

VISION OF JESUS — VIEW OF HIS CHURCH

3. The Jesus Who Sees Us: Uncomfortable, Comforting and Calling Revelation 1:9-20

This morning we are in the third installment of a study in the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation titled: VISION OF JESUS — VIEW OF HIS CHURCH.

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.

THIS IS HUGE — THE VISION OF JESUS carries tremendous weight in relationship to the spiritual condition of each of the seven churches. Jesus will introduce Himself to each of these churches by way of one of His attributes that speaks directly to their condition and need — and then He says, *“I know all about you!”*

This morning we get to see “The Jesus Who Sees Us.”

Revelation 1:9-20 (ESV) ⁹I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” ¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last,

¹⁸and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. ¹⁹Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. ²⁰As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

This description of THE JESUS WHO SEES US is not a literal description.

¹⁴.... His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶.... his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

He doesn't literally have a sword coming out of His mouth. John uses symbols to describe communicate to us the nature and attributes of Jesus — all these symbols of find their meaning within the Bible.

This amazing passage begs the question: Is *this* Jesus *your* Jesus?

This morning I pray that we will be radically changed by three things we see about THE JESUS WHO SEES US.

1. The Jesus who sees us *is uncomfortable* (we might say terrifying)

Revelation 1:17 (ESV) ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

When John saw Jesus, he fell down as if he was dead! Has that ever happened to anyone meeting a President of the United States? Think about this: John was no stranger to Jesus! Yet when he gets a glimpse of Jesus as He is right now, he just about dropped dead!

In the natural our default response to this is, "I don't want a Jesus that is so terrifying that I literally collapse."

I think it's safe to say that the average churchgoer prefers a Jesus who is, let's just say, not so terrifying! The average churchgoer prefers a Jesus who is, let's just say, not so mysterious — a Jesus who complies with their

expectations, agrees with their ideas and always fits in with their schedule, their budget, their politics and their sexuality. The average churchgoer prefers a Jesus who would never leave them trembling, and never demand anything of them. There's no shortage of men and women in 21st century American church culture who have a miniaturized, pocket-edition version of Jesus. A Jesus who is their personal mascot cheering them on in their pursuit of a designer life; a Jesus they believe is dedicated to giving them their "best life now". The Jesus they follow would never pose a threat to any of that.

This vision of Jesus that was given to John in his old age, in his suffering and crushing isolation, is hugely important to each of us because **THIS** is Jesus **as He is right now**. He is no longer the infant born in a back alley in Bethlehem and laid in stone feeding trough. He's no longer the humble carpenter of Nazareth. He is now the sovereign King of the universe.

THIS Jesus does not need us to rescue His cause! THIS Jesus has His own Kingdom and His own cause — and He's doing really well advancing his Kingdom and His causes. We're told in **Ephesians 1:11** that he

Ephesians 1:11 (CSB) ...works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will,

Think about this: Virtually every week someone — or several people — walk into this space wrecked by life in this broken world. I have! We wonder if we have any future left. But let me ask you this question: Isn't it better for the designer life we hoped for to be wrecked — even by Jesus — than to have our "best life now" without Jesus?

WE DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS — In His first coming, Jesus came incognito. He came undercover — He concealed His glory in the tent of His humanity. He didn't *want* to be impressive. And John was one of his closest friends. They knew each other really well. But now, about 60 years later, John is an old man imprisoned on the island of Patmos — Rome's version of Alcatraz. Suddenly, his old friend Jesus appears. We would think that John would have reacted in the same way we do when we're re-united with dear friends that we haven't seen in decades; run up to them, give them a giant

hug and say, “WOW! It is so great to see you! It’s been way too long! How are You?” Instead, when John sees his dear friend — *as he is now* — John is so undone that he fell down as if he had died!

QUESTION: How do you think of Jesus? Here’s what Jesus knew about Himself. The night before Jesus died for our sins He prayed. This is what He prayed

John 17:5 (CSB) ⁵*Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.*

When we see Jesus in the Gospels, He was incredibly ordinary.

Isaiah 53:2 (NIV) ²*...He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.*

When we see Jesus in the Gospels, we see such amazing humility; we see Him as the perfect servant — humble and meek. But all the while Jesus lived with an awareness of the glory He shared face to face with the Father (John 1:1) from eternity past. For thirty-three years He laid aside the expression of His glory to identify with us in our humanity and rescue us from our great enemies of sin and death and reconcile us back to God. But He fulfilled that mission. He returned to his Father, and **He isn’t ordinary anymore**. He took his rightful place as the glorious King of the universe.

The most glorious of any human king or kingdom pales in light of the matchless glory of the King of kings — a glory so great that it is, to say the least, uncomfortable — and would be best described as terrifying.

Psalms 2:11 (CSB) ¹¹*Serve the Lord with reverential awe and rejoice with trembling.*

THERE’S an AMAZING thing for us here concerning our King! Though He is exalted above all things — He is not distant.

Revelation 1:10 (ESV) ¹⁰**.... I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet**

Jesus is exalted — AND He is near — at the same time! I think that tells us that heaven is not as far from us as we think. When we think of dying and going to heaven, we think that we are going to a place that is far away from the created universe. Here, John hears the voice of Jesus — he turns — and there was Jesus. We're told in the book of Ephesians (1:20) that right now Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father exalted above all things! Jesus doesn't have to get up off His throne and *move* for us to experience him. Heaven is so close to us at this very moment. One guy put it like this: *This paper-thin world conceals it from our view.* We get an inkling of this very thing in the Old Testament.

2 Kings 6:17 (ESV) ¹⁷*Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

Right there on a rock on the middle of the ocean heaven was opened to John!

What is Jesus like right now? Let's take it one phrase at a time, starting in verse 13:

Verse 13 — *One like a son of man.*

In the incarnation Jesus forever and fully joined Himself to us in our humanity! *He is one of us.*

But more than that — "**son of man**" reminds us of the Old Testament prophecy in Daniel, where God appoints "**one like a son of man**" to rule as the King of this world (Daniel 7:13). There's a reason why the Bible emphasizes the *humanity* of our King.

In Daniel's vision, the political powers of this world move across the pages of history as savage beasts — a lion, a bear, a leopard, and finally an indescribably horrible beast. Don't miss this — seen through prophetic eyes the powers of this world are not seen as human or humane. Here's why.

In the beginning, God created Man and Woman to be informed, defined and directed by their creator. THAT is what it means to be truly human. When our first parents refused to be governed by God, they actually chose to live below the line of what it means to be truly human. From Genesis 3 forward to this very day every man and woman has made the same choice — to live below the line of what it means to be truly human.

Here's the truth of the matter — and it is utterly offensive to the mind of fallen man: We sinful humans have made this world less-than human. From Genesis 3 forward history is the story of how those who refuse to be governed by God have attempted to govern people who refuse to be governed by God — and for some reason we somehow think that those governments will bring about a world that is truly human.

Jesus, the Creator and King of creation came into human flesh to save us from the consequences of refusing to be governed by God. Along the way to the cross we see in the life of Jesus TRUE humanity. We see Him surrendered to the will of the Father. We see ultimate power exercised to serve and to love sacrificially. By His sacrificial death Jesus saved us — and by the same power He exercised when He conquered the grave, He causes us to be born again — He makes us a brand new creation. That is why Jesus is the only hope of this world worth banking on.

Verse 13 — Clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

He is dressed in priestly garments, because He alone can connect us with the grace of God. We don't work our way there. Our King — who is the True human — is the mediator who reaches out and takes each of us by the hand and puts our hand into the hand of God.

Verse 14 — The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow.

This is huge because back in Daniel's vision, it was God, the Ancient of Days, whose hair was white (Daniel 7:9). In the New Testament, Jesus is presented as both man and God. We struggle with this because we think in

terms of a simplistic either/or. We wonder, “Which is he? Is He human, or is He divine?” And the gospel’s answer is, “YES.”

Verse 14 — His eyes were like a flame of fire.

In other words, Jesus has penetrating insight. He sees through everything. Nobody can pull the wool over His eyes. And if anyone is wondering if they can stand up to his scrutiny, the answer is unequivocally, “NO!” A lot of people see Jesus as a really well-meaning, gullible Mr. Nice Guy. THAT might be the Jesus they would like to deal with — but that is not the real Jesus.

Hebrews 4:13 (CSB) ¹³*No creature is hidden from him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.*

Verse 15 — And his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace.

Wherever we step, we leave a mess. We are like a walking, talking, toxic moral and spiritual environmental mess. Jesus is the only remedy to the moral and spiritual environmental disaster we have all contributed to. Wherever Jesus steps, His footprints leave deep refinement. We need the real Jesus to leave His footprints in our lives individually and in Metro.

Verse 15 — And his voice was like the roar of many waters.

The Jesus who sees us speaks to us. The voice of Jesus is described with this same imagery in Revelation 14:2 and 19:6.

The sound of His voice is more powerful than all of the world’s waterfalls combined. Even when it comes to us like a “still small voice,” it thunders in our heart!

Guys — Jesus doesn’t have to raise his voice to be heard above the noise of this world.

Verse 16 — In his right hand he held seven stars.

Again — we’re not left to our own imagination to give meaning to these symbols. The meaning of the “**seven stars**” is told us in **verse 20**. The “**seven stars**” represent the “*seven angels of the seven churches*”. This could be a reference to spiritual creatures called “angels”. But the word translated “angels” can also be translated “messengers”. So it could also be a reference to the pastors of the seven churches who are commissioned by God to bring the Word of God to those churches.

In the Bible, the “**right hand**” represents “strength and power; authority and control”. Whether we view those stars as angelic beings watching over the local church or those who bring the authoritative Word of God to the local church — the fact that Jesus holds them in His right hand tells us that Jesus is the ultimate authority over the Church — over the local church.

The fact that Jesus is holding them in His hand means that the churches were literally in His grip — His power. No power on earth has any final say about us, if we belong to him.

Verse 15 — *From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.*

Especially in the age of social media there is no shortage of verbal saber-rattling. In the face of all that saber-rattling all that matters to us is what the King says. You don’t want to be thinking, “*This doesn’t concern me. Sure, he’ll judge the world. But I’m a Christian.*” In Revelation 2:12, Jesus introduces Himself to His church as “*him who has the sharp two-edged sword.*” And he says to the men and women of that church, “*Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them (the people who were a part of that community of believers that were living and teaching compromise) with the sword of my mouth*” (Revelation 2:16). If you’re just playing games with Jesus, you need to know that going to church, or joining a church doesn’t rescue you from Him!

Verse 16 — *And his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*

The **NLT** reads it like this — “*And his face was as bright as the sun in all its brilliance.*” His presence is as radiant and intense as the noonday sun on a hot mid-summer Placer County day.

AGAIN — this begs the question: Is **that your** Jesus? I pray that we’re all seeing that it is only the real Jesus — the Jesus revealed in these verses — who can truly say to us, “*Fear not.*”

What is “crisis” to us? Losing our health? Losing our job? Losing an election? If Revelation 1 is showing us who Jesus really is, then our only ultimate crisis is this: Do I know Him? Is He my Savior and King?

I love this region — not because it is my dream destination — but because Jesus loves it and He has sent us here to love it for Him and love it to Him. But there is one thing I deeply and strongly cannot love within it: A version of Christianity that exists for the very purpose of keeping the King at a safe distance; a version of Christianity that has created a Jesus that people feel comfortable with.

The real Jesus is not comfortable. But He, and He alone, can truly comfort.

1. The Jesus who sees us *is uncomfortable (terrifying)*

2. The Jesus who sees us *is comforting*

Verse 17 — ¹⁷... But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not,

John was so overwhelmed by the crucified, risen and glorified Jesus that he collapsed in a puddle. Jesus doesn’t pick him and say, “Bro, so sorry! I didn’t mean to terrify you.” He didn’t say, “John, why would you react to Me like that?” Jesus essentially says — I know that who I am is terrifying — but the terrifying reality of who I am is the very source of your comfort!

There is only one way we find comfort in the One who is essentially terrifying — that’s by accepting *all* that he is. So, Jesus Himself tells us more.

Verse 17-18 — *I am the first and the last, and the living one.*

When Jesus stepped into our world 2000 years ago we (and I say we because we are made of the same stuff humans were made of then)... we tried to destroy Him — because *we* wanted to be the first and the last. Jesus not only rose from the dead — Jesus **is** *the living one*. In other words, Jesus the only one who is not dependent on anyone or anything for life! He is the one *from whom* life flows. (SEE JOHN 1).

We are *not* the living ones. We are the walking dead. And the only way to become alive is to surrender to the one who is the living one. The only way we thrive in this new life is to put our defenses down and open up to him.

Verse 18 — *I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*

So, it is Jesus who was dead (past tense) and lives forevermore (present tense) — and it is Jesus who decides who stays locked up in death and who gets released from eternal death.

GUYS — His final and ultimate authority is the very thing that should comfort us.

How does that make sense? Here's how. When everything in our lives collapses, when our bodies let us down, and all our accomplishments and all our degrees and all trophies and plaques and portfolios fall from our hands — WE who fell at his feet will also rise in His presence.

THIS JESUS died for us! **THIS JESUS** died for the very ones who disrespected Him every day until the moment the gospel put us on our faces before Him, and we let go of this world and we laid hold of Him. When we did that **THIS JESUS** let go of all our sins and he laid hold of us with His grace. If you belong to **THIS JESUS** who is the first and the last, *do not fear*.

- 1.** The Jesus who sees us *is uncomfortable*
- 2.** The Jesus who sees us *is comforting*

3. The Jesus who sees us *is calling*

Verse 19 — *“Write, therefore, the things that you have seen.”*

Jesus gave John a job to do – writing this book of Revelation. Jesus could have done it himself, but He is so kind. He calls us to be involved in His work. He calls us to do brave and beautiful and hard things for Him before He returns.

What does he want *you* to do? Whatever it is, do not delay. Get after it. However scary it might be, he’ll help you. He’s the best boss in the universe.

HERE’S THE DEAL — If Jesus *isn’t* the True and forever King, then you and I would be crazy to live our lives for him.

QUESTION — How can you know you truly belong to Jesus and that you are truly serving Jesus? Here’s a couple of simple diagnostics:

¹ When you find yourself exhausted, inadequate, unprepared, and uncomfortable — but you still say to him, *“Lord, this is hard. I wouldn’t do this for anybody but You — and it might kill me. But if this is what you want me to do, I’m all in.”* Only someone who is alive to Him thinks like that.

² When you see that Jesus is not useful; He is royal.

CLOSE

It’s probably safe to say that none of us will ever in this life experience our Jesus — see Jesus — as John did. But that’s okay.

QUOTE: C.S. Lewis; *The Screwtape Letters* —

“Our cause (the cause of Satan and every demon) is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do God’s will, looks around upon a universe from which every trace of God seems to have vanished, and that person asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.”

Not if, but when that moment drops into your reality, it isn’t proof you’re not a Christian; it is actually assurance from Jesus that you are.

We are alive to the living Jesus, who is uncomfortable, comforting and calling us to serve Him in His glorious Kingdom. And it is so totally glorious if we have to fall at his feet as though dead in order to come alive

QUESTION — Is there anything keeping you and me from him?

QUOTE: A. W. Tozer — *Do a thorough job of repenting. Do not hurry to get it over with. Hasty repentance means shallow spiritual experience. It is our wretched habit of tolerating sin that keeps us in our half-dead condition.*

BONUS CONTENT

The way John introduces himself.

Revelation 1:9–20 (ESV) ⁹I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

This is very much like the intro to a movie in which the story line is introduced by one of the characters. When the seven churches got this document, they knew exactly who John was — they had a history with him. I believe Jesus chose John to record and deliver this content for because they knew how well John knew Jesus — and how well they knew John.

your brother — John was the last of the apostles; the last eyewitness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and perhaps closer to Jesus than anyone in the world. His spiritual authority was unmatched! Yet he looks at the church, looks at other Christians, looks at the newest believer, and says, “I’m your brother.” That’s a relationship reality for every Christian. By faith in Jesus we go from being a rebel fighting against God to being a citizen in the Kingdom of God. But even more amazing, we go from being orphaned because of our sins to being the adopted sons and daughters of God!

***Ephesians 1:5 (CSB)** ⁵He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

Ephesians 2:19 (ESV)** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints **and members of the household of God,

***Romans 8:16-17 (ESV)** ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

God the Father is now **our** Father. Jesus is **our** big brother, who came and died in our place so that we might be reconciled to God and be born again into the family of God. We’re now brothers and sisters with all who have believed with their hearts on the Lord Jesus. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit unites us with them! We’re not alone anymore!

and partner in the tribulation — Because of faith in Jesus we are no longer isolated in this world. John knew that he belonged to a family that suffered. He knew that he wasn’t the only member in the family that was suffering.

His suffering made him a partner with his brothers and sisters who were suffering!

By the way — Here is John! He is OLD. He has suffered for Jesus and for the Word of God. He was banished to Rome’s equivalent of Alcatraz, and was — as a friend of mine put it — *catastrophically lonely*. We live in a culture that is obsessed with youthfulness and believes that the most influential years of fruitfulness are long gone when you grow old. But God’s finest work in and through John’s life was taking place in John’s old age, suffering and isolation! That was the time and the context in which God gave to John this VISION OF JESUS; this Revelation of Jesus — which is the capstone and summation of Scripture.

and partner in the tribulation —

Tribulation — The root of this word *literally means “to press,” “squash,” “hem in,” then “to be narrow.”*¹

It carries the sense of an oppressive state of physical, mental, social or economic adversity.

Western Christianity knows pretty much nothing about “tribulation” or “suffering.” Most Christians today think that tribulation is a long drive to church, having to wait in line checking your kids into children’s church, poor facilities, or worst yet — a sermon that might make them feel uncomfortable.

DON'T MISS THIS — Tribulation and persecution was normative for the 1st Century Christian. Christians in Rome and Asia Minor were being persecuted during the rule of Emperor Domitian who ruled from 81 – 96 A.D.

QUOTE: Foxe’s Book of Martyrs — *“The emperor Domitian, who was naturally inclined to cruelty, first slew his brother, and then raised the second persecution against the Christians... A law was made, ‘That no*

¹ Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*](#) (p. 334). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion.’ A variety of fabricated tales were, during this reign, composed in order to injure the Christians. Such was the infatuation of the pagans, that, if famine, pestilence, or earthquakes afflicted any of the Roman provinces, it was laid upon the Christians. These persecutions among the Christians increased the number of informers and many, for the sake of gain, swore away the lives of the innocent.”

The fact that suffering was normative for the Christian is witnessed to by how the apostles saw the need to write about it.

***2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

***1 Peter 4:12-16 (NLT)** Dear friends, don’t be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. ¹³Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world. ¹⁴So be happy when you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. ¹⁵If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people’s affairs. ¹⁶But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!*

As we look at these words of John, we need to remember that there are brothers and sisters in Christ who **are** being persecuted all over the world for Jesus — especially in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. We need to remember them and pray for them.

***Hebrews 13:3 (NLT)** Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.*

If you’re a Christian — living for Jesus without compromise in a world that’s organizing itself without God and against God, you are going to experience tribulation. Not “the Great Tribulation” that we see recorded in **Revelation**

6-19, but the “*tribulation*” Jesus promised. Why is suffering and tribulation a given for the Christian? Jesus put it like this: ***John 16:33 In the world you will have tribulation.***

We suffer because we are living between “The Already and The Not Yet.” The Already = the redeeming work of the Cross and Resurrection has been done. Jesus said, “It is finished!” The Not Yet = forever in the presence of God in a glorified body in a New Heaven and New Earth. There are things yet to transpire. The Book of Revelation talks about them. Until then, here’s the reality:

1 Thessalonians 3:4 (ESV) ⁴For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.

AGAIN — DON'T MISS THIS — John received this revelation of Jesus in the context of suffering! The greatest need of the suffering Christian is a clearer vision of Jesus Christ! The greatest hope for the suffering Christian is Jesus because this book reveals the ultimate victory of Jesus over the world!