authority higher than Jesus! All human authority is *subject* to Jesus. All human authority *answers* to Jesus. All human authority will be *judged* by Jesus.

Jesus above all human authority changes everything! Here's how: Jesus trumps the authority of culture and trends. In **Ephesians 2** Paul refers to fallen culture as *“the course of this world.”* For those who are not yet Christian, their authority is the course of this world — which is orchestrated and directed by the god of this world. As Christians we face the challenge of

letting the trends and values of fallen culture speak with authority to us rather than the words of Jesus who is above all authority.

Jesus trumps the authority of peer pressure (in the home, work, school). Every form of human authority, from parents to professors; spouse to supervisor is not your ultimate authority. Jesus is! Jesus is the ultimate authority. Every form of human authority is under Jesus and answers to Jesus. That changes the way we live. That means that everyday we answer to Jesus. Paul put it like this:

1 Thessalonians 2:4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

We should be living as though we actually believe that one day when we will stand before Jesus. We should be living to hear Him say, “Well done good and faithful servant.”

Look at what the Holy Spirit says about the *ruler of the kings of the earth*

Revelation 1:5 (ESV) ⁵....To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

The *ruler of the kings of the earth* loves us! Would you note this: John didn't say that Jesus loved us, past tense! Amazingly in a very real moment in time past Jesus “loved us” and gave Himself for us! But the Holy Spirit is very careful to let us know that the one who is *ruler of the kings of the earth* **loves us** — right now. The verb is in the present tense (action in process or a state of being with no assessment of the action’s completion¹). It’s in the active voice — Jesus is the one loving us.

Jesus loves us in the now — in **this** very moment! And **(pause for 5 seconds)** in **this** very moment. NOW is a really interesting thing. I say the word NOW and as soon as I’ve said NOW has already become THEN. Jesus loves us in the NOW. He loves us the smallest possible measurement of

¹ Heiser, M. S. (2005). In *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology*. Logos Bible Software.

time. The smallest measurement of time is called **Planck Time**. Planck Time is the interval required for a photon travelling at the speed of light to cover the Planck length. Check out this number! It tweaked me when I read it. It is just 0.5×10^{-43} seconds! The man writing the article on Planck time said *“Don’t let the minus sign mess you up — it works in physics.”*

HERE’S THE DEAL — Even in that smallest portion of the NOW — Jesus loves you!

Who Jesus is changes everything! Have you ever found yourself thinking, “I think Jesus loved me yesterday, but right now, not so much”? There is never a “now” — even the smallest part of “now” that Jesus isn't loving you!

Is that the way you and I understand who we are? Is that the way you and I view our circumstances? Does that interpret the truthfulness of our feelings?

DON’T MISS THIS — You can say — *the ruler of the kings of the earth* loves me; but it doesn't stop there! Jesus loves **us**.

Who Jesus is changes everything! We should love what Jesus loves! Jesus loves the church. Jesus loves *this* collection of redeemed men and women called Metro! We should give ourselves to what Jesus gave himself to and for. If I believe that Jesus loves US in the NOW — then I should be loving what Jesus loves. The Bible says that our treasure always follows our heart ([Matthew 6:21](#); [Luke 12:34](#)). If I really love what Jesus loves then my time, talent and treasure will follow!

Revelation 1:5 (ESV) ⁵....To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

People often ask, “How can I know God loves me?” When we don't “feel” as though God loves us, what are we to do? How do I recalibrate — find my reference point for the truth that God loves me. The answer to both questions is this: Look at the cross!

John 3:16 (CSB) ¹⁶For God loved the world **in this way**: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:8 (ESV) ⁸but God **shows his love for us in that** while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

You can tell the depth of a well by how much rope you have to lower. When I see how much rope God had to lower; the length He had to go in order to save me, I don't see how great I am. I see how lost I was — and how much He loves me!

The ruler of the kings of the earth loves us and **freed us from our sins by his blood**. I pray that this verse will absolutely amaze you — because it absolutely blows my mind.

OUR sins — **HIS** blood! Jesus loves us and has freed us, loosed us from, and obliterated the effect of **OUR** sins with **HIS** blood!

Who Jesus is — what He has done — changes everything! Because of Jesus, we're not what we used to be! Our sin made us His enemy. His blood has made us His friends. MY sin made ME His enemy — HIS blood made me HIS friend. Our sin made us far from God. His blood brought us near. Our sin defiled us, His blood made us clean. Our sin made us guilty before God, His blood made us righteous.

Who Jesus is and what Jesus has done changes everything! We were loosed from our sins by His blood in specific events (cross and resurrection) that transpired at a specific time in history **past** (the week of Passover c. 32 AD). Two things follow from this.

¹ Jesus has already done this. Jesus did it all. But the cleansing, liberating power of the blood of Jesus is only applied to our individual lives by faith! We must receive the work of the cross and resurrection by faith. We must surrender our lives to Jesus out of believe that He washed us from our sins with His blood.

The moment you believe with your heart on the Lord Jesus Christ the cleansing, liberating power of the blood of Jesus is applied to your life and YOU are cleansed and set free

² The cleansing, liberating, reconciling power of the blood of Jesus is effectual today. In the first chapter of John's first letter John tells us that the blood of Jesus Christ is *continually cleansing us from all sin (1 John 1:7)*.

Revelation 1:6 (ESV) ⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father,

What does it mean to be priests? If we look at the priesthood of the Old Testament (all of which pointed to Jesus and all of which is fulfilled in Jesus) we can summarize it (in it's simplest form) like this: They were a very select group of men who got to enter the tabernacle (and later the temple) and worship God by offering sacrifices and burning incense. They were a select group of men who got to make intercession on the behalf of the people. They were a select group of men commanded by God to go out from the presence of God and bless the people for God!

Numbers 6:24–27 (ESV) ²⁴The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. ²⁷“So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

Jesus changed ALL of that! Because of Jesus every believing man and woman gets to offer to God a sacrifice of praise ([Hebrews 13:15](#)). Every believing man and woman gets to present themselves to God (all that we are, all that we do, all that we could ever hope to become) as living sacrifices — which is real worship ([Romans 12:1](#)). Every believing man and woman gets to come before the “*throne of grace*” to pray for their spouse, pray for their kids, pray for their church, pray for their world ([Ephesians 3:12](#); [Hebrews 4:16](#)). They get to be representatives of God — ambassadors ([2 Cor. 5:20](#)) — representing His heart, His will, His ways, His desire to bless men and women in Jesus!

Jesus changes everything! Because of Jesus every Christian gets to be a priest. Unlike the priests of the Old Testament, we serve God everywhere, all the time. In the Old Testament there was the Temple and then there was everything outside of it. The Temple, and all that was in it was holy — consecrated for use in the worship of God. Outside of the Temple everything was common, profane, secular. But because of Jesus we serve and worship God *everywhere* and at *all times*. Because of Jesus the secular is transformed into the sacred. The classroom is transformed into a place of worship — the workplace/job site is transformed into a place of worship.

PLEASE don't look at what you do as something less than your priestly service. Don't think of your job merely as what you have to do to pay the rent/mortgage, put food on the table and clothe your kids. You are a priest and your job is where you worship God with all that you do — it's where you represent God, its where you bless others.

Because of Jesus we are all priests! We are all on mission, we are all **in** ministry **with** Him as servants in His Kingdom.

Revelation 1:6 (ESV) ...to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

To HIM — the one *who is, who was, who is to come —the faithful witness — the firstborn from the dead— the ruler of the kings of the earth who loves us and sets us free from our sins by His blood — who made us a kingdom of priests — to HIM be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Jesus changes everything! (Line in an episode of the series CHOSEN: Mary Magdalene: *"I used to be one way. Now I am very different. What happened in between was HIM!"*) My life used to be all about me and my glory — until about 2:00-3:00am on December 31, 1973. Forty-nine years ago Jesus happened to me! Now my greatest desire is for my life to be all about Jesus and His glory. Yes, there's still a glory war that goes on in my heart. There are countless times every day when my heart needs to be recalibrated — but Jesus changes everything. I cannot begin to imagine what I would look like without Jesus.

**Revelation 1:6 (ESV)to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.
Amen.**

Mankind is not at the center of human history. I'm not at the center of my own history. Jesus is! History: His-Story.

Man is not the at the center of the Bible. The Bible is not anthropocentric. That is bad theology. The Bible is not all about me (ego centric). JESUS is the subject and the centerpiece of true theology!

By the way — Here is the first praise of Jesus in the Book of Revelation. As you read through the Book of Revelation you discover that the praise and worship of Jesus is amplified! The more that's revealed about Jesus, the greater the praise.

In Chapter 4: *Glory, honor and power.*

In Chapter 5: *Praise, honor, glory and dominion.*

In Chapter 7: *Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might.*

It's that way with Jesus. The more you know Him the more you praise Him. Not just singing songs n church — but worshipping Him as a lifestyle. Have you ever sensed that there are times when our corporate expression of worship in song seems a bit flat? Corporate worship is the sum of the parts. Corporate worship in song is going to reflect just how many people came in worshippers — how many people came in worshipping!

forever and ever — May God help us to not get stuck in the fog and mud of the temporal! May God help us to not get stuck in the fog and mud of the temporal **BECAUSE** we're told in **verse 7**

⁷Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

There is a divine trajectory to the plan of redemption! Jesus is coming back! We don't know when, but the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus to us as the returning Redeemer and King! There's a line in an old son by a guy named Keith Green that says, *"We believe that He's coming back, but we act like He'll never return."* When Jesus returns, He will be bearing the marks of His infinite, redeeming love for us. (When the heavens pass away, All your scars will still remain, And forever they will say how much You love me.)

⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God,

Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet; Omega is the last. In other words, Jesus is *"everything from A-Z."* Jesus IS the beginning and the end, and everything in between! In other words, *"It's ALL about Jesus!"* Is your Christianity, my Christianity, *"Jesus and _ _ _ _ _"* or is it *"Jesus, You are the beginning and the end and everything in between"*? I believe the answer to that is tied to our vision of Jesus.

Being a Christian comes down to this: The one who is the beginning and the end steps into the middle of our lives and changes everything. AGAIN: *"I once was one way. Now I am very different. What happened in between was Him."*

When you meet Jesus, He becomes your everything! He is your LIFE. He is your HOPE. He is your JOY. He is your PEACE. He is EVERYTHING to you!

Not only is Jesus EVERYTHING to the believer, Jesus is the summation of everything that God has to say to us! Jesus is God's last Word to us!

Hebrews 1:1-2a; 3 (NLT) Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. ² But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son... ³ The Son reflects God's own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly.

⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

I love how Bratcher and Hatton read this in their commentary of Revelation.

“I am the one who causes all things to begin and brings all things to an end,” says (the Lord) God who is all powerful (Almighty), who exists now, has always existed, and lives for ever.²

THIS is the baby who was born in a stable and laid in a manger. This is the one who grew up a humble, poor, marginalized Galilean peasant. This is the one who was mocked, brutally beaten and murdered. He was always *the Alpha and the Omega... who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*”

As awesome and wonderful as Jesus is in the Gospels, this makes Him even more wonderful! The one who causes all things to begin and brings all things to an end could have simply willed out of existence those who beat Him, scourged Him, crowned Him with thorns and nailed Him to a cross. But that would have left us forever damned. The one who is **all** powerful, possesses **all** might, held together the atomic structure of the very fists that struck Him; held together atomic structure of the nails that were driven through His hands and feet! The one who exists now, has always existed, and lives forever. He could have lived without us! Yet in a way unknown to us, He wouldn't!

In this final book of the Bible we see Jesus in His exaltation! He's not in a manger; He's in glory! He's not suffering; He's ruling and reigning. The crowd that yelled “Crucify Him” is replaced by innumerable voices that proclaim His infinite worth and glory!

This morning, in the pages of Scripture, the Holy Spirit pulls back the curtain and we get to see who Jesus is. This isn't philosophical and religious speculation. This is Divine revelation. The purpose of revelation is not merely information. The purpose of revelation is transformation.

² Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993). *A handbook on the Revelation to John* (p. 25). New York: United Bible Societies.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV) *And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.*

We're not being told by the Holy Spirit "who Jesus is" so we can file that information away.

QUOTE: Paul Tripp — *Abstract, impersonal theology helps no one. The goal of the theology of Scripture is not information, but personal heart transformation.*

The Holy Spirit says, "Here's Jesus — What will you do with Jesus?"

The end of theology is doxology — worship.

I'm going to read this to you one more time! I'm going to ask you to close your eyes and listen once again — ask the Holy Spirit to shine into your heart the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus in a way that changes everything!