

When John saw Jesus that Sunday morning on Patmos, he collapsed and was like a dead man. It wasn't that he was old and weak, or overcome by emotion: John had seen that look in Christ's eyes before, and when he realized what Jesus was communicating, it overwhelmed him. John saw Almighty God the Son, Jesus Christ who was displeased with His Church.

Did you know that in less than 60 years, the original edition of Christ's Church had gotten to the point where 70% of the local assemblies were displeasing to God? That's right 5 out of the 7 churches that Jesus had visited were reprimanded and warned. Christ's expressed in 5 out of 7 letters His displeasure about the way that were living out God's plan for their lives.

Jesus had done an onsite examination, and now He was asking John to write the report and send it back to each of those churches. The report was not good, but the situation was not hopeless. In each instance all that was needed was a change of mind that would lead to a change in behavior. That is what Jesus asked for: repentance!

This message of Jesus we are looking at in Revelation is vital for each of us today. As we open to Revelation 1 we are seeing a divinely given portrait of the real Jesus visiting the "purchased with His own blood" congregations of the redeemed.

What we get in this chapter is a portrait that is three-fold. It is Divine, its is corrective, and it is very sobering.

The Divine, Corrective, and Sobering Portrait of the Real Jesus

The description of Jesus in Revelation 1:9-20 is unlike any other single passage in all of God's Word. In these verses we see Jesus as He is right now, and what we see isn't what we usually think of Him. That's why we need this portrait.

1. First, it is a **Divine Portrait**. This is the way God wants every person in Christ's Church to look on the Jesus we know and love. God sent this vision of Jesus to John for the believers of all the ages onward. So, this isn't John's opinion, it is exactly what God sent. Revelation 1 is a Divine Portrait of Jesus Christ as God wants us to see Him today! Yes, He is the compassionate, loving gentle Jesus with children on His lap, that we see in the Gospels. Yes He is also the fiery preacher with zero tolerance for unrepentant sin, warning of hellfire and endless doom who takes on the hypocrites mercilessly. Both are the real Jesus and God sent a Divine Portrait so we NEVER forget that.
2. Secondly, it is a **Corrective Portrait**. The churches by the end of the First Century had grown lax in those decades following Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. They had slowly moved away from the writings of the Epistles of James, Peter, Paul, and John that emphasized holy living, consecrated lives, and Spirit prompted walks. Believers seemed to be abandoning lifestyles that reflected Christ's ownership of them as His servants individually, and collectively

as Christ's purchased Church. So Revelation 1 is a Corrective Portrait of Jesus that many early believers needed to get them back focused on Christ's desires for them in daily life.

3. Finally, it is a **Sobering Portrait**. Nowhere is the intolerance of sin that Jesus has for His Church more clearly seen than in this chapter. As Hebrews says, the way you know that you are a real son is if you get spanked by your father. Jesus says I have found disobedience in My Church and I am not stopping until it gets rooted out. Sometimes we are so amazed by His grace, that so freely offers us redemption and forgiveness—that we neglect His holiness that demands purity, obedience, and submission to His will as Lord and Master.

The Divine, Corrective, and Sobering message God is sending for us to heed is, that:

Jesus Wants His New Temple, the Church To Be Pure and Holy

When Jesus started His ministry the Temple of God was a building, but as He began to teach He spoke of a temple not made with human hands. He taught about a time when the worship of God would not be confined to a building, but would become spiritual worship that was based on truth.

Then He sent His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to live within each of His children, baptizing them spiritually the instant of their salvation, into His Church.

They were taught that God expected them to gather regularly for worship and instruction as local assembled bodies of Christ where the Holy Word of God, the Scriptures would be read and explained.

Then His apostles recorded God's final words for mankind, as the New Testament was written down and completed.

As we read what Paul (I Corinthians 6:19-20), and Peter (I Peter 2:4-10) wrote, we find that we have become the new temples of God. Each individual believer is the dwelling place of God. We are the holy temple of the Holy God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

With that idea that we are the actual temples of God, a couple of scenes from the Gospels may help us understand this Revelation1 portrait of Christ that almost seems puzzling to us. The two accounts we need to remember are what we call the two times we see Jesus cleansing of the Temple.

Please open there with me in your Bibles to John 2:13-22 this was how Jesus opened His ministry.

John 2:13-22 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. 15 When He had **made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple**, with the sheep and the oxen, and **poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables**. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." 18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" 19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was **speaking of the temple of His body**. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

Now in Matthew 21:12-13 look at a scene from about Tuesday in Christ's last week, just before He went to the Cross on Friday (also captured in Mark 11:15-19; and in Luke 19:45-46).

Matthew 21:12-13 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' (Mark adds "for all nations") but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

What lessons can we learn from that scene from the opening and the closing of Christ's ministry? Jesus was very serious about worship. Worship was centered around the Temple.

Our Worship is Watched Closely by God

The Temple had to be kept clean, completely focused upon God's Word, with no worldly trappings of greed, materialism, or any other defiling sins.

That was the only way that the Temple of Jerusalem could perform the plan that God had for it to be a place for all the world (the "all nations" Mark captures in Christ's quote of Isaiah 56:7) to come face-to-face with the True and Living God. Here's the catch:

Our Bodies are Now His Living Temples

Remember what happened on this side of the Cross? We each as individual believers are now the living temples of the Living God, and even more, when we gather, Peter said that we are like living stones and we form an even greater form of that Temple of God as Christ's gathered Church. Turn onward to I Corinthians 6:19-20:

*Or do you not know that **your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Now even further back to I Peter 2:4-5, 9-12:

*Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, **5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 11 Beloved, **I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul**, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Jesus Wants His Church As a Pure & Consecrated Temple

Jesus has always had one desire for us His Church. Paul said it so clearly in Ephesians 5, Christ wants

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to present us to His Father as a Holy Church, not have any spot or wrinkle, but as a chaste and pure Bride.

*Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her**, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

The One who gave Himself for us, washes us, and wants to loose us from all the chains of sin that so easily enslave us, is also our bridegroom who jealously (James 4:4-8; II Corinthians 11:2-4) longs for our purity for Him. James was the first writing pastor inspired to record God's Word, his message sounds so much like what Jesus was looking for:

James 4:4-8 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? 6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Paul reminds us in II Corinthians 11:2-4 with a picture we can all understand, the jealousy that a bridegroom has for his bride is what Christ has for each of us:

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

The first command that Christ gave to His Church was during His ministry in the Gospel by Matthew in chapter 18. That command was that His Church be kept pure. The sight Jesus reveals to us of Himself in this present age is what is captured in Revelation 1, and it is the same scene we saw from His earthly ministry.

With the picture of Jesus walking into the Jerusalem Temple and with a whip driving out anything that was not in keeping with God's holiness, think of the verses before us. On His walk through of the new temple of God in His Church Jesus found that believers had dragged into their lives and thus into His Temple, all sorts of bad stuff.

Christ's Report After Examining His Church

The saints in Ephesus had allowed other things in life to rob Jesus of first place in their hearts, in their schedules, in their concentration; and all that signaled that He was no longer the supree love of their lives.

The Pergamites had gotten comfortable with the world, and had blended right into the activities, entertainments, and habits of the lost world around them and were no longer distinctive.

The Thyatirans were tolerating sin, and allowed false doctrines to permeate Christ's Church. The Sardians were dead, they no longer looked alive in Christ, their minds no longer appeared filled with new life from Christ, they were walking corpses acting, thinking, walking like all those dead in trespasses and sin around them.

And finally, the Laodiceans were so bad, so distracted by their materialistic pursuits of pleasure, had become so un-needing of Christ—that Jesus wanted to spit them out of His mouth, like a sickening taste, or a spoiled piece of food that could only be vomited out was where that church had come.

Now, as we open again to Revelation 1, and read this vivid, eye-witness description of Christ, isn't it clearer why Jesus has those flaming eyes, and those feet of brass, and sword coming out of His mouth?

Jesus is walking through His new temple made up of the bodies of all those redeemed saints He has bought with His own blood; and the new temple has gotten almost as bad as the old one. Jesus is headed to cleanse the temple of His Church in chapters 2-3, and we see how He looks as He is on the way to do so in these verses in chapter 1.

Seeing Christ Cleaning Out His Early Church

Notice the very precise specifics of what John saw about Jesus as He examines His church and finds 5 out of the 7 to be facing His great displeasure.

*Revelation 1:9-20 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lamp stands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lamp stands: One like the Son of Man; clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. 14 **His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.** 17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. 19 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. 20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamp stands which you saw are the seven churches.*

For a moment watch those elements of Christ seen by John, spoken of by Jesus as He visits those seven churches.

What Does Jesus Expect From His Church

Today if I could ask each of you to hold onto just one concept from this entire message it would be this question:

Are you doing what God designed you to do?

You were made to be His temple priest, His bride, and His body.

Are you functioning as a healthy member of Christ's church today?

Remember that there are no less than twelve metaphors in God's Word for the Church¹. Each metaphor is a powerful way for us to see how God looks upon us who are Christ's church.

God uses these metaphors to help us understand our responsibilities as believers. He wants us to apply each of the truths revealed by these descriptions of the church into our daily lives. We often need to be reminded that as members of Christ's church:

1. We are His **TEMPLE** and Priests: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **God's new temple and priests**—*should increase our awareness of God's very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet; and see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that we offer to Him.*

*I Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built **up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

I am Christ's Temple. I should want to grow in my awareness of living in His Holy Presence. That is what happens as we read His Word if we bow first in adoration and whisper a prayer of seeking Him.

Have you personally sought your God, this week, in His Word?

Hebrews 13:15-16 Therefore by Him let us continually **offer the sacrifice** of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

I am part of Christ's Priesthood. I should want to delight in offering the sacrifices He desires. Have you thanked God for eyes to see with, ears to hear with, feet that walk, a mind that still functions? Offer Him the sacrifice of thanks for sins forever gone, of hope that it endless, of joy that never runs out. And then pick someone to “do good and to share” with.

We all need to be each doing a “good deed” for others each week. And then, each day, and then all day long.

2. We are His **BODY**: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **the body of Christ**—*should increase our interdependence on one another and our appreciation of the diversity of gifts within the body.*

I Corinthians 12:27 Now **you are the body of Christ**, and members individually.

¹ Adapted from Wayne Grudem; *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, p. 858.

I am Christ's Body. I should want my body to do what His did. Jesus went around doing good. He had compassion for the confused, He helped the poor, healed the sick, loved the outcasts, and comforted the lonely. God has no Hands but yours. God wants us as a fully functioning part of His Body.

3. We are His BRIDE: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **the bride of Christ**—*should stimulate us to personally strive for greater purity, deeper love for Christ, and swifter fuller obedience to Him.*

II Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have **betrothed you to one husband**, that I may present you as **a chaste virgin** to Christ.

I am Christ's Bride. I should want to strive to stay pure for Him. When I watch TV I am seeking His approval. When I dress it is for His adoring gaze. I think of Him as my beloved.

Jesus is walking around today.
He is doing an onsite examination of us as His Church.

God wants us devoted to be being Christ's Bride. What happens when He finds that we aren't doing what He called us to do?

Next time we'll see the chastening work Christ is doing even today in His Church!