

EFC

Revelation: "May We Truly See"

February 18, 2024

Revelation 1:9-20

Good morning, English Fellowship Church. My name is Jeremy, and I'm one of the Pastors here. I want to thank Pastor Chris for preaching from the life of Joseph last week. I just want to remind you that he preached from Genesis because it is a part of our two year Bible reading we are encouraging all of us to be going through. This morning, I'm going to pick back up in our Revelation series.

Pray.

You may have noticed that sometimes I take my glasses off to read. I've worn glasses since third grade, but about a year ago, I noticed that my prescription had changed, so I've needed to update it for a while. About a month ago I finally got a new prescription. Since I now need help seeing objects that are close, it was recommended for the first time that I get progressive lenses. This means that the strength of the lens is different, depending on where you look, so you can see near, far, and intermediate more clearly. Or at least, that's the theory. Let me tell you, it was a failed experiment! There were zones that were blurry, and the positions of what helped me focus at different distances were wrong!

In truth, those new lenses made it very difficult for me to see clearly. It was so bad, they didn't even last the whole day until I went back to my old lenses! Why? Because seeing clearly is so important for life! I want to see clearly, so I can live! We know this is true with our physical eyesight; it is even more important for our spiritual eyesight. We need to see clearly, so we can live.

The Apostle John recognized the importance of seeing, and its impact on believing. When John wrote the Gospel of John, he pointed out that he himself had seen Jesus, and that he wrote in order to help we who don't see Him physically still "see" and believe through his testimony.

John 19:35 "He who saw it has borne witness - his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth - that you also may believe."

John opens the letter of 1 John reminding his readers that he had seen Jesus personally, so they can what he is about to write.

And now, in Revelation, Jesus commands John to write down what he sees, so that we, too, may see and believe. In this section of Revelation, "to see" is repeated six times! It is important that we pay attention to what John saw, so that he can help us see clearly as well. And when we see clearly, we will be helped in our walk with Jesus through this life.

"I, 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. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "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." Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and 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. The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In 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. When 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, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As 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." (Revelation 1:9-20)

There are two primary things John sees in this passage, though by extension, the third thing John sees are the visions of the rest of the book of Revelation; we'll focus on the two that are in our verses for today.

The biggest thing John sees in this vision is not a thing at all, but a Person. John sees "one like a son of man..." The context tells us that John is seeing Jesus, revealed in His great glory.

John uses symbolic language to describe Jesus' appearance in this passage. Remember that much of the symbolism in Revelation is rooted in the Old Testament, and looking there helps us see what John is communicating through the symbols. John uses eight symbols with OT background to describe Jesus here, but I don't think he means for us to focus on any one symbol alone. Like a mosaic whose individual images make up a far greater image, these symbols are to be taken together in order to give us a greater picture.

For the sake of time, we won't go back into all the OT passages containing these symbols, but as we began this morning, we did read from Daniel 7 and 10, where many of the symbols originate. Since it seems that John uses these symbols to communicate an overall message about Jesus, we need to look at what primary messages about Jesus these symbols communicate in the OT.

Jesus is the Eternal Ruler. Common laborers wore their sashes at the waist so they could tuck in their tunics to work; dignitaries wore their sashes at the chest to show their exalted state. The descriptions of hair, eyes, feet and voice all point to the Daniel passage we read. "...with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man.... And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." Daniel 7:13-14

John uses these images to help us see Jesus as the Lord over all with with absolute authority that will never end.

Jesus is the Final Judge of all. Many of these OT symbols also carry with it the message that Jesus is the Final Judge over all creation, including all of mankind. Jesus' eyes that see all, His purely refined bronze feet, the sword of His mouth, and His face shining like the sun all have

undertones of judgment intended with them. This is also the point of Jesus' statement, "I have the keys of Death and Hades."

John uses these images to help us see Jesus as the Final Judge to whom everyone must one day give account.

One with God. If you look back at the OT symbols, you will notice that several of them are applied to Yahweh God, but here John applies them to Jesus. John is clearly telling us that Jesus is not only Eternal Ruler and Final Judge; He is God Himself.

Victorious Savior. Moving further in our passage, Jesus also tells us one more important aspect of His identity: "I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore." (1:17-18) Not only is Jesus Ruler, Judge, and God Himself; Jesus is also the Savior of all who repent of their sins and put their faith in Him. Jesus died on the cross, absorbing the wrath of God and paying the full penalty of all the sins of His people. And He rose in victory three days later, giving new, eternal life to all who receive Him.

When John turned to see who was speaking to Him, He saw Jesus: Eternal Ruler, Final Judge, God Himself, our Victorious Savior. And John fell at His feet, as though dead! Oh, how easily we allow words to fall so lightly on our ears, but never touch our hearts! How blind we can be! John saw Jesus, revealed in stunning glory, overwhelmingly majestic. John, who lived with Jesus three years and saw great miracles; John, who boldly spread the Gospel to the world; John, who endured great suffering as a witness of Jesus' death and resurrection. John is no weak-hearted wimp! Yet upon seeing Jesus, he fell at His feet as though dead.

There is one other thing John saw, and this helps bring this vision of Jesus right into our lives. John saw seven golden lampstands, and seven stars in Jesus' right hand. At the end of our passage, Jesus tells John what these symbols mean: "...the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches." (1:20)

The interpretation of the lampstands is straightforward: these represent the churches (and the church as a whole). There is debate about what the "angels of the seven churches" means. My best interpretation is that they are angelic representatives that watch over the churches.

However we understand the stars, it is clear that Jesus' church is in focus here. John sees Jesus "in the midst of" His church, and He holds us. He who is Ruler over all, He who is the Final Judge, He who is our God and Savior, is with us and holds us always.

Comfort. Protection and reward as we face injustice and suffering. We are not alone, as we suffer, for Christ is with us, holding us. One day He will right every wrong, heal every hurt, and dry every eye.

Conviction. Warning and accountability as we face hardship and tribulation. The temptation when we face persecution and hardship because we are followers of Jesus may be that we close our mouths, deny our faith, and try to "fly under the radar." Jesus sees all, and He will judge all – the whole world, and the church.

The purpose of revealing to us Christ's comfort and conviction throughout Revelation is this: to call us to persevere with Christ and not give up.

In our faithful commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior alone. To follow Him and live in His ways, though the world lives utterly differently.

In our clear proclamation of Christ as Savior and Lord alone to the world. This is the point of a lampstand – to hold up the light in the darkness!!!!

When we see Jesus clearly - as Eternal Ruler, Final Judge, God in the flesh, and Victorious Savior – we are greatly helped to endure trials and tribulations as we walk faithfully with Him and clearly tell others the good news of salvation and new life in Christ alone.

This goes hand in hand with worshiping Christ as He deserves, for our faithfulness to Him is directly tied to our worship of Him. He is Lord over all, majestic and glorious. To see Him is to fall before Him in worship!