

## Revelation 1:9-20

### "Seeing Jesus"

J.C. is coming again. That's what we were considering at the close of our time a couple of weeks ago. We were noting the difference between the Rapture, which will happen suddenly w/out warning, whereby we as believers will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:16-17 [the world won't see the Lord at that time]). However at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ the scriptures make it very clear that *every eye* will see Him, just as lightning that flashes from the east, is seen in the west.

His 1<sup>st</sup> coming was cloaked in obscurity to say the least, born in a manger, in the tiny town of Bethlehem; not even noted in the Bethlehem Gazette or mentioned in the Jerusalem Journal, but believe me when I tell you that when He comes *again* to establish His rule & reign on planet earth, no one will miss it. It's found in Vs 7 of Rev 1 (Read)

I mentioned to you last time that the # 7 is threaded throughout this book in various & sundry ways; this is the 1<sup>st</sup> of 7 references in this book to the return of Christ to planet earth. In the rapture He will come as a Thief & steal millions of believers from this world. At His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming; He is coming w/the clouds & *every eye will see Him*.

Now what does it mean when it says He's coming w/clouds? Is that literally or figuratively? "Yes". It will be true literally because when Jesus ascended, you recall He was taken up before the eyes of His disciples & a cloud received Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9). But as they stood there staring up at the sky a couple of men (aka angels) stood by them & said to them, "Hey guys, why are you standing there staring up at the sky? This same Jesus was taken up *from* you will return *to* this planet in the same manner as you've seen Him go." So even as He was *received* into a cloud He will *return* w/clouds.

It's also true figuratively in that multitudes of believers are called "clouds" in a figurative sense (Heb 12:1 being surrounded by so great a "cloud" of witnesses) & we realize from Rev 19 that when Christ comes again we come w/Him. So He will come w/clouds literally but also figuratively w/multitudes of believers following behind.

We also realize that clouds are commonly associated w/God's presence & God's glory in the scriptures; throughout the OT the cloud of glory that surrounded His presence was known as the "Shekinah" glory of God. To me that's pretty cool because to make the connection of believers being called a cloud we realize that He considers us His glory; when Jesus returns in glory it will be w/you at His side. He's coming w/clouds.

And every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. At His 1<sup>st</sup> coming Jesus came in humility to deal w/sin, at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming He will come in power & glory to deal w/sinners.

Ok, so far the 1<sup>st</sup> 8 Vs have been action packed, filled w/what we're going to receive, a greeting from the Godhead & an affirmation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of J.C. That being said the 1<sup>st</sup> 8 Vs serve primarily as an introduction; the revelation is yet to begin. In Vs 9 John brings us to the edge of the Revelation & it's in Vs 10 that he officially causes us to dive in headlong, notice.

### Vs 9

This is what we call "servant leadership". John is an apostle, the last living apostle at this time. The yr is approx. 95 A.D., persecution has broken out & is reaching epidemic proportions. John wants his readers to realize that being an apostle hasn't exempted him or gained him any special status of immunity from it. They're going through, he's going through it, he's right there w/them yet in the midst of it he's patient *in* it & is trusting in the Lord through the hardship *of* it.

You see, when he says that he was on the isle of Patmos, don't envision him on an island somewhere basking in the sun enjoying a glass of condensating iced tea. The word "Patmos" may not ring any special bells for us but the fact is that it's where you were banished & put to forced labor quarrying marble for the Roman Empire. It was a prison w/out bars, about 6 miles wide & 10 miles long, the "Alcatraz of the Roman Empire".

John had been banished there because the Roman Emperor Domitian wanted to put an end to his "seditious/rebellious" preaching in Ephesus (where he had been the Pastor) & this was a way that he figured he could "quarantine" the further spread of the gospel. According to tradition he'd tried to have him killed by having him boiled in oil but God not being through w/him John didn't die so he was banished to Patmos.

So John says, "Hey, I'm here for the sake of the word of God and for the testimony of J.C." Domitian wanted to quarantine the gospel but instead he put John right where he needed to be in order to receive an incredible revelation of J.C. that'd impact/encourage & strengthen believers everywhere from that point forward throughout human history.

Because you just can't stop the word of God. It's like when Paul was writing to Timothy & he said, *"Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, leaven to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained."*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eph. 3:1

Here's what I want you to be encouraged by: you may (like John) be in a place of isolation, of loneliness, troubled times or tribulation; perhaps you feel like you're in a prison w/out walls. Don't lose heart; more times than not it's when we're going through the fire (ask Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-Nego) that Jesus shows up & reveals Himself to us in ways we'd previously never seen nor understood.

### Vs 10-11

So this is how it all began right? John was "in the Spirit" on "the Lord's Day". What does that mean? Does it mean that he was walking in the Spirit as opposed to walking in the flesh on some Sunday afternoon? I suppose it certainly could but it really doesn't strike us w/that sense does it?

The idea here is that John was in a unique frame of heart & mind so that the Holy Spirit was preparing him to receive the supernatural things of this book. Now there's a bit of a debate here because it could also be rendered, "I was in *my spirit*" "on the Lord's day". Because of that there are those who perceive this as John being "whisked" away (as it were) not bodily, but spiritually being projected forward unto the Day of the Lord whereby God was showing Him the things that were to come, the judgments He would pour out.

I'm not sure it really matters how we understand that; what we need to understand is that God got John's attention & through the power of the Holy Spirit (in one way or another) God revealed some radical things to him.

He says, "I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet". You get the idea don't you? It wasn't a trumpet that he heard, it was a voice, but like a trumpet the voice called him to attention; it got his full focus, fixed his attention & readied him to receive instruction.

Now think it through, it's be 60 yrs since John has heard the voice of his Lord, now it's ringing out, like a trumpet, he hears it *behind* him & the Lord begins to speak *to* him. "I am the Alpha & the Omega, the 1<sup>st</sup> & the Last" all of creation flowed forth from Him, will be wrapped up in Him; He is the beginning & the end of it all. (Just FYI, the title 1<sup>st</sup> & the Last is a title that God claims for Himself in various passages found in the OT; this is 1 of the NT passages where Jesus is clearly claiming to be God.)

He says, "What you see, write in a book & send it to the 7 churches which are in Asia."

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<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 [2 Ti 2:8-9] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

As we mentioned last time there were more than 7 churches in that part of the country but Jesus selected these churches because they will serve to encompass the entirety of the church physically at that time, historically through the ages & presently/prophetically until Christ calls us home.

### Vs 12-13

Can you imagine what must've been going on in John's heart & mind as he began to turn around knowing that he was about to see the face of his Lord? It's been 60+ yrs since he's seen Jesus; & I would suggest that the Lord's voice didn't sound the same when it called out to John here as it did when Jesus was walking w/John on the earth. This voice was filled w/power & might; the texture of it, & the tone found in it was incredible, but by the titles that the voice took to itself John knew, "It's Jesus!"

He's listening to Him, he begins to turn so as to look *at* Him & what does he see. He doesn't see Jesus does he? At least not initially, instead he sees 7 golden lampstands. (What a let down, I was expecting to see Jesus but instead I saw these lampstands...)

Now follow the flow, keep the context; Jesus said, "Write to 7 churches" then when he turned to look he saw "7 golden lampstands" (now I'm going to fast forward just a bit, Vs 20 tells us that these lampstands *are* the churches).

They are the "light bearers" they have no light in & of themselves but they are platforms upon which the light will shine. Now understand that these aren't menorahs or candlesticks. They are free standing lampstands upon which an oil lamp would be placed & lit.

They remind us of the lampstand found in the tabernacle, the exception being that the lampstand in the tabernacle was one lampstand w/7 sources of light attached to it, the center shaft & then 3 arms extending from each side. These however are 7 separate freestanding lampstands. The difference of course being that under the O.C. God called the nation of Israel as 1 to be the light of the world, here Jesus is addressing 7 separate churches; one body among the Jews, many among the Gentiles, however the function of all is the same, to be the light of the world.

Again the lampstand itself isn't the source of light; the light comes from the oil lamps themselves. All the lampstands can do is put the light in a prominent place so that more people can see & what we do see we can see more clearly. That's what makes these lampstands such a perfect picture of the church, we can't produce the light, all we can do is display it. The oil isn't ours, the fire doesn't come from us; we need the oil of the Spirit, the fire of the Holy Spirit to come upon us *then* the light can shine forth prominently/radiantly.

Look at Vs 13. “In the midst of the 7 lampstands One like the Son of Man.”

How important is this? Jesus in His rightful place, the midst, in the center of His church; just where He belongs in your life & mine. Not in some obscure, out of the way location, right in the center of it, right in the middle of things.

Now this title, “One like the Son of Man” sounds like a very humble title doesn’t it? He’s the Man among men, One like the Son of Man...But when you realize the reference to Daniel Ch 7 you understand that this isn’t a humble title of all; it’s a title of glory & of honor & prestige. In Daniel Ch 7 we find where Daniel writes & says, *“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then 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 the one Which shall not be destroyed.”*<sup>2</sup>

This is the One, The Son of Man, J.C. That John sees in the midst of the lampstands. He was clothed w/a garment down to the feet, & girded about the chest w/a golden band.

Let me jump straight to the point, we’re seeing Jesus here in the midst of His church functioning as our Great High Priest; He’s wearing the priestly attire. The garment that goes down to His feet & the golden band girded about the chest. Now of course the High Priest in the OT had an Ephod, or a band of sorts that went around his chest that had some gold thread woven through it. Here we see that Jesus was girded about the chest w/a band made entirely of gold. Of course it speaks of & points to the more excellent ministry & surpassing glory of Jesus Christ.

So don’t miss the picture that’s being painted for us of our Great High Priest in the midst of the lampstands. In the Tabernacle there was one source of light; that was it. It was to be giving off light 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week. So the priest would have to go in every day (probably several times a day) & make sure there was plenty of oil in the lamps, if there was any soot that needed cleared out, wicks that needed trimmed. He was constantly checking on & tending to the lampstand so that light could flow forth from it continually.

Even so we find J.C. (our Great High Priest) in the midst of inspecting & tending to the lampstands.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Da 7:13-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We'll see in Ch's 2 & 3 what He finds, wicks that need trimmed, soot that needs cleared out, oil that needs to be added, whatever. Jesus is constantly evaluated & re-evaluating our lives. Why? So that the light might shine forth full force from our lives; look at Vs 14.

### Vs14-16

Have you ever stopped to think about the fact that this is the only physical description ever given to us of Jesus in the entire bible? We know nothing of what Jesus looked like, we know He wasn't a supermodel thanks to Isaiah 53:2. We know He had a beard because it was prophesied that it would be ripped from His face in Isaiah 50:6. That's all we have, no mention of how tall He was, what He wore, what He looked like, or any physical features of any kind.

People have painted all kinds of pictures, but they have no basis for them. How many times have pictured what you thought someone would look like because you heard them on the radio but when you saw them they looked completely different than you envisioned? Well, as it pertains to the countenance & stature of Jesus this is what the bible gives us.

His head & His hair were white like wool, as white as snow. Not just His hair, His head as well; they reminded John of wool, they were white like snow. Of course it's hard for us to hear of wool & not be reminded of the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. It's hard for us to hear the phrase, "White as snow" & not be driven toward the picture of purity. *"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."*<sup>3</sup> The white hair also points us to the Ancient of Days of Dan 7:9 which alludes to the eternity & surpassing wisdom of the Lord.

His eyes like a flame of fire. Fire is often times associated w/judgment; this speaks to His penetrating insight; Jesus knows all about you; He knows all about me. He knows what we do & why we do it; & one day it'll all pass through the fire & only that which has been established on Christ will last, everything else, wood, hay & stubble, it'll burn under the penetrating gaze of J.C.

His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace. Brass in scripture is also the metal of judgment. The altar upon which the sin offerings were made was a brass altar.

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Is 1:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Of course Jesus became sin for us, bore our judgment, was refined (if you will) through the fires of crucifixion. He's also the one who will stand in judgment of the church, in judgment of the world...

It should also be pointed out that brass was the strongest known metal of the ancient world. So we see in the feet like fine brass a picture of strength, stability & permanence, today John might say, "His feet were like titanium" He's not going anywhere... & His voice as the sound of many waters; speaking of power & authority, like standing next to Niagara Falls or something; there was might, there was majesty to it.

Notice what He had in His right hand, "7 stars" again fast forward to Vs 20 we discover that the 7 stars are the representatives (perhaps the Pastors) of the 7 churches. Sometimes we sing "He's got the whole world, in His hands" well, that may be true sovereignly but specifically we can say matter of factly (7 being the # of completion) He's got whole church in His hands. Jesus said, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."*<sup>4</sup>

"Out of His mouth went a sharp 2 edged sword, & His countenance was like the sun shining in it's strength." His glory is so brilliant, so great that it's Overwhelming & impossible to gaze into.

Now I hope you don't think that Jesus is running around w/a sword between His teeth. The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. What's interesting here is that as a general rule when the NT speaks of the sword it speaks of a smaller tactical kind of sword to be wielded w/precision (Machaira). This word however is different, it's the word "Rhomphaia", it's the heavy, used to deal major damage & destroy, kind of sword, the split you in ½ kind of sword. The "Don't mess w/My church or I will destroy you" kind of sword, it reminds of the words of Jesus when He said, "I will build My church & the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt 16:18)

Everything about this vision speaks of strength, majesty, authority, & righteousness.

**Vs 17-20**

We'll pause for now, pick up here & point out a couple of things next time. For now we'll close w/this thought. John saw in Jesus eyes like a flame of fire & feet like fine brass. Jesus stands prepared to judge; as He searches your heart what does He find?

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (In 10:27-28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Does the gaze of Jesus *warm you*? Or does it *warn you*? As He inspects your life, does He need to add more oil, perhaps trim the wick or clear out the soot? He wants your light to shine bright; give Jesus His way in your heart, that *He* might be glorified in *your* life...

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your word. Jesus it blows us away to think that while on the earth John leaned back on Your chest & experienced such a nearness to You but seeing You glorified he fell at Your feet as though dead. Help us to see You & honor You for who You are. Holy, overflowing w/power & majesty, strength & righteousness. May we fall down before You & offer all that we are to You. Trim us, cleans us, fill us fresh w/the power of the Holy Spirit that we might shine bright *for* You & bring glory *to* You.

Of course you can't shine *for* Jesus if you don't belong *to* Jesus. Jesus is He who lives & was dead & behold, is alive forever more. What that means is that suffered & died upon the cross so that we might be forgiven of all our sin. & Having paid our penalty He rose again having defeated death never to die again. Forgiveness awaits you, freedom from guilt is available *to* you, but only in Christ. If God is dealing w/you today, speaking *to* your heart wanting to make His home *in* Your heart, than how about you surrender today, right here, right now?