

## THE VISION OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST, REVELATION 1:12-20

Well let's turn in our Bibles, please, to Revelation chapter 1. We are studying together through the book of Revelation, and we have proceeded through chapter 1 and find ourselves in the second half of the chapter. Today we're going to looking at verses 12 to 20, but in order to pick up the context, we want to start reading at verse 9. So Revelation chapter 1, verses 9 through 20, then end of the chapter. Notice if you will, Revelation 1 and verse 9, the author of the book says:

“<sup>9</sup> I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. <sup>12</sup> And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; <sup>13</sup> 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 [chest] with a golden [belt]. <sup>14</sup> His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup> and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. <sup>16</sup> And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. <sup>17</sup> And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: <sup>18</sup> I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. <sup>19</sup> Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; <sup>20</sup> the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

Now in our study of this passage last week, we saw that the apostle John, who is the author of this book, was suffering severe persecution at the hands of the Roman government. They had sent him into exile on the Island of Patmos because he was preaching the word of God and because he was bearing testimony to the saving work of Jesus Christ.

What John was experiencing individually is what the church at large experiences universally. Satan hates Christ and His people, and Satan uses those who serve him to severely persecute them. The world would like nothing better than to exile Christians from their presence and to destroy their influence and destroy their message and to destroy, indeed, their very existence.

But Christ did not leave John to suffer his persecution alone, and He does not leave us to suffer ours alone, either. Jesus comes to us and Jesus fights for us and Jesus comforts us with His presence. So when John was in the midst of his persecution by the world, Jesus comes to him and reveals Himself to him and reassures him that sin and evil and Satan and death will not

triumph over him. The story of the book of Revelation is the story of spiritual warfare, in which Jesus and His people triumph over Satan and his people.

In the passage before us, the resurrected, glorified, and triumphant Christ appears to John. He speaks to John and He reveals Himself to John, and He says to John, Do not fear the exile, the persecution, the hatred of Satan and of the world. I am here. I am with you. I will give you victory. This vision John has of the resurrected Christ is spoken of in verses 10 to 20, which I just read to you. We saw in these verses that this vision began with Christ verbally identifying Himself. Notice John says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,<sup>11</sup> saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia,” and He lists them.

Now the voice that John heard was like that of a trumpet. Often trumpets are used in the Bible to announce the appearance of God to people, and this is what was occurring here. And that there be no doubt as to the identity of the person speaking, the person speaking declares that He is the Alpha and the Omega, He is the first and the last. These two titles that this person speaking with a voice of a trumpet ascribes to Himself are titles that are used of God in the Old Testament and they’re used of God in the New Testament. Therefore, by using these titles, this person speaking is identifying Himself as God. So then, not only the sound of His voice, but also the titles He identifies Himself by make it clear that this person speaking is none other than God.

Now after revealing His presence to John, and after identifying Himself to John by a voice, He then tells John to write to these seven churches in Asia the content of all that he sees in the visions he’s going to be receiving. Notice he says in verse 11, What you see, write in a book. So John is going to have a number of visions in which he sees things. These visions are given to him by the Lord Jesus, and he is going to record them, and he did do so, and that book is the book we have in our hands—the book of Revelation. This, then, is the voice John heard when he was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and we studied all of this last week.

So then having seen last week the voice John heard, we want to continue to consider further the substance of this vision that John had. The substance of the vision that John had of Christ involved, first of all, the voice John heard, verses 10 and 11. Today we want to consider together secondly, the sight John beheld. The sight that John beheld is in verses 12 to 16.

Now as John was on the Island of Patmos, worshipping on the Lord’s Day, he not only heard a voice behind him speaking to him, he then turned around to see who was there and who was speaking to him. Verses 12 to 16 tell us what he saw. Notice verse 12: “And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.” Verse 12 tells us he saw seven individual candlesticks made out of gold, apparently arranged in a circle, because later he tells us that Jesus is in the middle of them, so they must have been arranged in a circle.

And we are told in verse 20 what these candlesticks represent. Notice verse 20, Jesus says, “the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden

candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches:”—now here it is—“and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” So these candlesticks represent something. They are symbolic imagery designed to represent an actual reality, and that actual reality is these seven churches that are listed in verse 11. These candlesticks represent the seven churches to whom John writes.

Now we need to understand, throughout the New Testament, the church is described as being the light of the world. The church casts God’s light upon the darkened world, a world that is darkened by lies and a world that is darkened by evil. We read passages like Matthew 5:14 to 16, where Jesus says, “<sup>14</sup>Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup>Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. <sup>16</sup>Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” So it’s entirely fitting that candlesticks be symbols of the churches, because the churches are a source of light to the world, and they shed that light by doing good works. He says, Let men *see* your good works. This is the light that shines before men. So we shine light by our good deeds.

But we’re also told in Philippians chapter 2, verses 14 to 16, to “<sup>14</sup>Do all things without murmurings and disputings:” Why? “<sup>15</sup>that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,” here it is, “among whom ye shine as lights in the world; <sup>16</sup>holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.” Paul here tells the Philippian church that they are to shine as lights in the world. And how do they shine light? By holding forth the word of life.

And so the church provides illumination to the dark world by the proclamation of the truth—holding forth the word of life; and by the performance of good deeds—let your light so shine that men may see your good deeds. So by holding forth the word of life and by exercising good works towards others, the church illuminates the world with goodness and truth, in contradiction to evil and lies, that so characterize the darkness of the world.

Now it says that these candlesticks not only shed light, which is their primary function, but it says *of* them that they’re made of gold. That these candlesticks are made of gold shows the value and the preciousness of this witness that the church has to the world in its proclamation of the truth and its performance of good works. And it shows the value of the church, not only to the world, but to Christ Himself. Jesus places a very high value on His church, and that’s why the candlesticks are made of gold. Jesus loves the church. Jesus died for the church. Jesus is building His church. And Jesus indwells His church. Jesus marries His church—it is His bride. Is it any wonder that Jesus views the church as golden lightbearers?

John sees seven candlesticks, each representing one of these seven churches that are mentioned in verse 11. Since seven is also the number that symbolizes completeness, these seven candlesticks also represent all of the churches of all of the centuries, between the first and the second coming of Christ. The lamp and the light of each individual church scattered across the

world and throughout the ages bears a collective witness to the same message, by its preaching the truth and by its performance of good works. All true churches of all time in all places shed the same light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, wherever they are and whenever they exist.

So the first thing that John sees when he turns around are these seven candlesticks, which represent the seven churches and the light they shed in the world by their preaching of the gospel and by their performance of good works, and the value they have to the world and to Christ as they do those things.

But notice verse 13. Verse 13 says that “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,” it says in the King James, which is literally breasts or nipples, but the idea is around the chest, “with a golden belt,” or girdle, which goes all the way around something. If you girdle a tree, it means you cut the bark all the way around it so it dies. A girdle is just simply a belt. He has this golden belt around his chest, and he has this long robe that goes all the way down to his feet.

These seven churches represented by these seven candlesticks that John sees in verse 12 are not alone. Verse 13 tells us Christ is in the midst of His churches. Notice it says that in the middle of the seven candlesticks stands the Son of Man. Christ isn’t way over here, and His churches way over there. The passage makes it clear that Christ is in the midst of His churches to lead them, to protect them, and to empower them as they worship and serve and proclaim His gospel.

In Matthew chapter 18, verses 15 to 20, Jesus talks about the function of the local church, and He concludes that instruction by saying, regarding His local churches, “<sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the *midst* of them.” Let me ask you a question: Where is Jesus this morning? The answer is, He’s right here in the middle of us. His spiritual presence is manifested here in a special way that is not manifested outside the church and out in the world. Christ saved His church, Christ sanctifies His church, Christ indwells His church with His special personal presence. The church is the sole institution through which Jesus accomplishes His work in this world. It is His temple upon this earth, and believers are the kingdom of priests who serve within that temple.

So the position of Christ in the midst of the churches, and the special concern that he exercises toward those churches in this chapter and in the following two chapters, shows us the centrality and the importance of the church to Christ in His work of destroying the works of the Devil and in destroying the kingdom of darkness and in establishing the Kingdom of Light and in the display of His own triumphant, victorious glory. All of that is achieved through the instrument that He established—His local churches.

Christ is banking all of His efforts and all of His work to get accomplished in and through His churches, which tells you something about the importance of being involved in a biblically functioning local church. It is the place of Christ’s special presence, it is the spiritual temple which he indwells and receives worship, and it is the place out of which the light goes to the

world, and the proclamation of the gospel is achieved, spiritual warfare is carried out, and spiritual victory is achieved, collectively and individually.

Notice the description of this resurrected, reigning, and returning Christ in verses 13 to 16. It says in verse 13 that John saw “one like unto the Son of man.” Now the Son of man is a title that Jesus took to Himself a great deal when He was on earth. He called Himself the Son of man all the time. He appeared to be a man, because in fact He was a man. But He was also more than a man; He was the Godman. He was God incarnate in human flesh so that He was fully divine and fully human, in one person.

When our passage says He is “like unto the Son of man,” this phrase is taken directly out of Daniel 7:13. In Daniel 7:13, Daniel says, “<sup>13</sup>I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.” This is when Jesus triumphed over the kingdoms of this world, and the kingdoms of this world became the kingdoms of Christ.

In this prophetic passage in Daniel chapter 7 and verse 13, Jesus is identified there as one like unto the Son of man. You see, He’s like us, but He’s just “like unto” us, because unlike us, He has Deity and we don’t. So He’s like us, but He’s not like us. He’s like us in His humanity, but He’s not like us in his Deity. And thus this phrase, “one like unto the Son of man.”

This description, then, that’s going to follow of this Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is very parallel to the description that’s given of Jesus in Daniel chapter 10. And what we’ve seen already is, we’ve just seen in this first little bit of the book of Revelation that the imagery that John uses and the symbolism that He employs is the same imagery and symbolism that is employed repeatedly in the book of Daniel, in chapter 2, in chapter 7, in chapter 10.

Listen to chapter 10 of Daniel, verses 5 and 6. Daniel says, “<sup>5</sup>then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: <sup>6</sup>his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.” So we see that John sees the same Christ that Daniel saw, and that the book of Revelation is the fulfillment of all of the promises in the book of Daniel, both as to the person it represents, and the work that he accomplishes and achieves.

Now John himself had a similar vision of Christ to the one recorded here in Revelation 1 earlier in his life, you recall, on the Mount of Transfiguration. In Matthew chapter 17, it says Christ’s face did shine as the sun, and His clothing was as white as the light. And so in verse 13, John sees Jesus in the same majestic and royal attire, the attire of a king, wearing a robe that reaches to His feet with a band of gold around His chest. Only kings were arrayed in such apparel.

Verse 14 goes on to describe Him, in terms of His head. Notice: “His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire.” Here in verse 14, John

describes Jesus' hair as being pure white, symbolizing His eternality, His purity, and His wisdom. Once again, in Daniel chapter 7 and verse 9, the Ancient of days is said to have "the hair of his head like the pure wool." And here, the same thing is said of the hair of the Lord Jesus, indicating that He, too, is the Ancient of days; that is, He is God from eternity past. He possesses the divine attributes of purity and wisdom.

In our culture and society, someone with white hair is someone who is older, experienced, has a lifetime of learning, and thus is marked out as someone who has wisdom. Imagine having the white hair of eternity and the wisdom that He possesses that is symbolized by that. White hair is associated with the old and the wise, and Jesus is infinitely old and Jesus is infinitely wise. White hair, or white as wool, is also associated with purity. In Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 18, it says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

So this white hair that Jesus has identifies Him as the Ancient of days. It identifies Him as being the eternal one, the infinitely pure one, and the infinitely wise one. But verse 14 also goes on to say that "his eyes were as a flame of fire." This also echoes the imagery that's contained in Daniel chapter 10 and in verse 6, when it says "his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." What Daniel was seeing in the exalted glorified Christ, John also is seeing the same thing. This is not something new. This was something that has been expressed previously in the Scriptures, in terms of attributes of Jesus Christ.

So when it says His eyes were as a flame of fire, what this means is that His eyes burned down through every layer of deceit to lay bare the truth, and it also means that His eyes burned with indignation at the wickedness of Satan and evil men which he sees. His eyes being like a flame of fire symbolizes not only the omniscient, penetrating perception of the Son of man, but it also expresses His anger and indignation at the sin which His divine insight observes.

But this is not all. Verse 15 goes on and says, "and his feet [were] like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." This continues to echo the words of Daniel 10 and verse 6, where it says that his feet are "like in color to polished brass." Here, the brass is seen as almost molten. It is glowing like it's been heated in a furnace. The appearance of Christ's feet was like that of metal glowing in a furnace, signifying the consuming fire of His coming judgment, in which He will trample His enemies under His feet in the heat of His anger. He will come, the Bible says, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These two attributes of Christ—His flaming eyes and His feet that glow like metal heated in a furnace—are emphasized in chapter 2 and verse 18. In one of the letters to the seven churches, notice Revelation 2:18 says, "<sup>18</sup> And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God,"—now notice the attributes emphasized—"who hath his eyes like unto a

flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.” Now why is Jesus pointing that out about Himself to this particular church? Well, keep reading and you’ll find out.

Verse 19: “I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.” So far, so good. Now here is the problem. Verse 20: “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. <sup>21</sup> And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.”

Here it is: “<sup>22</sup> Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. <sup>23</sup> And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

So the idea of the fiery eyes is that Jesus sees the sin and the hypocrisy in this woman’s and her followers’ lives, and the burning feet say, I am coming in judgment! Repent before I arrive! Thus His flaming feet.

Verse 15 goes on to say, not only that His feet were like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace, but that “his voice as the sound of many waters.” The allusion here is to the roar of a massive waterfall. If you’ve ever been to a real waterfall, like Niagara Falls, the thing roars so loud you can’t even hear people talk. Or it could be an allusion to the mighty waves of a monster storm that come and just *smash* on the shore and *explode* like bombs! And if you’ve spent any time at the ocean, you’ve seen those and heard them. John is on an island, and Patmos was not a very big one, either. When the storms came across the Aegean Sea, he heard the waves pounding on the shore.

So the allusion is to the roar of a massive waterfall, or the mighty waves smashing upon the shore. It says in Ezekiel 43, verse 2, “behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.” So this metaphor of the voice of God being like the power of the smashing wave or the crashing waterfall is one that occurs frequently in the Scriptures. The point that’s being made is this: The God of Israel has a voice that is *overwhelming* in its power, and when Jesus speaks, no one can resist the power of His voice.

Have you ever tried to stand under a waterfall that is dropping tons of water every second, or tried to stand up on the shore to a 15foot wave that’s coming towards you? That is the power of the voice of God as He speaks. When Jesus speaks, *no one* can resist the power of His voice.

Verse 16 says, “And he had in his right hand seven stars.” We’re not left to doubt what these stars represent, because we are told in verse 20 what they represent. Notice verse 20: “the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden

candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

The question is, What are these angels? There are those who assert they are literal angels, and that every local church has a guardian angel watching over it. The problem with that is the Bible nowhere teaches that. The Bible does talk about us individually having guardian angels that watch over us. But it doesn't talk anywhere about collective bodies of people having an angel watching over them. The word “angel” literally means “messenger.” That's what the word in the original language means. “Angelos” is transliterated “angel” into English, but in the original language, angelos just means messenger, and it's used that way many times in the Scripture.

So these angels that are in Jesus' right hand are messengers in Jesus' right hand. They are, He says in verse 20, the messengers of the seven churches. Now a messenger is someone who bears and conveys a message. So these messengers in Christ's hand are the ones who represent Christ's message to the seven churches. He declares that plainly in verse 20. And who is the one who brings Christ's message to the churches but the pastors of those churches.

We read in Daniel chapter 12 and verse 3 about those messengers, when it says, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” So we're specifically told in Daniel 12 and verse 3 that those who turn others to righteousness are to be likened unto stars. It says “they that turn *many* to righteousness,” and the implication here is that these are individuals who convey Christ's message to the church, and they are likened unto stars in this passage and in Daniel 12 and verse 3. We see in Revelation 2 and verse 1, “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write...” So these letters are to be given to the pastors, who then read them and convey them and preach them to the congregation.

Now it's interesting to note in verse 16 that it says Christ holds the pastors of His churches in His right hand. I can't convey to you how thrilled I was when I read that. Christ holds the pastors of His churches in His right hand, and what that means is that He upholds them, He protects them, He sustains them, and He empowers them. He puts them in a place of honor in His kingdom and in His presence. He walks in the midst of the churches. He holds their pastors in His right hand. He gives to them the message that He wants them to deliver to His churches, and this is exactly what we see him doing in chapters 2 and 3. “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write;” “Unto the angel of the church of Smyrna write;” “unto the angel of the church of Thyatira write;” and He goes on.

Christ has a special care for the pastors of His churches. He holds them in His right hand, and that is the only reason that they are able to persevere in their work and accomplish their work, because without Him, they would have no message, they would have no power, they would have no protection from the ravages of Satan.



The blessed Christ gives as a gift to His churches pastors who are teachers. Pastor-teachers, it says, in Ephesians 4 and verse 11: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; <sup>12</sup> for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” And so just as Jesus gave the apostles to His church, and just as Jesus gave prophets to His church, and just as Jesus gave great evangelists to His church, Jesus gives pastor-teachers to His churches. He gives them a special understanding of His message and a special authority and power and protection in the deliverance of it.

Revelation 1, verse 16 goes on to say, that out of his mouth goes a sharp twoedged sword. Now this obviously is a symbolic reference to the word of God. This point is evident from such passages as Ephesians 6 and verse 17, which says, Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. It’s obvious from such passages as Hebrews 4 and verse 12, when it says the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any twoedged sword.

Now it’s interesting to note that this sword is said to be twoedged. There were swords that just had one, but this one has two edges. The number two conveys the idea of complementary and interdependent union. And the two edges of this sword represent the Old and the New Testaments, which are the two complementary and interdependent parts, whose union together comprises the totality of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

You know, people who throw away the Old Testament and just have the New have a one edged sword. It’s imperative that we understand and preach both, because they are inextricably intertwined, joined together in as much of an inseparable union as a sword with two edges has those two edges joined together into one function.

Now a sword is used to slay. You kill people with swords. It’s all they’re good for. You don’t do anything else with them. You don’t do surgery, you don’t serve cake. You use swords to kill people. And so a sword is used to slay, and by the power of Christ’s word spoken in this world, the powers of darkness are slain and defeated, and the prince of darkness is slain and destroyed.

This imagery is once again rooted in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 49 and verse 2, it speaks of Christ in his role as judge. Jesus speaking here of His Father says, “And he,” my Father, “hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me.” And it goes on with this imagery that Jesus is the sword of God, and Jesus is the arrow of God, to bring God’s judgment on a wicked world. So we use the word of God like Jesus does, to do spiritual warfare with the forces of darkness.

Now verse 16 closes with a declaration that Christ’s face shone like the sun at its brightest. Notice, “and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” When the sun shines, it shines very strongly. Have you ever tried to stare at the sun? How long does that last? That’s how long those who think they can stand up against Christ will last when He looks on him with that burning countenance, like the shining of the sun and that burning eye of flaming fire. People

think when they get to heaven they're going to waltz up to God and have a chat. People will wither like a spider in a fire when they stand before God.

It says in Second Thessalonians 2 and in verse 8, "And then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed," speaking of Antichrist, "whom the Lord shall consume with"—notice—"the spirit of his mouth," that's the sword, "and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." That's the face shining as the sun in his countenance. Remember on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus' face began to shine as the sun. And what happened to the apostles? Boom! Down on their faces. They couldn't look on it for a second.

So Christ is going to exercise instantaneous, overwhelming power against His enemies, and they will utterly wither in an instant before it, and be utterly unable to stand against it. Those who think they can stand against Christ need to go out and have a look at the sun and learn a lesson about how well they will be able to stand against Christ when He returns.

Well, this is the sight John beheld. We've seen the voice John heard in verses 10 and 11 last week. We've just now seen the sight John beheld in verses 12 to 16. And now we'll proceed more rapidly. Notice thirdly, the response John gave. The response John gave is in verse 17. He says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

Now I want to summarize what we just talked about, and there's no better way to summarize it than to read the description that William Hendriksen gave in his book, *More than Conquerors*, on pages 56 and 57. He says this:

"The Son of Man is here pictured as clothed with power and majesty and with awe and terror. That long royal robe; that golden belt buckled at the breast [chest]; that hair so glistening white that like snow on which the sun is shining it hurts the eyes; those eyes flashing fire, eyes that read every heart and penetrate every hidden corner; those feet glowing in order to trample down the wicked; that loud, reverberating voice, like the mighty breakers booming against the rocky shore...; that sharp, long, heavy greatsword with two biting edges; that entire appearance 'as the sun shines in its power,' too intense for human eyes to stare at—the entire picture, taken as a whole, is symbolic of Christ, the Holy One, coming to purge [cleanse] His churches, and to punish those who are persecuting His elect."

That's what John saw. Is it any wonder John fell on his face? This is not sweet, comforting, limp-wristed, little Jesus. This is the awesome, almighty, majestic, all-powerful, returning judge. Is it any wonder that this terrifying vision of the risen Christ standing before him, as the overwhelmingly powerful judge, who is inescapable and irresistible and dreadful in His wrath, and terrible in His judgments—is it any wonder that this should cause John to collapse on his face in fear and terror?

Like all of prophets before him, he felt utterly unfit to be in the presence of God. Whether it was Isaiah, or Ezekiel, or Daniel—all had the same response when brought into the divine presence,

and that is, I am unfit to be in the presence of God! Woe is me! I am overwhelmed by the majesty of God! I lose all my strength! I fall on my face in reverence and awe and worship and dread. And listen to me. If this is how *believers* react in the presence of God, what will be the state of the unsaved when they come into His presence? We read previously in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 7, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” Well that’s the response John gave.

Now having seen the voice John heard in verses 10 and 11; having seen the sight John beheld in verses 12 to 16; having seen the response John gave in verse 17a; notice fourthly, the comfort John received in verses 17b to 20. Verse 17, “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.” Now here it is: “And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: <sup>18</sup>I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

No more comforting words were ever spoken than that. And so with a comforting touch, and with a reassuring word, and with a wonderful promise, Jesus comforts John and raises him up again. Because you see, the purpose of this vision for John was not to terrify him; the purpose of this vision for John and for all believers was to comfort them. And even though Jesus is this awe-inspiring, terrifying, overwhelming God, yet He employs all of that power for the blessing and the comfort and the uplifting and the upholding and the equipping in the sending forth of His precious children that He loves with all His heart, that He laid down his for.

We see the comforting touch—He laid His right hand upon me. We see the reassuring word—He said, Fear not. John, you have nothing to fear from me. I am *for* you, not against you. I am the first and the last. I am God, yes, but my divine power will be used to protect you, not to harm you. I will protect you, John, from death, and in the protection from death comes all the other protections.

He says in verse 18, I am alive. I was dead. But behold, I am alive for evermore. He says, I have defeated death. It has no more power over me. I have eternal life. I am alive forevermore, and I, He says, have the keys; that is, I have the authority and the control over hell and over death. Now if someone gives you the key to the building, what are they doing? They’re giving you authority over the building and its use, right? So when Jesus has the keys to death and to hell, He has authority over death, and He has authority and control over hell. Therefore, He’s saying to John, You do not need to fear sin and its consequence, death. I have defeated them both, I control them both, and therefore death cannot hurt you and hell cannot threaten you. Therefore, do not fear your persecutors. I will cast *them* into death and *them* into hell, and I will sustain you in life, and I will bring you to heaven. John, fear not.

So here’s a man who had lots of reasons to fear. He was the object of persecution by the Roman government, he was on this Isle of Patmos in exile, not knowing if he was going to be summoned and executed. And Jesus said, John, I’m here. You’re never going to die unless I turn the key.

And the key is in the hand of the infinite, almighty God, who is angry with your enemies, and who is for you with all of His heart and strength. John, how can you be afraid? How can you be afraid, John? John, fear not.

And that's what Jesus is saying to every one of us here this morning who are trusting in Him: Don't be afraid of the spiritual warfare that you're facing. Understand that this Christ, pictured in this passage in the glory of all of His attributes, is fighting for you. Pity not yourself. Pity your enemies who set themselves against Jesus Christ. They, as we will see, shall all be cast into the Lake of Fire, while those who serve this exalted Christ will be conducted into the new heavens and the new earth.

And so Jesus having assuaged John's fears, now gives him a mission. Verse 19: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." In other words, John, write everything you have seen. Write everything that you're seeing now. And write all the stuff you're going to see subsequent to what you're seeing now. That is what verse 19 is saying, and that's all it's saying. John, write everything you have seen; write everything you are seeing right now; and write everything you're going to see. Omit nothing. Include everything. And he did, and thus we have the book of Revelation.

And so in verse 20, He gives him the meaning of the symbols that he has seen, the ones that are necessary—the candlesticks and the stars. The rest are selfexplanatory. And then He begins to dictate to John His letters to the churches, which are then to be given to the pastors, to be read to the people and expounded to them. Not that they're to be withheld from the people, but notice, they're given to the angel of the churches, and then he gives them to the church.

So God has raised up ministers of the gospel to preach His word to His people. And what is the message that the minister of the gospel who is held in Christ's right hand is supposed to be conveying to the people? Well the answer is, it's what Jesus says in these seven letters.

Now when you show up to church, you expect a message from me, don't you? I'm supposed to say stuff. What am I supposed to say? Well I'm supposed to be a messenger of Christ and convey to you Christ's message. And the question is, What is that message? And the answer is, It's the message in these seven letters. I don't get to make up the message. And that's why you see me expounding the Bible verse by verse, explaining it phrase by phrase, because it's *His* message. It isn't mine. I'm not allowed to tell you my message. I'm required to be a messenger of Christ and to take the words of Christ, and as Paul says to Timothy, preach the word. Preach it when it's popular, preach it when it's not, keep on preaching it patiently. The time will come when they don't even want to hear it, but you just keep on preaching it, and you'll be my faithful servant and I'll hold you in my hand and I'll protect you. And in that great day, you will shine as the stars of heaven.

There's a special reward for faithful pastors. There's also a special wrath and judgment for unfaithful pastors. Jesus said through Paul in First Corinthians chapter 3, If any man defile the

church of God, him will God destroy. He's talking about pastors there. That's why James says, Let not many be teachers, knowing we will receive the greater judgment. That's why preaching in the pulpit is at once the most wonderful and the most terrifying activity that a human being can ever engage in. Wonderful, because you feel the power and enablement of Christ, and terrifying, because if you mess it up, then you have just defiled His bride, and Christ doesn't take it kindly when someone abuses His wife. Would you, if somebody abused your wife?

So what we're going to be hearing is the message the messenger is charged to give, and that is the message of Christ to His churches. May we have ears to hear, and hear, respond, and overcome. People, this is not health and wealth preaching. That's not the gospel. This is serious business because we're involved in serious spiritual warfare. Let us listen seriously to the voice of Christ, because this person pictured in this passage is the judge we're going to face, and He's either going to say to you on the day of judgment, Fear not; or He's going to say to you, Depart from me. And the difference will be, Did you embrace the message that He gave to you in this book?

So we need to take this message seriously, we need to study it diligently, we need to obey it comprehensively, and live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Nothing less will give us a good outcome on the day of judgment. May we be serious Christians. Shall we pray together.

Father, we thank you that we see here that the risen Christ is a tremendous source of comfort to His people, and the risen Christ is a tremendous source of terror to His enemies. Father, may we be on the side of Christ. May we humble ourselves before Him and embrace Him as our Lord and Savior, and find from Him and through Him that blessed touch of comfort, that blessed word of peace, that blessed promise of deliverance from death and from hell. Thank you for a wonderful Savior. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.