

Message #6

Revelation 1:17-20

There is a song that was written by Danny Daniels and Bill and Gloria Gaither that is one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written, in my opinion. Gloria Gaither wrote the words and Danny Daniels and Bill Gaither wrote the music. The song is "I've Just Seen Jesus." It was first recorded back in 1985. When Larnelle Harris, who is now 74-years-old, and Sandy Patty, who is 65-years-old, sing that song, it can move you to tears. In fact, I watched the great pianist Anthony Burger play that song on the piano at David's Cathedral in Jerusalem, with Larnelle Harris sitting in the audience and that brought me to tears. It is a wonderful song.

But of course Danny Daniels, Bill and Gloria Gaither, Larnelle Harris, and Sandy Patty, have not really seen Jesus and neither have we. But the Apostle John did see Him right here in Revelation and his response fits the lyrics, "I've just seen Jesus and I'll never be the same again."

There is a dangerous lack of awe and reverence in most of the churches today. Many promote a concept of Jesus that loves you as a friend just the way you are and does not really care how you live your life. But Jesus Himself said in **John 15:14** that you are my friends if you do what I command you. Jesus also said in **John 5:22-23** that all judgment has been turned over to Him by the Father "so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father."

Clearly Jesus does not present the idea that I'm your "beach buddy." He presents the idea that I am God and you need to see this and understand this because when you actually do see Me, you will never be the same again, and things will never be the same again.

Now when any person in the Bible has actually realized they are in the presence of God, the response has always been similar. When the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on the Throne, he said, "woe is me for I am ruined" (Is. 6:5). He said I am a man of unclean lips. When the prophet Daniel saw a vision of heaven, he was "greatly alarmed" and his "face grew pale" (Dan. 7:28).

When John saw Jesus Christ in all of His glory in Revelation, he "fell at His feet as a dead man." Think about this. At the time this happened, John is the most honored and spiritual man of God on earth. All other Apostles are dead. He was the last living Apostle who was the beloved Apostle. He had specifically been kept alive by God to write Revelation. But when he saw Jesus Christ, in all of His glory, it affected him in the way it should affect us. This is the only appropriate way to respond when you have just seen Jesus.

What we see here is this:

WHEN JOHN SAW JESUS, HE FELL DOWN AS ONE DEAD; BUT JESUS REACHED OUT AND TOUCHED HIM AND REVEALED REVELATION TO HIM.

Notice the verbs of **verse 17**, "I saw" and "I fell." This is John himself writing and telling what he did and what happened. There are two responses that John writes:

RESPONSE #1 – John writes how he responded when he saw the glorious Jesus. **1:17a**

When John turned around and saw Jesus Christ in all of His glory, he writes: **“I fell at His feet like a dead man.”**

Contextually what prompted this was John’s recognition that he was a sinful, finite man who was actually in the presence of the God/man who was about to judge the world.

I guarantee us this. If this were the response of the Apostle John to seeing the glorified Jesus, this will certainly be our response.

Every now and then you get these mystics who claim they died and came back. Some of them say they were in a boat and they looked to the shore and they saw Jesus motioning for them to row to Him. What a bunch of mystical nonsense. When one does actually see Jesus, they are not going to wave from a boat; they will be down on their face.

Now when John writes “I fell,” he uses a first person singular, aorist tense verb. What this means is at this specific point and moment of time when he saw Jesus, he produced this action. In other words, this was John’s own action. He was not forced to do this; this is what he volitionally decided to do. **This was his own choice of response to seeing Jesus.**

John fell to the feet of Jesus Christ as one who had just been struck dead would fall. When some human or animal drops dead, they instantly drop to the ground. That is what John did. He dropped to the ground the moment he saw Jesus. He realized I am in the presence of the God/man. I have just seen Jesus the God/man and when one has just seen Deity, one does not typically live to write about it.

A very frequent response and reaction that often accompanies one who is overwhelmed by the fact that he is in the presence of the glory of God, is falling prostrate down on the ground.

This was the response of Ezekiel, when he saw the glory of God (Ez. 1:28). It was the response of Daniel, when he saw a God/ man giving orders to Gabriel (Dan. 8:17, 27). It was the response of Peter, James, and John, at Christ’s transfiguration (Matt. 17:6); it was the response of the Apostle Peter, when he realized who Jesus was (Luke 5:8) and it was the response of the Apostle Paul, on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-4; 26:14).

These were powerful men of God, mightily used by God and they were all on the ground with their faces and heads bowed because they were in the presence of God and Jesus Christ.

The truth is, when we do really see Jesus, we will not be singing a Gaither song; we will be down on our faces before the King of kings.

This kind of response to Jesus Christ does honor God the Father (John 5:23). It was the Apostle Paul who said there will come a day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11).

Dr. J. Vernon McGee really captures the essence of this moment: “But when he (*John*) saw the glorified Christ on the Isle of Patmos, he did not go up to Him and pat Him on the back or shake hands with Him. He didn’t even begin a conversation. He fell at His feet as dead! The effect of the vision upon John was nothing short of paralyzing. ... My friend, since John reacted like that, we can be sure that when you and I get into the presence of the Lord Jesus, we are not going to approach Him in a familiar way. We will fall at His feet as dead. He is the glorified Christ today” (*Revelation, Thru The Bible, Vol. 5, p. 896*).

RESPONSE #2 – John writes how Jesus responded to John. **1:17b-20**

When Jesus Christ saw this response of John, He reacted to him in two ways:

Reaction #1 - He physically touched John. **1:17b**

The first thing Jesus did to John, when he was down on his face at the feet of Jesus, was to take His right hand and place it on John.

John did not dare to touch Jesus, but Jesus reached out and touched John. Jesus Christ is seen here in all of His Divine Glory as God and no one just goes up and touches Him, but He reached out and touched John.

The right hand is significant because the right hand is the side of God’s favor and blessing. In fact, at the judgment of the nations, those who are selected to be on the right side of Jesus Christ will enter the kingdom and those on the left will be eternally condemned (Matt. 5:25:31-33, 41). So this right hand is a significant matter.

This action is very reminiscent of what previously happened to John some 60 years prior to this at His transfiguration. He touched John, who was down on the ground there (Matt. 17:7).

This is an important moment because John had just seen the Glorious God/man holding the seven angels of seven churches in His right hand (Rev. 1:16, 20). Now that same hand is reaching out and touching him.

One must wonder what happened to the seven angels of the churches. The text does not say but in view of the next two chapters, we may safely assume that they departed to their respective church assignments.

When Jesus touches John, it shows John and us that the sinless hand, which holds and favors the churches, is the same hand that touches and favors sinful individuals.

This is a moving moment because here is Jesus in all of His glory and majesty putting His right hand on John. **John knew by this action that he was graciously favored by God.**

If one could have asked John, do you deserve this? I am certain John would say, “I deserve to be dead.” But John was touched by Christ’s wonderful touch of grace.

Reaction #2 - He verbally talked to John.

Not only did Jesus touch John, but He also talked to John and He made eight separate statements to John:

(Statement #1) - “Do not be afraid.” 1:17c

The Greek (mh fobou) is written in such a way that indicates John was afraid and Jesus is telling him to stop it. It is a present imperative with a negative prohibition. What that means is that Jesus is commanding John to stop being afraid.

John was a sinful, finite man and he realized he was in the presence of the sinless Savior and he was very afraid. John has just seen Jesus in all of His glory as Divine judge. One would have to be an arrogant buffoon not to be afraid.

When Jesus says this to John, it certainly would mean that John had nothing to fear concerning the judgment and wrath of God. If one is in a right relationship with Jesus Christ, there is no need to fear the Divine wrath of God because as Paul said, we are not appointed to wrath (I Thess. 5:9).

(Statement #2) - “I AM the first.” 1:17d

This is the first of four “I AM” statements Jesus makes about Himself. **The “I AM” egw eimi verbal grammatical formula, is a powerful statement of Deity. It comes from the Old Testament and it means that Jesus Christ of the New Testament is the self-existing, covenant Jehovah of the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14).**

Jesus in essence says here “I AM” God and I am the first of everything. There was nothing before Me. I AM the God creator of everything.

(Statement #3) - “I AM the last.” 1:17c

What Jesus is saying here is “I AM” God and I am the last of everything. Jesus says I control everything from the first to last, from the beginning to the ending.

This title “I AM the first and the last” is used three times in Revelation pertaining to Jesus Christ - Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13. Jesus Christ is the first and last of everything.

This title was used in the O.T. in regard to Jehovah the great I AM - Is. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12-13.

When Jesus was here on earth and identified Himself as being the “I AM,” the religious leaders knew exactly what He was claiming (John 8:58-59). They wanted to kill Him.

(Statement #4) - “I AM the Living One.” 1:18a

This phrase is used of God in both the O.T. and the N.T. (Josh. 3:10; Ps. 42:2; 84:2; Jer. 10:10; Hos. 1:10; Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom. 9:26; II Cor. 3:3; 6:16; I Thess. 1:9; I Tim. 3:15; 4:10; Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; I Pet. 1:23).

This is a phrase that means there is only one true living God who has always existed and has been continually alive and living. This is a statement of Deity in that God never had a birthday. He was always in existence and is always continually alive.

Robert Thomas wrote: “This contrasts Him to the dead and inanimate gods of heathenism” (*Revelation An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 111).

(Statement #5) - “I was dead.” 1:18b

Jesus wants all to know that as God, there was a moment in time when He was dead and the stress is I was really and truly dead. Think about this. One member of the Godhead was literally dead.

The verb “I was” is aorist middle. What that means is that Jesus is saying that there was a specific moment in time (aorist tense) when I, in and of myself (middle voice), made a decision to die. No one took My life, but I laid it down. I literally and really was dead.

Now one would logically ask, why would God permit Himself to die? Why would Jesus Christ actually make a decision as the Living, Eternal God that He would die? We know the answer. He came to lay down His life for sinners because that is the only way that any may be saved.

(Statement #6) - “behold I AM alive forevermore.” 1:18c

The text literally reads “I am living forever and ever.” Christ makes it clear I AM forever and ever alive.

(Statement #7) - “I have the keys of death and Hades.” 1:18

When we think of the noun “keys” we think of something that is used to open a door, which permits entrance into someplace. Jesus says in My hands are the keys of death and Hades. This “death/Hades” formula is used again in Revelation 6:8; 20:14.

Jesus says I determine who dies and I determine who goes to hell or Hades, which is a Hellish place one goes until final sentencing to the Eternal Lake of Fire (Luke 16:23; Rev. 20:14). The keys of everything pertaining to this are in My hands. It would seem logical and reasonable to ask, well what does one need to do so that He will not use those keys to put one in Hades? The answer is believe in Him and receive Him as Savior.

(Statement #8) - “Therefore You write.” 1:19-20

Because of who I am and because of what I did and because of what you see, you write this down.

There are three time frames about which you are to write:

Time Frame #1 - Write past things “which you have seen.” **1:19a - Revelation 1**

Time Frame #2 - Write present things “which are.” **1:19b - Revelation 2-3**

Time Frame #3 - Write future things “which will take place after these things.” **1:19c - Revelation 4-22**

The actual way the future things break down are into five future events:

- 1) Future things that will take place in heaven. Rev. 4-5
- 2) Future things that will take place in the Great Tribulation. Rev. 6-19
- 3) Future things that will take place in the 1,000 year Millennium. Rev. 20:1-10
- 4) Future things that will take place at the Great White Throne Judgment. Rev. 20:11-15
- 5) Future things that will take place in the New Jerusalem, New Heaven and New Earth.
Rev. 21-22

Now as we mentioned in Revelation 1:1, the word “revelation” is singular and not plural. So this book is one revelation that God wants His people to know and understand as a unit.

In **verse 20**, Jesus reveals the “mystery” of what John saw. Now a mystery in the Bible is not something unknown to God; it is unknown to humans until God chooses to reveal it to them.

The symbolism is carefully explained. The seven stars are seven angels. The seven golden lampstands are seven churches.

So clearly Revelation is a book that is to be carefully read, taught, understood and applied in the churches and heavenly angels monitor this to see whether or not this is taking place.