

“A PICTURE POSTCARD FROM PATMOS”

Rev. 1:9-20

The pen-portrait of Jesus Christ in Revelation chapter one is the most complete and graphic picture of Jesus that we have in capsule form in all the Bible. After all, this book is titled: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”. However the entire Bible is a gradual revealing of Him. Think through the Bible with me:

- Old Testament – preparation for Jesus Christ;
- Gospels – manifestation of Jesus Christ;
- The Acts – propagation of Jesus Christ;
- Epistles – explanation of Jesus Christ;
- Last book – Revelation of Jesus Christ.

However, nowhere is He so vividly pictured as here in the verses before us. For here He is portrayed in a totally different way from the remainder of the New Testament. For instance, in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we see Jesus set in an earthly context. The focus is on His lowly birth; His boyhood; His miracles, teaching, death and resurrection. But here in Revelation chapter one, the emphasis shifts to the heavenly context - Jesus after His resurrection, after the ascension – the glorified Jesus.

Let us look at this picture postcard of Christ sent from the island of Patmos to Christ’s churches in the following manner: First,

I. THE VISITATION THAT JOHN EXPERIENCED.v. 9-16

We begin with verses 9 and 10 - “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. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet.”

Consider two pivotal points here: “I was in the Spirit of the Lord’s Day ...” (v.10) Here is a disciple of Jesus Christ, imprisoned on a desolate island because of His testimony for Jesus. And what does He do? On the first day of the week, he worships!

Eph. 5:18 tells us: “be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” – and that is what John was doing! Throw Paul in prison and he praises God and sings at midnight; banish John from civilization and he worships. There was the awareness of the presence of the Lord wherever they were.

A worshiping saint on his knees can see farther than the devil on his tip-toes! It was while John was worshipping that he saw the invisible and heard the inaudible. It was then that he had the greatest experience of his life! Notice what happened next:

A. The Voice That John Heard

Rev 1:10-11 “and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet....”

Notice the words: “A loud voice, as of a trumpet”, that is a simile, “as of”. He did not

hear a trumpet but a “voice” similar to a trumpet. Several times in scripture God uses loud sounds from heaven to get earth’s attention, such as:

2 Sam 22:14 - “The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded.”

Job 37:2,4 & 5 - “Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, and the rumbling that comes from His mouth.” v.4 “After it a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, and He does not restrain them when His voice is heard.” V.5 “God thunders marvelously with His voice...”

Revelation 1:15 - His voice was “as the sound of many waters.”

Revelation 14:2 - “And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder...”

However, God does not always trumpet, thunder or shout! When God spoke to Moses on the mountain He spoke in “a still small voice.” (1 Kings 19:11-13) In Rev.3:20 Jesus said, “if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.” Have you heard? Have you opened your life to Him?

The study of the voice of the Lord throughout scripture will drive us to our knees in our spirits if not in our bodies. Our God is an awesome God! John heard that voice of majesty and then he saw the vision majestic:

B. The Vision That John Saw. v.12-16

John was shut away from society there in the Patmos Prison, but he was not shut away from Sovereignty. Jesus came to visit him and spoke to him and John had the privilege of seeing the glorified Son of God! His vision of Jesus is recorded in verses 12-16.

What is God like? Some see Him as a “big bully upstairs” as one apostate labeled Him or He is perceived by some as the “Congenial Old Man Upstairs” who winks at sin. Well, here is the most complete composite of Jesus that we have in one single passage of Bible and He is neither a bully or an Old Man.

The vision is exalted and terrifying! John saw Jesus many times during His earthly ministry but never like he saw Him on the island of Patmos! We have seen many paintings that claim to represent what Jesus looks like. Christian book stores have them. I am sure that the artists mean well, however, not one of them is anything like the person whom John saw.

Let us analyze the vision in very general terms, for a sermon could be preached on any one of the characterizations listed here. The descriptions are as follows in v.13-16 “in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 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.”

Here The Revealer is revealed! Here is Jesus “crowned with glory and honor.”
(Heb.2:8-9) Notice John’s description of Him point by point:

His garment – “clothed with a garment down to the feet” – speaks of His humanity;
His girdle – “and girded about the chest with a golden band” - speaks of His deity;
His head and hair – “His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow” – speaks of holiness;
His eyes – “and his eyes were like a flame of fire” - speaks of His omniscience;
His feet – “His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace.” – speaks of His judgment;
His voice – “his voice as the sound of many waters” – speaks of His authority;
His right hand – “He had in his right hand seven stars” – speaks of His power;
His mouth – “out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword” – speaks of His truth;
His face – “His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength” - speaks of His glory.

This pen-portrait of the glorified Lord Jesus is the most detailed in all of scripture. This is not a dead figure on a cross, this is the resurrected, glorified God our Savior that we will see some day!

John heard the Voice - John saw the Vision. Now, if this had been one of us instead of John what would our response have been? What was John’s response? The answer leads us to consider:

II. THE VENERATION THAT JOHN GAVE.v.17a

“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.”

There are two actions that take place at this point: John falls at Jesus’ feet in adoration and Jesus speaks to John.

A. John’s Worship.

John had been one of the inner circle of Jesus’ disciples, had leaned upon Jesus’ shoulder at the Last Supper in the Upper Room, whose feet Jesus had once washed, now falls at the feet of the glorified Christ in worship.

This is not the first time that humans were overwhelmed by the awesomeness of the Lord. Ezekiel had a similar experience: “I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown.” (Ezek 1:27-28)

When Jesus confronted Saul on the Damascus Road we read in Acts 9:3 - “suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth...”

Worship, in our day, is fast becoming a lost art. Churches have services that they call “worship” services. But in some of them very little actual worship takes place. There

does not appear to be a sense of the presence or the transcendence of the Lord of the Lampstands, the Christ of the Candlesticks!

As John was on his face in worship Jesus spoke to him.....

B. Jesus Words. v.17-18

Rev. 1:17-18 - "But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last; 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."

Jesus words were words of comfort. "He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid...'"

Jesus words were words of confirmation:

*"I am the First and the Last,
I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold,
I am alive forevermore. Amen"*

"I AM's" In John's Gospel:

John's writings are the ones that list the "I AMs" of Christ:

1. I am the Bread of Life (6:35)
2. I am the Light of the World (9:5)
3. I am the Door (10:7)
4. I am the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. I am the Resurrection (11:25)
6. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life 14:6
7. I am the True Vine (15:1)
8. I am the Alpha and Omega (1:8 & 17)

Jesus words were words of conquest. v.18 "And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

What an encouragement to John this visit by Jesus must have been. John had been persecuted for Jesus; He had been exiled for preaching the truth about Jesus. People may have said to him, "John, it isn't worth it! Recant! Give it all up! Live for the present! But now Jesus comes – touches Him – the Touch of the Master's Hand! And speaks words of comfort, confirmation and conquest.

"It will be worth it all , when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
Just one glimpse of His dear face
All sorrows will erase
So bravely run the race till we see Christ!"

III. THE VERIFICATION THAT JOHN RECEIVED.

v.19-20 "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things

which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”

The verification that John receives involves two areas, first:

A. His Mission Is Verified. v.19

“Write.” This is a repetition of the command in v.11 - “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches.” There are two different instructions here: “write” and “send.” John was to “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” (v.19)

John obeyed the dual commands to “write” and “send” and we have what he wrote in our possession. This is the Miracle Book! Theologians call this the Doctrine of Preservation. That is, God has miraculously preserved His Word down through the centuries so that we can say with confidence, “This is the Word of the Living God!”

When we get to heaven we can thank John for doing what Jesus told him to do. In the meantime, let us read and heed what he wrote!

So, John’s Mission is Verified and now we come to v.20 where we see:

B. The Mysteries Are Clarified. v.20

“The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” v.16 also says that Jesus has 7 stars in His right hand. What or Who are the stars?

The Seven Stars - are the messengers or pastors of the churches. Most English translations use the word “angel” instead of “messenger” or “pastor” to translate the Greek word “angelos”. “Angelos” is frequently used in referring to human messengers. Furthermore, nowhere in the N.T. are angels placed in a leadership position over the church. It is very poor theology to say that Christ is writing to the angels of heaven rather than human messengers. Humans, not angels, are responsible to God for the conduct of the church on earth.

Therefore, the seven “angelos” or messengers represent the human leadership in each church – specifically the pastor. That the pastor is in Christ’s right hand reminds every leader that it is Christ’s Authority by which he serves, not his own, and he, the pastor, is accountable to the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus.

The Seven Lampstands - “The seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.” In verses 12 and 13 Christ is pictured as standing in the midst of the 7 golden lampstands. The lampstands are the churches that Jesus is going to address in His letters. Here we see the centrality of Christ in His churches. This reminds us of His promise to the disciples: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” and, “Where two

or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.”
(Matt. 18:20)

Lampstands serve as a source of light and the church is to light up a darkened world. Jesus said that He is “the Light of The World” (John 9:5). The church is made up of Those who have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of Light (Col. 1:12-13) We, the members of the church, are commanded to “live as children of light” (Eph. 5:8) and to let our light shine before men. (Matt.5:16)

CONCLUSION

There are two overriding pictures of Jesus in this last book of the Bible. One is in Revelation chapter 1, the other in chapter 19. I close this study with the picture from Revelation chapter 19:

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” (vs.11-16)

Which characterization of Jesus Christ would you rather meet face to face? The One John met on Patmos or the One sinners will see as He comes to Judge? Have you embraced Him as your Savior?

Psalm 2:12 says, “Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”

As we see Jesus in the Scriptures, at least 3 things should take place in our lives:

- The vision of Him should generate wonder;
- The vision of Him should stimulate worship;
- The vision of Him should motivate witness.

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