

Text: Rev. 1:12-20 – Part One
Title: The Jesus We Shall See
Time: 2/12/2017 am
Place: NBBC

Intro – One of my favorite passages that encourages me to look for the return of Christ and the rapture of the church was written by the apostle John in his old age. It is 1 John 3:1-2, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

What has always been striking and instructive to me is that, in spite of his advanced age at the time of his writing those words, John does not say, “When I die I am going to see Him,” but “When he shall appear.” John did not look forward to the day of his death; he looked forward to the day of Christ’s return. He believed it could happen at any moment, and we must live that way too.

John mentions there that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, and we shall see Him as He is. I do not know whether John wrote those words before or after his experiences on Patmos described in our passage in Revelation this morning. Whatever the case, what we do know is that this passage describes a time when John saw Christ as He is. He did so without yet being like Him, and so what He saw truly terrified him.

I have titled our study of the passage this morning, “The Jesus We Shall See,” and very simply I want us to think

about two truths from the passage: (1) the Jesus we shall see made John afraid; and (2) the Jesus we shall see told John not to be afraid. We will only get to the first of these points this morning.

I. The Jesus we shall see made John afraid (vv. 12-17a, 20).

Ill: We sometimes go through very frightening experiences that stay with us for a long time. Perhaps you were in a bad car accident, and now you find it difficult to ride in a car in heavy traffic. Maybe you were bitten by a dog, and now you find that you cannot bring yourself to go near them. Perhaps you took a baseball to the head while in the batter's box, and that ended your love of that game.

Well, John has an experience in this passage that may have had him looking over his shoulder from then on. John saw the Jesus we shall see, and more specifically he saw Jesus's location, His appearance, and His possessions. Let's take those one at a time.

A. John saw Jesus' location (vv. 12-13a, 20b).

Appl: John sees Jesus in the midst of seven golden lampstands (KJV, *candlestick*). A lampstand was the stand where lamps were hung, which would burn the oil that gave light to a room. In the Old Testament economy, one lampstand with seven lamps was part of the tabernacle furniture, symbolical of the light of God's truth in Christ shining in a dark world.

Verse 20 of our passage explains that these seven lampstands that John saw are the seven local churches. Jesus is located in the midst of the seven local churches. As a local church, we can be sure that He is in our midst, for He

promised in the context of His teaching on the local church, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst" (Matt. 18:20).

Jesus said something else about lamps and lampstands in the Gospel of Matthew. Matt. 5:14-16, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick [lampstand]; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Jesus says that each of us as believers is a lamp that He calls the light of the world. Whatever light this dark world has from heaven will have to come from our lives. He then says that what we need to do with the light of our lamp is put it on the lampstand and not under a bushel basket so that men can see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

So it is very significant that in Revelation the Lord Jesus calls the local church today's lampstand. If we are not a part of the local church's ministry as the light of the world, our light is to some degree hidden under a bushel in such a way that the world is not seeing important good works that glorify our Father in heaven and lead men to the Savior.

III: The testimony of Nonah's memorial was the light of a lamp on its lampstand. Will ours be that?

To put our lamp on the lampstand is to be an active and committed part of a good local church like ours in this day and age. Let's not let our light hide under a bushel by neglecting the lampstand of God's church.

B. John saw Jesus' appearance (vv. 13b-15, 16b).

Ill: We have all seen how many in our world today caricature Jesus Christ. If you Google "caricatures of Christ," and I did, you will find some truly blasphemous material from people who obviously have a deep-seated hatred for Jesus Christ. Even for us who love Him, we probably have an idea of what we will see when we see Christ that is not very accurate. Even the apostle John was surprised when he saw the Jesus we shall see. He notes five specifics.

1. His clothes (v. 13b). There is nothing casual about the Lord's dress in this passage. His clothes signify His royalty and His priestly ministry as our exalted Melchizedekian High Priest. You might say reverently that Jesus dressed up for church this morning as we gather to worship Him. We too should wear our Sunday best when we come to worship Him.

2. His head and hair (v. 14a, 16b). They were white like snow or wool. The white-haired head signifies the great wisdom of elders in the Scriptures. Daniel's Ancient of Days, God the Father, is described as having this white hair (Dan. 7:9). We live in a world in which the young believe they know better than the old. No one knows better than Jesus Christ, and his head and hair are white. His countenance shines like the sun. Certainly, when we know the full brightness of His countenance shining upon us and warming our hearts, our faces reflect some of that brightness.

Ill: I will never forget the day Tony Jolly had forgotten Betty Morgan's name and wanted to ask how she was doing because we had been praying together for her. He said something like, "How is that lady in your church doing, you know, the lady who glows?" What makes Betty glow? It is

the warm sun of her Savior's countenance shining upon her and reflecting off of her. Do we glow with that light?

3. His eyes (v. 14b). They are described as a flame of fire. They are holy eyes, and they weigh all that they see as righteous or as unrighteous (Prov. 15:3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.") And they are omniscient and caring eyes, which watch over His people to meet their every need (1 Pet. 3:12, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.") You may remember the author of Hebrews admonishing us as the people of God, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). His eyes are penetrating. He can see our heart. He knows our thoughts and secrets.

4. His feet (v. 15a). Translators struggle with this description of Jesus' feet, because no one knows what the word translated *brass* refers to exactly. It is actually a compound word that is made up of two smaller words - *brass* + *frankincense*. There is no metal alloy made with frankincense, and so that is why there has been some confusion.

I think the answer may be that the feet are brass, but they have frankincense on them because of where Christ as our High Priest has walked. Frankincense was a key ingredient in a perfume that God designed to be put on the floor of the Most Holy Place before the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat (Exod. 30:34-38). The two brass pieces of furniture were the altar of sacrifice and the laver, those pieces that came into contact with and dealt with the sin of the people. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would take the blood into the Most Holy Place and make atonement for the sins of the people. I think the feet

that John describes here symbolize our Savior's shedding His blood for our sins and presenting that blood as our atonement on the mercy seat of heaven's most holy place.

Have you been washed by that blood? Have you placed your faith in this saving work of this priest in your behalf? Have you bowed and worshipped at those feet?

5. His voice (v. 15b). It was very loud, like the voice of many waters. One commentator reminded me of 1 Kings 19:12, "And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." Jesus speaks with great compassion, but He also speaks with great authority. His first coming was a time for great compassion. His second coming, the focus of Revelation, will be a time for exercising great authority. We must listen to this voice now, though it only be that still small voice of His Spirit applying His Scripture to our hearts, or we shall listen to it later, when it thunders like the crashing seas pronouncing judgment on all His enemies.

C. John saw Jesus's possessions (v. 16a, 20a). Two possessions are mentioned: seven stars in His right hand, and a double-edged sharp sword coming out of His mouth.

Appl1: Martin Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," celebrates the way that Jesus Christ is going to win that final victory that crushes Satan. It says, "one little word shall fell him." That word is depicted in Revelation as this mighty sword that comes from the mouth of Christ. All He has to do is say the word, and the enemy is done. He will.

Appl2: And then we have the stars, and we will conclude this morning with these. The seven stars are the seven angels of the churches (v. 20a). The letters were addressed

specifically to them (2:1, etc.). Two popular interpretations for what these angels mean include (1) the pastors of the churches, or (2) a supernatural angelic being that in some sense watches over each local church.

I noticed something this past week that led me to a third conclusion. As we read each of the seven letters to the seven local churches, each is specifically addressed to the angel. All of the pronouns and verbs of the letters are second-person singular in form. So when Jesus says, for instance, in 2:2, "I know *thy* works, and *thy* labor, and *thy* patience, and how *thou* canst not bear them which are evil: and *thou* hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars," He is saying that to what the text calls *the angel of the church of Ephesus*. It was his works, labor, and patience. But it also was the church's, of course. So I am led by this to conclude that *angel* is just another symbol for *local church* in this passage. The angel of the church of Ephesus is the church of Ephesus (an appositional use of the genitive case, kind of like *temple of His body* in John 2:21). We could translate, *the angel in Ephesus, which is the local-church*.

So why would there be two symbols of the local church here, both the stars and the lampstands? Well, from heaven's perspective, our church is a star in the right hand of the Jesus Christ. From our earthly perspective, our church is a lampstand. Contrast a star with a lampstand for a minute. From our perspective, we give off light, but it does not go very far, nor is it very powerful. From the perspective of Jesus Christ, our church is His angel, His messenger to a lost world, and the light we possess is powerful like the light of the stars. And so He deals with His churches about their responsibility to be angels or messengers in His own right hand.

Conclusion: I have often wondered why the Lord left the message that saves the souls of men in our care and not in the hands of the angels. Now I see that from heaven's perspective, we are categorized as angels, powerful messengers of light in a dark world, like the stars shining in the night sky, because we are in our Savior's mighty right hand. This is the calling of our church. Do you want to be a part of that work? May the Lord find us faithful.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching