

A Glimpse of the Glorified Christ (Revelation 1:9-20)

Introduction

- 1) Have you ever wondered what Jesus looked like when He walked on this earth? I'm not interested in some artistic guess of some Renaissance painter who conceives him as a blonde, blue-eyed European. Nor am I intrigued by modern fantasies that feminize our Lord and neuter Him. I do often wonder: what did the Lord really look like? The prophet Isaiah has an interesting perspective in Isaiah 53:2-3: "He has no form or splendor; And when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him ... He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." It is not a pretty picture and doesn't really provide much help. To be honest, we need to acknowledge that we really don't know what Jesus looked like when He walked on the earth.
- 2) Let me ask you a 2nd question: Would you like to know what Jesus looks like now, the Jesus of today, resurrected, ascended, glorified and majestic? Well, I've got good news. Three times in Revelation we are given magnification and breath taking portraits of our heavenly King. They appear in 1:9-20; 5:1-14 and 19:11-21. They are not identical, but they are complementary. They are not intended to be exhaustive and literal, but descriptive and pictorial as they provide a glimpse of the glorified Christ in His appearance, apparel and authority, who at any moment, any place, any time, any day or any situation is all we need.
- 3) John understood our need to catch a glimpse and to see anew the glorified Christ, especially when times are tough and particular crises overtake us. John found himself in just this kind of situation, exiled as a political prisoner to the rock quarry island of Patmos. Here in 1:9-20 John was privileged to see the Lord in all His splendor, and out of that experience he gives us 4 occasions when a glimpse of the glorified Christ is what we need.

We need to see Jesus when:

I. We endure persecution for God. 1:9

John had been faithful to preach the Word of God and proclaim the testimony of Jesus Christ (cf. 1:2). What was his reward? It got him thrown in jail and sent away to die alone. Patmos was a 10 x 6 mile mountainous island in the Aegean Sea about 70 miles W.S.W. from Ephesus off the coast of Asia Minor. It was in essence a penal colony for exiled criminals banished and sentenced to hard labor in the rock quarries.

Pliny the Elder says of such exiles, "They were thrown together into any ship that could be found, and such as escaped the dangers of the waves and storms and reached the place assigned for their habitation, found there nothing but bare rocks and an inhospitable rugged shore where they had to pass a life of hardship and misery." W.M. Ramsay says that many of the Christians suffered the harsh treatment described by Pliny. He says, "Many Christians were punished in that way. It was a penalty for humbler criminals, provincials, and slaves. It was in its worst form a terrible fate: like the death penalty it was preceded by scourging, and it was marked by perpetual fetters, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on the bare ground in a dark prison, and work under the lash of military overseers. It is an unavoidable conclusion that this was St. John's punishment."

A persecution of Christians broke out in the Roman Empire about AD 90. Originally it was directed against Jews who refused to pay tax to Jupiter Capitolinus. Being associated with Judaism in the minds of many, Christians also suffered during this persecution. Domitian, who ruled from AD 81-96, loved to be addressed as *dominus et deus* (Lord and God). He found eager support for emperor worship in the province of Asia. Participation in this worship became a mark of loyalty to the empire. Domitian generally enforced emperor worship. Upon refusal to participate, Christians were charged with treason. According to church tradition, when Domitian was put to death in AD 96, John returned to Ephesus and died around AD 100 a natural death. John had been faithful to Jesus and apparently it had not paid off. Look where it got him. But don't miss it; look what it got him. As he suffered for Jesus, John gained insight into the ways of God that he could have gotten in no other way. What did he learn?

1) There is partnership in suffering for Jesus.

John has brothers and companions (co-fellowshippers, co-partners). He is not alone. He is no Lone Ranger. His Lord had suffered, his brother, James, martyred. Paul and Peter were dead. Antipas (2:13) had been killed. Many share in the partnership of suffering then and now.

2) There is pain in suffering for Jesus.

Tribulation – pressure, trouble, affliction. Tribulations need not sidetrack our walk with Christ. 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. “God’s pain always brings gain.” 2 Tim. 3:12 reminds us, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

3) There is praise in suffering for Jesus.

- Kingdom (*basileia*) – 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.
- Note: We do share now, today, in His royalty, power and kingdom. Yes there is tribulation, but there is also a kingdom.

4) There is purpose in suffering for Jesus.

- Patience (*hupomone*) – to abide under a heavy load, to persevere, endure, to stay with it, hang in there, not throw in the towel or drop out of the race. James 1:4 says, “let patience have its perfect (complete) work.” God through companionship, tribulation and glory is training us and preparing us for heaven. He is a faithful Father who will never give up on us.
- The “patience of Jesus Christ” is better “in Jesus Christ.” All of this is in Him, according to His will, His plan. 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. Christ will provide the needed strength for John, and for us, to endure extreme trials and suffering and come out of it all victorious conquerors.

Transition

We need to see Jesus when we endure persecution for God.

We need to see Jesus when:

II. We receive a commission from God. 1:10-11

When we suffer we need to draw near to the Savior. When we suffer we need to depend completely upon the Spirit. When times are especially tough John says:

1) Enjoy the Spirit's control. 1:10

- 4 times we see the phrase in the Spirit (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).
- This is not a normal state but a supernatural state. It is a true ecstatic condition. Nothing in the text indicates John sought it. It was a divine seizing by God. John did not resist it, but gave himself over to the sovereign control of God for His purpose in His life.
- Lord's Day – Sunday or Easter Sunday or “Day of the Lord.” It was the day of worship and John was in church; not the building for that is not necessary, but in the Spirit who occupies all who belong to Jesus. It was resurrection day, and John was present to worship the Lord. In all aspects and avenues of life, enjoy the Spirit's control (cf. Eph. 5:18).

2) Obey the Savior's command. 1:10-11

- Loud voice like a trumpet (cf. 4:1) some say the voice is that of 1) an angel but what follows clearly identifies the speaker as 2) the Lord Jesus Christ.
- What a different voice John heard on this day from that which he had heard almost 70 years ago! Then it was the earthly Jesus, now it is heavenly Son of God. Then was the humbled Savior, now it is the exalted Son of Man.
- What you see, write (imp.) in a book (scroll, *biblion*) and send (imp.).
- These 7 churches were especially dear to the heart of God and the heart of John. These were actual historical churches in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. The number 7 would also indicate their representative nature of the various types of churches that exist through the history of the church.
- Christ had a word then and He has a word now for His churches. He tells John to write and write he does, one of the most magnificent books of all time. When we obey the Savior's command, we can count on the results being nothing less than supernatural. It was true for John and it is true for us!

Transition

We need to see Jesus when:

- 1) We endure persecution for God.
- 2) We receive a commission from God

III. We have a vision of God. 1:12-16

- John turned to see the one whose voice was like a trumpet who spoke directly to him with a commission to address the churches. What John saw would encourage his heart as well as knock him off his feet and nearly take his life.

1) Jesus is present among His saints. 1:12-13

- Seven golden lampstands – Moses constructed a seven-branched lampstand for the tabernacle (Ex. 25:31ff). Zechariah had a vision of a seven-branched golden

lampstand which was said to be the “eyes of the Lord, which range throughout the earth (Zech. 4:10). Verse 20 tells us that here they are the 7 churches. As lampstands they held small oil lamps. From them light, God’s light, was to go out to a dark and evil world. For us, the assignment is the same.

- John also saw a person in the midst of the lampstands. His identity is no secret: it is the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus. Both his title and His location are significant. Title – Goes back to Dan. 7:13-14. This is Jesus’ favorite self-designation. It occurs 81 times in the gospel. It identifies Him as the heavenly Messiah who is also human who will receive a kingdom. Location – in the midst, the middle, the center of the lampstands. He is there, He is with them. They are not alone, they are not forgotten. He knows what they are going through for He is in their midst. He is watching and He is working in the midst of His churches. Though they may fail Him, He will not fail them, for He is with them.

2) **Jesus is portrayed in all His splendor. 1:13-16**

- What John saw next human words are inadequate to describe.
- Clothed in the apparel of a prophet, priest and king, John saw the unveiled, glorified and exalted Jesus as He truly is.

a. **In His dress He is our priest. 1:13**

Verse 13: Clothed (perfect tense) with a garment down to the feet and girded (perfect tense) about the chest with a golden band was the dress of the Priest in the Old Testament (Exodus 28:4). It signifies Jesus as our great High Priest and points to His work of atonement and intercession on our behalf (cf. Heb. 7:25).

b. **In His wisdom He is profound. 1:14**

Verse 14: Head and hair white like wool white as snow. **His wisdom is profound**

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1) <u>purity</u> in character | 3) <u>authority</u> as judge |
| 2) <u>dignity</u> of His person | 4) <u>eternality</u> in existence |
| | (Ancient of Days of Daniel 7:9) |
| 5) <u>excellency</u> in wisdom | |

c. **In His insights He is penetrating. 1:14**

Eyes like a flame of fire. **His insights are penetrating**

- 1) penetrating insight
- 2) omniscient intelligence
 - *In fiery holiness, the true condition of each church, each Christian, is transparent to the gaze of His eyes.

d. **In His strength He is permanent. 1:15**

Verse 15: His feet ...fine brass ... refined in a furnace. **His strength is permanent**

- 1) strength
- 2) stability (context of judgement - cf. Heb. 10:13 & Ps. 110:1)

e. In His announcement He is powerful. 1:15

His voice as the sound of many waters. **His announcements are powerful**

- 1) awesome power
- 2) pervasive authority
 - echoes forth His majesty and sovereignty like the waves which continually crash against the rocks of Patmos

f. For His servants He is protective. 1:16

Verse 16: right hand – hand of authority and honor < possession

<protection (cf. John 10:28)

seven stars – (see v. 20) **His servants are protected**

g. In His judgments He is perfect. 1:16

mouth ... a sharp two-edged sword – cf. Heb. 4:12

Thracian sword – long, broad and heavy; sharp on both sides (6 in Rev.; 1:16; 2:12,16; 6:8; 19:15,21)

--- Word of God >

His judgments are perfect

--- Word of Christ > in divine judgement, power and authority!

h. In His appearance He is praiseworthy. 1:16

Countenance ... sun shining ... strength **His appearance is praiseworthy**

-- brilliance

-- glory (cf. transfiguration, Matt. 17:2)

-- holiness

-- majesty

-- awesomeness

John saw Jesus as He, the Son of God, truly is. He is an awesome God, a powerful God, a majestic God. He is a God worthy of our worship, worthy of our service, worthy of all we can give him.

“Yes, Amen! Let all adore Him, High on the eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory, Claim the kingdom for your own.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ shall reign and Christ alone!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ shall reign and Christ alone!”

Transition

- 1) We need to see Jesus when we endure persecution for God.
- 2) We need to see Jesus when we receive a commission from God.
- 3) We need to see Jesus when we have a vision of God.
- 4) We need to see Jesus when:

IV. We perceive a revelation about God. 1:17-20

To see Jesus today as He is and as we are is more than we could take. In our sinful condition, the magnificence of His glory would overwhelm us as it did John. It would be too much. This is no man upstairs, no big guy in the sky. This is the Lord, the Savior, King Jesus. At this point in the vision what did John learn about King Jesus through his perception of this revelation?

1) **He is a comforting God. 1:17**

John fell as dead. No laughing, barking or roaring!

- Laid His right hand on me (gentle authority)
- Do not be afraid (pre. imp. w. the neg.) “stop being afraid”
- First (*protos*) and the last (*eschatos*). Said of God in Isa. 44:6; 48:12; of Jesus in Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13. He alone is God, absolute Lord both of creation and history. He starts and He finishes! He is before all – after all. All is under His sovereign control.

2) **He is a conquering God. 1:18**

- He who lives (the present [first again for emp]) and was dead (past), and behold, I am alive “forevermore” (future) Amen.
- I have the keys (authority, control, access)
But to what?
- Lit. “death and *Hades*” (O.T. *sheol*, meaning the grave, place of all the dead, or place of the wicked dead.) Death claims the body, Hades claims the soul BUT, not unless Jesus says so! Why? Because He has the keys!

3) **He is a communicating God. 1:19-20**

- Vs. 19 the key which unlocks the Apocalypse seen (ch. 1) ... are (chs. 2-3) ... will take place after this (cf. 4:1; chs. 4-22)
- 4 major interpretive approaches have been applied to Revelation.

I. **Preterist**

1. All the events of Revelation were fulfilled during the days of either Nero or Domitian. The book is concerned only with events of the first century.
2. This view was developed by the Jesuits and is still held by many in the Roman Church and by some Protestants.
3. This view cannot account for the end of history events described in the book, and it forces events back into the first century where they do not fit (e.g. all of Rev. 19-22).

II. **Historicist** (Postmillennialism – the belief that Christ will return at the end of the millennial age.)

1. Revelation is a panorama of western church history, from the initiation of the apostolic era to the consummation of the age.
2. This position was espoused by Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, and most of the Reformers, except the Anabaptists.
3. The multiplicity of interpretation of metaphors and symbols quickly becomes intolerably subjective. No 2 historicists agree!

III. **Idealist** (Amillennialism – the belief that there is no literal millennial reign of Christ on earth.)

1. The Apocalypse is not to be construed as a representation of actual events, whether past or future. The book is only a symbol or metaphor to depict the great struggle between good and evil. It simply affirms in the end God wins.

2. This concept was spawned in the Alexandrian school of philosophy and theology by Origen and later Augustine. It is maintained by a host of liberal, and some conservative, Bible students today.
3. As this method shows, philosophy and Christian theology do not always mix well. An allegorizing or spiritualizing hermeneutic is dangerous. The early fathers of the church are overwhelming in their support of Revelation as representing actual history in some sense.

IV. Futurist

1. Beginning with chapter 4 or 6, the events described belong to the future age and constitute a marvelous prophecy of God's program for the consummation of the age.
 2. This view has wide acceptance among evangelicals around the world. Anabaptist of the Reformation era were futurists. Numerous church fathers from the initial Christian centuries also were advocates of this view. Today this view is held by ...
 3. The futuristic perspective is in perfect harmony with the message of the entire Bible. Far fewer interpretive problems are engendered by this approach.
- Vs. 20 stars = angels (*aggeloi*)
4 main views: (#3 or #4 is the best view; lean toward #3.)
 1. specific messengers from John to the 7 churches
 2. specific messengers from the 7 churches to John
 3. guardian angels of the 7 churches
 4. pastors of the 7 churches
 - Christ is with us, in our midst, therefore be not afraid.
Don't fear time, He is the first and the last
Don't fear life, He is He who lives
Don't fear death, He is alive forevermore
Don't fear eternity, He has the keys of death and Hades

Conclusion

“Just When I Need Him Most”

Just when I need Him, Jesus is near, Just when I falter, just when I fear;
Ready to help me, ready to cheer, Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him, Jesus is strong, Bearing my burdens all the day long;
For all my sorrow giving a song, Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him, He is my all, Answering when upon Him I call;
Tenderly watching lest I should fall, Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him most, Just when I need Him most;
Jesus is near to comfort and cheer, Just when I need Him most.

William C. Poole

Charles H. Gabriel
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