

Text: Rev. 1:12-20

Title: The Jesus We Shall See - Part Two

Time: 2/12/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro - We began our study of this passage last week with the observation that John sees Jesus Christ as He truly is in this passage. He tells us here about the Jesus we shall see. What John saw surprised even him, and so we can expect that our conception of what it will be like someday to see Jesus needs adjusting as well. John was fearful as he saw the Savior. We noted His location, His appearance, and His possessions.

This morning we sang the song, "Saved by Grace," a song written by Fanny Crosby. She is remembered today as the "Queen of Gospel Song Writers" and the "Mother of Congregational Singing in America." She was a member of the Sixth Avenue Baptist Church in Brooklyn, NY, so as Baptists this morning, we share a special connection with this sister in the Lord. She wrote over 8000 gospel hymns and songs.

Fanny Crosby was blind when she wrote all those hymns. She believed that treatment she received for a cold at six weeks of age was responsible for that blindness, although more modern medicine seems to indicate that she had been born blind. When she was 8 years old, she wrote her first poem, which was about her blindness:

"Oh, what a happy soul I am,
although I cannot see!
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.

"How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't,
To weep and sigh because I'm blind
I cannot, and I won't!"

That heart's attitude was greatly used of the Lord. Once a well-meaning pastor said to Fanny, "I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when he showered so many other gifts upon you." Fanny's reply was, "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I was born blind? Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior."

We saw last week that the "I. The Jesus we shall see made John very afraid." But the passage also mentions that the Jesus we shall see told John that he need not be afraid. Fanny Crosby looked forward to seeing Christ without fear. John did too. And in this passage, our Lord puts His right hand on John's shoulder, and then He gives John three reasons he did not have to be afraid.

II. The Jesus we shall see told John not to be afraid (vv. 17b-19).

A. "Do not fear, I am the first and the last" (v. 17b).

III: I have had the wonderful privilege of reading the Bible with a friend who is opening it for the very first time. We have begun reading the Gospel of John together, and I noticed that when you read John with someone who is new to the Bible, you find something right away that is hugely important to understanding everything. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word."

Appl: That is a statement about the preexistence of Jesus Christ. According to the Bible, everything began with Him. What comes naturally to each one of us is the idea that the reality of our lives begins with self. What the Bible tells us is that self should not be our starting point. That is not where the reality of our life begins. It actually begins with Jesus Christ as the Eternal Creator who existed in the beginning, who is the first, and who made all things including us. If we do not begin with Him, we do not have a true grasp on reality. Our world is a dark place of illusions and lies, unless we see that everything begins with Him.

Appl2: The corollary of everything beginning with Christ, of course, is that everything also ends with Him. He is the first and He is the last, and this means that His people do not need to be afraid.

Ill: I saw an article this past week that said that the Ohio State Buckeyes' football team ranks #1 going into next season. Evidently, they have a lot of returning talent and also are expecting a lot of good recruits, so they enjoy this pre-season status as the team that ranks first in the nation. Now I am not a betting man, but if I were I do not think that I would put my life savings down on Ohio State becoming the 2017-2018 national champs just yet.

But imagine if something could be written about this football season that not only accurately ranked a team's pre-season status, but also could tell us who the champion would be each year. Imagine that ESPN could publish an article every year that could tell you who was the best not only at the beginning of the year, but also at the end? That would be a truth worth acting upon.

Jesus tells John not to be afraid. He is the first and the last. His status pre-season is that He is the Champion, and His status at the end of the season is that He is still going to be the Champion. The "season" we are talking about here is in part the life we experience now, between the first and the last. Life had been a bit rough on John. He had decided to be on the Lord's team and do the Lord's work and life was cruelly harsh on him right now. Jesus says, "Do not fear. I am the first and the last." I know how this season ends, and we win.

Do you really believe that like John did? Does it comfort your heart like it did his to know that Jesus is the first and the last? Or does it worry you? If it worries you rather than comforts you, you may not be playing on the right team. You may be betting your entire life and eternal existence on a losing proposition, namely that you are the first and the last. You are not; Jesus is. John lived for Jesus, not himself, so he found great courage in this wonderful truth. We can too.

B. "Do not fear. I have conquered death and hell" (v. 18).

Ill: John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* tells of a day that Christian and his friend Hopeful fell asleep too near to Doubting Castle, which was owned by the Giant of Despair. Bunyan records what happened, "Then said the Giant, 'You have this night trespassed on me, by trampling in and lying on my grounds; and therefore you must go along with me.' So they were forced to go, because he was stronger than they. They also had but little to say; for they knew themselves in a fault. The giant, therefore, drove them before him, and put them into his castle, into a very dark dungeon, nasty and stinking to the spirit of these two men."

He goes on to describe how they were imprisoned there from Wednesday to Saturday, experiencing hunger and beatings at the hand of the giant, and how that Christian suffered doubly knowing that it was his own failures that has caused him and his friend this misery. Despicably, the giant counsels suicide as the only way his prisoners could escape his prison.

Then while praying together late Saturday evening, Christian suddenly remembers a key: "Now a little before it was day, good CHRISTIAN, as one half amazed, break out in this passionate speech: 'What a fool,' quoth he, 'am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise; that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle.' Then said HOPEFUL, 'That's good news; good brother, pluck it out of thy bosom, and try.'

"Then CHRISTIAN pulled it out of his bosom, and began to try at the dungeon door; whose bolt (as he turned the key) gave back, and the door flew open with ease: and CHRISTIAN and HOPEFUL both came out. Then he went to the outward door that led into the castle yard; and with his key opened that door also. After, he went to the iron gate, for that must be opened too; but that lock went exceedingly hard: yet the key did open it. Then they thrust open the gate to make their escape with speed; but that gate, as it opened, made such a creaking, that it waked Giant DESPAIR:

"who, hastily rising to pursue his prisoners, felt his limbs to fail, for his fits took him again, so that he could by no means go after them. Then they went on, and came to the king's highway again; and so were safe, because they were out of his jurisdiction."

Appl: Our passage speaks of the key that Christian found in his bosom. Jesus says to John, "Do not fear; I have the keys of death and of hell." He can free the prisoners held in the dungeon of death and hell. Death and hell are the consequences of our sins, and because we are sinners, we are imprisoned by our sin and by its consequences, death and hell. The only way out are the keys that Jesus has.

How did Jesus get those keys? He tells us at the beginning of the verse, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen." He owns the keys of death and hell because He is the one who suffered death and hell for us and then arose victorious from that prison for it was not possible that He could be held by it. "Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and He was buried, and He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures." That is the good news of the gospel. That is the reason sinners do not have to remain imprisoned by death and hell, the consequences of their own sin. He can free us from them.

But what if after finding that key of promise in his bosom, Christian had never tried it in the lock of the prison doors. What if he decided that life in the prison was pretty nice after all, or that most people would not agree that his key would work? He would have remained under the power of the destroyer of his soul.

The destroyer of our soul is far craftier than the Giant of Despair, for he offers us pleasantries and distractions to keep us from using the key to open the door to our prison. Men refuse to believe the gospel that saves them from their sins because they are very comfortable in the dungeon of their own destruction. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also

reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8). We ought to fear death and hell as the consequences of our sin, but once we understand that fear, Jesus says to us, "Do not fear. I have conquered death and hell. I have died for your sins and have risen again to give you life everlasting by the power of My Spirit." Do you believe on Him for salvation this morning?

C. "Do not fear. Instead, write" (v. 19).

Appl: Fear incapacitates. Jesus wanted John to complete a very important task, and so he tells John, "Do not fear. Instead, write." He was told to write what he had seen, and John did so in chapter 1 of Revelation. He was told to write what was, and John did so in chapters 2-3 of Revelation, the letters to the then contemporary local churches of Asia. Finally, He was told to write what shall be, and John did so in chapters 4-22 of Revelation. That was John's task, and he completed it faithfully and fearlessly.

Conclusion: We also have a task when it comes to the Book of Revelation. We read it in 1:3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." Our task is to read what John wrote, believe it, apply it to our lives, and obey it. So we need to live as though Jesus is the first and the last, giving our all to love and serve Him. We need to tell others about the keys of death and hell, that they are prisoners to their sin and need the release that only the crucified and risen Savior can provide. And whenever we are fearful facing these tasks, we need to feel the Lord's right hand on our shoulder saying, "Do not fear."

“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