

2. The vision of Christ

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Bald eagles are capable of seeing fish in the water from several hundred feet above, while soaring, gliding, or in flapping flight. This is quite an extraordinary feat, since most fish are counter-shaded, meaning they are darker on top and thus harder to see from above. Fishermen can confirm how difficult it is to see a fish just beneath the surface of the water from only a short distance away.

The eagle can identify a rabbit moving almost a mile away. That means that an eagle flying at an altitude of 1000 feet over open country could spot prey over an area of almost 3 square miles from a fixed position.

Obviously none of us have that kind of vision. Some people are not blessed with good vision. They have to wear glasses or contact lenses or some are blind. Likewise, our spiritual vision can be only given to those whom God wants to bring a special revelation. Apostle John was chosen to write the revelation of Jesus Christ by receiving this special vision of Christ.

A. JOHN ON THE ISLAND OF PATMOS

Rev 1:9-11 I, John, both your brother and companion in the Tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

1) The voice of the Savior

The island of Patmos was a like an Alcatraz Island in the Roman Empire. It was used as a prison island, and functioned as a prison without walls. The island was rich in marble, and most of the prisoners were forced laborers in marble quarries. Patmos was a rocky, desolate island about 10 miles long, and 6 miles wide.

On the Lord's Day, John heard a trumpetlike voice behind him. It was Jesus Christ speaking! As far as we know, the apostle had not heard his Lord's voice since Christ ascended to heaven more than sixty years before.

Keep in mind that John is writing as a pastor of people who are being tortured, persecuted, and slaughtered. That is why he identifies himself as their brother and companion in difficulty.

2) For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ

Most scholars assume that John was on Patmos, because he was arrested and imprisoned in persecution from the Romans. However, it is also possible that John was set to Patmos as a missionary to the prisoners there by the Lord Jesus.

John, though aged, was forced to labor in the mines located at Patmos. Early sources also indicated that about A.D. 96, at Domitian's death, John was allowed to return to Ephesus when the Emperor Nerva got in power.

The testimony of Jesus Christ - The Greek word translated testimony literally means "witness" and is the basis for the English word 'Martyr.'

3) In the Spirit on the Lord's Day

What does John mean by saying he was in the Spirit? This must have been a unique spiritual experience for John. I believe that Apostle John was carried beyond normal sense into a state where God could reveal supernaturally the contents of this book.

There are four references to John being in the Spirit in the Book of Revelation. He was not the only one who had this kind of experience. Who else had? Apostle Paul. We find him talking about this experience in 2 Cor 12.

2 Corinthians 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

4) Why did the Apostle repeat, "I am the Alpha and the Omega"?

Why did the Apostle repeat, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last"? After all, John said the same thing just two verses earlier. I believe it is because most people don't struggle with the Alpha or the Omega. They know God looked at creation and declared it good. And they know in the end, in heaven, things will be good. But where people have a hard time is in the middle - now, present time. We question and struggle with the things going on presently. "Why is this happening? Why didn't God do something about this? Where was God when that happened?" We cry.

B. THE SEVEN LAMPSTANDS AND THE SON OF MAN

Rev 1:12-16 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

1) KJV made another bad mistake in translation in this part.

Much surprise to "KJV only people", KJV made another bad mistake in translation in this part.

KJV Rev 1:12-13 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

They are not candlesticks. The original Greek word for this is "luchnia" which means lampstand. Some people think that it is a menorah which is a seven-branched candle holder. It symbolizes the seven days of the Creation and get used in ceremonies of the Jewish Temple. It is not a menorah. If it is a menorah, how can the Son of Man stand in the middle of it? They were seven free standing oil lamp stands. The lamps set on these lampstands.

2) The light doesn't come from the lampstands.

John's vision of seven golden lampstands represents the seven churches. In the middle of them stands the Light of the church, Jesus Christ, arrayed in splendor and strength.

The light doesn't come from the lampstands nor a lamp. They are only the instruments of dispensing light. They must receive both oil and fire which represent the Holy Spirit. The stands and lamps merely make the light more visible. Therefore, the lampstands are a good picture of the church. We don't produce the light, we simply display it.

3) Jesus - the King, the High Priest

The clothing of Jesus indicates that He is a person of great dignity and authority. Long garments were only worn by those who didn't have to work much, so they were a picture of great status and authority. The golden band around the chest is probably a part of the garments as the High Priest according to Exodus 29:5.

One of the duties of the Old Testament priests was to tend the golden lampstand in the tabernacle. Every day they had to fill the oil, clean the soot, and trim the wicks. They had to closely inspect and care for the lamps so they would burn continually before the Lord. Here is Jesus, our High Priest, in the midst of the seven lampstands which is seven churches, carefully inspecting and caring for the lamps, helping them to always burn brightly before Himself.

4) The descriptions of Jesus

v14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow

The white hair speaks of great wisdom and timelessness. The phrase 'white as snow' also emphasizes the idea of purity.

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."

His eyes like a flame of fire

Fire is often associated with judgment in the Scriptures. Jesus' eyes display the fire of searching, penetrating judgment.

2 Peter 3:7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

v15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace,

Since fire is connected with judgment, these feet like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace speak of someone who has been through the fires of judgment and has come forth with a refined purity. Jesus has been through the "Refiner's Fire" by His atoning sacrifice, death and resurrection.

Brass is a metal connected with judgment and sacrifice. Israel's altar of sacrifice was made of brass and it was called the "brazen altar."

His voice as the sound of many waters

This means that Jesus' voice had the power and majesty of a mighty waterfall.

v16 He had in His right hand seven stars,

According to Revelation 1:20, the seven stars speak of the leaders or representatives of the seven churches. The stars are securely in the hand of Jesus.

out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword

This is a heavy sword 'rhomphaia', used to kill and destroy. Sometimes the New Testament speaks of a smaller, more tactical sword known in the ancient Greek lan-

guage as the 'machaira.' Hebrews 4:12 uses the term for this smaller, more precise sword.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The idea of it coming out of His mouth is not that Jesus carries a sword in His teeth. The idea is that His Word is the sword. His weapon is the Word of God, and our weapon is Word of God according to Ephesians 6:17.

His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

The glory of Jesus is so great, so shining, that it is hard to even look upon Him. Jesus has the same glory as in His transfiguration, when His face shone like the sun according to Matthew 17:2.

We must understand the elements of this description - the overall impact of this revelation of Jesus is clear. Everything in this vision speaks of strength, majesty, authority, glory, holiness and righteousness.

The Lord had come to judge the churches, and He would also judge the evil world system.

C. JESUS IN COMPLETE CONTROL

Rev 1:17-18 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

1) Great verses against cults

Last week, I mentioned that all the cults have one common denominator - denying the deity of Jesus. I cannot overemphasize for all of us to understand the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in methodical manner. These are the great verses to memorize to encounter the followers of these cults who believe in wrong way.

God declares that He is the first and the last and He is the beginning and the end and He is the Alpha and the Omega. Now Jesus declares the identical comment. There is no room to doubt that Jesus is God. If you deny that, you don't have salvation from Jesus Christ in your heart.

2) Only Jesus holds the keys of Hades and of Death

Some imagine that the devil is somehow the "lord of Hell." Some imagine that the devil has authority or power to determine life or death. Clearly, they are wrong, because only Jesus holds the keys of Hades and of Death. We can trust that Jesus never lets the devil borrow the keys.

D. REVELATION - THE OPEN BOOK

Rev 1:19-20 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which 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 which you saw are the seven churches.

1) Jesus interprets His own images

This second command to write gives us a structure to understand the Book of Revelation. John was command to write regarding the past, present, and future from John's perspective.

Jesus kindly interprets His own images. The stars in His hand represent the angels of the seven churches. The lampstands represent the seven churches themselves.

Why would each church have its own angel, and why does Jesus hold these angels in His hand? Some people believe that these angels are the pastors of these seven churches. This idea is based on a literal understanding of the ancient Greek word translated angel, 'aggelos.' That word literally means "messenger," and certainly pastors are "messengers" to churches.

Many people wish they could have a spectacular vision like John had. But we can know the very same Jesus John saw. We can know His purity, His eternal wisdom, His searching judgment, His victory, His authority and His majesty. Each of these aspects of His nature are ours to know intimately through His Word, the Bible.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Our God has not only been in control before the creation of the universe and after the Millennium, but also He is in control of anything happen in between.

Because of this, we can trust His sovereignty and His will.

2) When we admit our wickedness, need of His presence in our lives and start to accept His sovereignty, we get to start our personal revival in our lives.