

A Glimpse of the Glory *Revelation 1:9-18*

There is a desperate need for hope in our world. Everywhere we look we see confusion and chaos. It is difficult for even the most optimistic not to be discouraged with the condition of the world. Does the future offer any hope? Absolutely! If you have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ the future is bright indeed.

The vision described by the Apostle John in this first chapter of the Book of Revelation is a vision of hope. A hope not based in some grand plan of human design. It's a hope founded on the crucified, risen, and glorified Christ!

Let's begin this morning by looking at verse 9 of Revelation chapter 1. Notice, John says he "*was on the island that is called Patmos*" when the Lord gave him this divine revelation. Patmos is a barren, rocky little island in the Aegean Sea about 40 miles off the coast of Asia Minor. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, exile to a remote island was a common form of Roman punishment in the first century, usually given to political prisoners. Early church fathers such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius tell us that John was sent to Patmos as an exile under Emperor Domitian who reigned from A.D. 81-96. Why was John sent to Patmos? Look again at verse 9. John says that he was on Patmos "*for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*" John's crime was two-fold. First, he was a Christian, in fact he was a leader of the Christians, and Rome considered all Christians criminals. Second, John was guilty of being an uncompromising preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Exile on the island of Patmos meant a hard life of exposure to the elements, constant hunger, extreme loneliness and exhausting labor. It was under these brutal conditions on the bleak, barren island of Patmos that the sovereign Lord chose to give John a glimpse of His glory.

1. What John Heard (Rev. 1:10-11).

Look at verse 10. John says, "*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 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'*" (Rev. 1:10-11)

John heard **the voice of Christ**.

Notice, His voice was "*as of (or like) a trumpet.*"

John heard a trumpet like voice behind him, but it was Christ Himself speaking! Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 when the Lord Jesus descends from heaven to resurrect, rapture and remove His church from the earth, He will announce his arrival "*with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.*"

When Christ comes again His voice will be *like* a trumpet - but it will be Christ's own voice calling his children out of this world.

Have you heard the voice of Christ? Jesus said, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”* (John 10:27).

Like Moses on the mountain, like Paul on the road to Damascus, John heard the audible voice of the Lord. I have never heard the voice of God like that, but the Lord has spoken to me many, many times. Christ speaks to you and me by his Spirit and through his Word. When we open up our bibles and read the Word of God He speaks to us. When you come to church and sit under the preaching of God’s Word the Lord is speaking to you. He is speaking to you right now. The question is, “are you listening?”

John heard the voice of Christ which sounded like a trumpet. As far as we know, John had not heard his Lord's voice since Christ had returned to heaven more than sixty years before. Although the beloved apostle was intimately familiar with the voice of the Savior, this was an unfamiliar sound. So he turns to see the voice.

2. What John Saw (Rev. 1:12-16).

John saw **a vision of the church of Christ**. Look at verse 12. He saw "*seven golden lampstands*." Instead of one lamp stand like the great golden menorah that stood in the Temple, here we have seven individual gold lamp stands arranged in a circle. Now we know the seven golden lamp stands represent the seven churches of chapters 2 and 3. Look at verse 20.

John’s vision of "*seven golden lampstands*" teaches us two very important truths about the church of Jesus Christ. First of all, the fact that these lamp stands are made of gold remind us of how precious the church is to Christ. The church is the beloved bride of Christ, bought and paid for with His own precious blood.

Second, the lamp stands remind us of the purpose of the church. What is the principal function of a lamp stand? A lamp stand’s purpose is to give off light. The lamp stand is not the light. The lamp stand is the bearer of the light.

Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world"* (Jn. 8:12). The church is not the light, Jesus is the light; the function of the church is to bear the light of Christ. Brothers and sisters, you and I are the church. We are called by God to bear the Light of Christ to the whole world. (Matt. 5:14-16)

Notice verse 13 says, *“And in the midst of the seven golden lampstands One like the Son of Man.”* The title “Son of Man” refers to Christ. In fact, this is how the Lord most often referred to Himself in the gospels.

When John tells us that *“in the midst of the seven golden lampstands One like the Son of Man”* he is simply saying that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of His churches. In Matthew 18:20, Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst." You are here, but I have news for you. Jesus is here also. As the old song says - Surely the presence of the lord is in this place. Jesus is here! The Son of God, the Son of man, the Savior of the world is in the midst of His churches. He's walking among His churches. Christ is walking up and down these aisles. He is moving in and out of these pews. The Lord is in this place. We need to worship and praise His holy name.

John saw **a vision of the commission of Christ**. Verse 13 goes on to say that the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ is *“Clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.”*

This garment is symbolic of Christ's commission as Priest. Hebrews 8:1 says that, in Christ, we have *“a high priest (in Christ) who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”* Let me point out just two of the ways the Lord Jesus fulfills His priestly calling.

First of all, He intervenes for us. The most important responsibility of the High Priest was to intervene on behalf of the people by offering sacrifices to God for their sins. That's what Jesus did for us on the cross of Calvary. Jesus didn't merely offer a sacrifice for our sins, He *became* our sacrifice (Heb. 9:23-28). We receive forgiveness from the Father because of the sacrifice of the Son (1 Jn. 1:7). The bible says there is one mediator, one intervener, between sinful man and holy God, the Man Jesus Christ.

Second, He intercedes for us. Another important duty of the High Priest was to pray for his people. Jesus said to Peter, *“I have prayed for you”* (Luke 22:31-32). Do you know that Christ prays for you? I am so grateful to know that there are many people who pray for me. Some of you pray for me every day, and I want you to know that I covet your prayers. But dear folks, my greatest comfort, my greatest confidence comes from the knowledge that my Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, *“always lives to make intercession”* for me (Heb. 7:25).

John saw **a vision of the character of Christ**. Look at verse 14. *“His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow.”*

This is symbolic of Christ's eternity. In Daniel He is called the *“Ancient of Days”* (Dan. 7:9, 13, 22). Jesus said, *“Before Abraham was, I Am.”* There was never a time when Christ was not. There will never be a time when He will not be. He is the eternal God (Jn. 1:1). He came out of eternity, and He moves into eternity.

This is also symbolic of Christ's purity. White snow and white wool speak of unstained purity. Isaiah wrote, *“Come now, and let us reason together, says 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.”* The bible tells us in 1 John 1:7 says *“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* And then we have this wonderful promise in 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.”*

Verse 14 goes on to say that *“His eyes like a flame of fire.”*

This is symbolic of Christ's perfect wisdom and penetrating sight. He knows all, all about you and me. There is no hiding our sin from His sight, for He is *“a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Heb. 4:12b).

John writes in verse 15 that *“His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace.”*

This is symbolic of Christ's judgment. The brass altar in the Temple was the place where the sin offering was consumed by fire. Two-thousand years ago on a hill outside of Jerusalem, a cruel Roman cross became an altar upon which the dear Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ gave His life as a sacrificial offering for our sins. On the cross Jesus bore the judgment of God upon our sins. One day He will be our judge.

John 5:22 tells us that the Father “*has committed all judgment to the Son*” (Jn. 5:22). Daniel Webster said, "The most solemn thought I have had is that one day I will stand before Christ and give an account of my life." Every one of us will one day stand before Christ in judgment. If you received Christ as your Savior you will appear before Him at what the bible calls the bema seat of Christ where you will be judged according to your good works and rewarded accordingly. If you rejected Christ you will one day stand before Him at the Great White Throne, where you will be condemned and cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

John adds in Verse 15 that His voice was “*as the sound of many waters.*”

This is symbolic of Christ's authority and power. H. B. Sweete said, "The voice of God is not confined to one note." ² His voice can be like a roaring river or a quiet brook, it can thunder in rebuke or gently comfort.

Now look at verse 16. "*He had in his right hand seven stars, out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*" (v. 16b).

This is symbolic of Christ's Word. The Book of Hebrews says that the Word of God is "*living, active, and sharp.*" The Word both condemns and converts. It converts those who repent and believe, and it condemns those who reject its truth. It is "*the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life*" (2 Cor. 2:16).

John saw a vision of **the countenance of Christ**. Verse 16 goes on to say that "*His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*"

This is symbolic of Christ's glory. His glory is brighter than the sun. The Psalmist said, "*For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory*" (Ps. 84:11).

Quite a picture isn't it? This is the closest thing we have in the Word of God to a picture of the Son of God. Let me ask you a question. Is this vision of Christ how you have Him pictured in your mind?

3. What John Did (Rev. 1:17-18).

Look at verse 17. John says, "*And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as dead.*"

The effect of this vision on John was overwhelming. He was so awestruck that he **fell at the feet of Christ**. He was intimately acquainted with the Savior but he didn't recognize the glorified Lord.

Praise God, our dear Savior is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. What a friend we have in Jesus. I am so glad I can say this morning that Jesus walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own. But dear church, we must be very careful that our familiarity and fellowship with Christ doesn't blind us to the glory and majesty of Christ. Beloved, Jesus is not your “good buddy.” He is God Almighty! There can be nothing but awesome reverence in the presence of the holiness and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When John saw Christ is all of His holiness and glory he fell at the Lord's feet as if he were dead. Notice what the Lord Jesus said to John. Jesus said, "*Do not be afraid.*" That is Christ message for you today as well. “Do not be afraid.”

All the fears that sometimes grip our hearts fall into one of two categories; they are either fears of life or they are fears of death. I want you to see that Christ is the answer to all our fears. Look again at verse 17.

First of all, we need not fear life because Christ is "*the First and the Last.*" He is first because there were none before Him. He is last because there are none to follow Him." ⁴ He is the eternal one. That means He will always be with us, from the beginning of life to the end. He was there in the moment of our birth, He will be there in the moment of our death, and He will be there through all of the moments of life. No matter what challenges we may face as we travel this journey of life He will be there. No matter what circumstances we may find ourselves in along the way He will be there. The Lord Jesus says, "I will never leave you or forsake you." The Psalmist wrote, "*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me*" (Psalm 139:7-10).

Now look at verse 18. We need not fear death, because Jesus said, "*I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of death*" Because Christ died for our sins on the cross and rose again from the dead He has conquered death and the grave for all who would place their faith in Him as Lord and Savior. Jesus said, "*Because I live, you shall live also*" (Jn. 14:19).

Are you afraid of death? If you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, death has no power over you. Paul wrote, "*O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 15:55, 57).

Conclusion,

Several years ago Gloria and Bill Gaither wrote a wonderful song that expresses the hope that we have in Christ.

*God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus;
He came to love, heal, and forgive;
He loved and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.*

*And then one day I'll cross that river;
I'll fight life's final war with pain;
And then as death gives way to victory,
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives.*

Please sing the chorus with me.

*Because He lives I can face tomorrow;
Because He lives all fear is gone;
Because I know he holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives.* ⁵

1. William Barclay, *The Revelation of John, Vol. 1, The Daily Study Bible Series* (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA) p. 46.
2. Ibid, p. 50.
3. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Vol. 2* (Victor Books, Wheaton, IL 60187) p. 569.
4. J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible Commentary, Vol. 5* (Thru The Bible Radio, Pasadena, CA 91109) p. 896.
5. *Because He Lives*, Gloria and William J. Gaither