

Face-to-Face with Jesus • Revelation 1:9-20 • By Dr. David O. Dykes. Part 3 in the series Revelation: Unveiling the Truth

INTRODUCTION

When you see Jesus, what do you think he will look like? What will be his physical appearance? Most of us have in our mind, what Jesus looked like when he ministered for three years. And then we have in our mind his post-resurrection appearance when his disciples recognized him. But the description in Revelation is not his earthly appearance nor his post-resurrection appearance. It is his post-ascension appearance after Jesus went back to heaven (where he is right now).

The Christian Adventist movement has an interesting origin in the mid-1800s. A Baptist by the name of William Miller, who studied Revelation and Daniel and concluded that Jesus Christ was going to come back in October of 1843. He formed a movement of people from different denominations around this belief. When Jesus Christ did not return in 1843, he said it was October 9, 1844, a year later. And the movement grew to almost 100,000 followers called the Millwrights. Many of them sold their property, quit their jobs, and gathered on a hill in Upstate New York to wait for Jesus. On October 22, 1844, they were still waiting for Jesus to come back, but Miller changed his doctrine to say that October 22 was the date Jesus entered into the tabernacle in heaven instead. These were the early days of the Adventist movement, which sub-divided into different groups. The largest and the most well-known group is the Seventh Day Adventists church. It just so happens that my grandfather, my step-grandfather, was a preacher in the Christian Adventist church. They have a strong belief that Jesus Christ is going to come back and immediately establish his kingdom here on earth.

David Koresh led a branch off of this movement in Waco, Texas, based on Isaiah 11:1 where the scripture says "...out of Jesse, a root shall grow and the branch shall be the Messiah." Jesse was the father of King David. And so that's where they get this term, the Branch Davidians. A cult like this is generally a religious movement tied into a human individual. I do consider the Mormon church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to be a cult because they trace their origins back to Joseph Smith. And that is the classical definition of a cult, any kind of religious movement that is orbiting around a human individual at its center. David Koresh claimed to be the Lamb in the Book of Revelation, to whom we will be introduced in Revelation chapter four. But the Lamb in the Book of Revelation is one who has been slain from the foundation of the world. He died for our sins and is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Revelation is all about Jesus. Revelation 1:9-20 says:

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 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.

Verse 19 is the key to understanding the whole Book of Revelation. There are three bold divisions. The first part is this: "The things that you have seen..." John saw a vision of Jesus. The second part is "...the things which are." That's the letters to the seven churches in chapters two and three. And then John is to write "...the things which shall be hereafter in the future." That's the beginning of chapter four through the end of the book. Let's now look at the first section, what John saw.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE VISION (1:9-10)

1. Physical (1:9)

We know where John was when he received this vision—the Island of Patmos. Earlier John was boiled in oil by the Emperor Domitian, a Roman emperor. Roman emperors had colossal egos, and Domitian was one of the first ones who made it a law throughout the empire that every year, every citizen must burn incense to him

and declare that Domitian was Lord of the universe. And John, of course, and other Christians, didn't do that. Many of them were put to death, but when they boiled John, he did not die. The law stated that if you tried to execute somebody and they lived, you couldn't execute them again. So, John was exiled to this island. But it was not some tropical paradise, but some barren, windswept little island. Why did Domitian put John there? Because John could no longer preach the good news of Jesus Christ. But God always has the last word, doesn't he? Because while John was on this island, he received this vision from the Lord. And what a blessing it is.

John says in verse 9, "I am your companion in suffering." John knew that the Christians were suffering and being persecuted. There is a heresy that is being taught that says Christians never suffer. I don't know where they get that, but they certainly don't get it from the Bible, because Christians do suffer. The question is, when we suffer, do we do it to the glory of God?

2. Spiritual (1:10)

John says in verse 10, "...on the Lord's Day I was in the spirit." This is the first time that the phrase "Lord's Day" is found in the Bible. We assume it to be on Sunday. You see, the Jews worshiped on Saturday, but the Christians began to worship on the first day. But the Bible never says that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. Some people say Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath and Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. But find me a chapter and verse on that. You won't find it. In fact, all of those Old Testament regulations concerning the Sabbath are passed away, nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ.

What does "in the spirit" mean? He was praying so intently that he was almost carried away in his prayer. I wonder, has that ever happened to you? Have you ever been praying and lost all sense of time?

Anytime I've spent time in prayer, the time just passes so fast. I recall one Sunday evening after church as a college student I went back to my dormitory room to pray and talk to the Lord. I was on my bed, and I just continued to pray and pray and pray. And I can't explain this to you, but if it's anything like being caught in the spirit, I was. It was as if I prayed all night, but I wasn't even aware of it. It was almost like I was sleeping and praying at the same time.

John says while this was happening, he heard a voice like a trumpet. It wasn't a trumpet. It was a voice like a trumpet. Have you ever heard God speak to you? There have been very few times when I heard what I thought was God actually speaking to me, except through the Bible. But I do remember in 1970 when I was a lifeguard at a Baptist summer camp between my junior and senior year of high school. I didn't go to that camp to do business with God. I went because it was a

good job. You could get a real good suntan if you were a lifeguard, and you could meet plenty of girls too. On July 24, 1970, I was seated about halfway back in the church auditorium when the preacher said, “God called me to preach when I was 17 years old. And I've been doing that ever since.” And when he said that, as clear as I've ever heard anything in my life, a voice from behind me said, “David, that's what I want you to do.” Was it an audible voice? No, it was a lot louder than that! It was so real to me that I literally jerked my head around in the pew to see who it was. I know what John's talking about. And some of you do too. And that happens very seldom, but that's how God called me to preach. I knew from that time on that's what God wanted me to do.

II. THE CONTENT OF THE VISION (1:12-16)

What did John see in this vision of Jesus?

1. The position of the Lord (1:12)

Look at verse 12. John saw seven lampstands with candles. And he saw someone like a son of God, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet. A priest was the only one who kept his feet covered. This is a picture, therefore, of the priestly role of Jesus. John says Jesus had a golden sash across his chest, a symbol of a judge. That's the dual position of the Lord—priest and judge—standing among these golden lampstands, which represent these seven churches. Likewise, Jesus is in the midst of his Church even today.

2. The picture of the Lord (1:12-16)

In all the Bible, there's only one physical description of Jesus and this is it. Now, what do you think Jesus looked like when he was on his earthly ministry? Have you seen these pictures put out by the Baptist Sunday school board in Nashville where Jesus has long brown hair, fair skin, and big blue eyes? I've been to Israel several times, and I've never met a Jew that looked like that. Sometimes we think that Jesus was a real handsome man, but the Bible says just the opposite. He said there was nothing about him that caused him to be attractive to people. He was just an ordinary-looking guy.

But when you see Jesus face-to-face, either at the rapture of the Church or when you die and stand before Jesus, what do you think he's going to look like then? I believe he's going to look exactly like he did when John saw him in this vision.

There are seven descriptions given. First, notice his hair and his head (verse 14) are white. This is a picture of wisdom, holiness, and purity.

Second, it says his eyes were a blazing fire. Now notice these are similes. It didn't say his eyes were on fire. It says his eyes were *like* a blazing fire. Have you ever

seen somebody so intent in their gaze like that? First Corinthians 3:13 says one day all Christians will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and our works are going to be judged by fire. And the fire will burn up all the wood, hay, and stubble, but that same fire will purify the gold, silver, and precious stone. Where's that fire going to come from? Could it be that all Jesus has to do is just look at it and that fire we'll try our works?

Number three, his feet were like glowing bronze. That doesn't mean his feet were bronze. They were like glowing, white-hot feet, a symbol of judgment. In other words, he's standing steady, and his judgment is sure.

Number four, his voice was like a mighty waterfall. I've heard you can hear the sound of Niagara Falls long before you see it. That's the power of his voice.

Fifth, in his hand he holds seven stars. Verse 20 says these seven stars represent the seven angels, who are the seven messengers of the seven churches. The word translated "angel" can also mean human messenger. In these letters to the seven churches, when it talks about the seven angels, I believe it's talking about the pastors of the churches.

Number six, it says that his voice, his mouth, was like a two-edged sword. When he spoke, it cut in both directions. Hebrews 4:12 says the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. When Jesus comes back, as it is described in Revelation chapter 19, his word is the only weapon needed at the Battle of Armageddon. They're not going to need 50-millimeter machine guns. They're not going to need an FBI unit. They're not going to need armored cars. The only weapon that will be used at Armageddon is the two-edged sword that comes out of the mouth of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Number seven describes his face like the sun shining and all its brilliance.

Parallel this description of Jesus with how the Apostle Paul in Acts chapter nine describes Jesus when he's on his way to Damascus. Paul describes two things that are in parallel with what we've just read.

First, he said that there was such a bright light that he couldn't even look at it—a light brighter than the mid-day sun. And then he said that there was a voice like thunder, so loud that everyone with Paul fell to the ground. I thought for many years before I read this passage of scripture that when I see Jesus, I would go up to this brown-haired, blue-eyed Jesus, look him in the eye, hug him, and say how glad I was that I was there! But that would be like trying to look into the noonday sun. His glory must be veiled, or it would kill us!

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE VISION (1:11-20)

What happened as a result of what John saw when he saw this vision of Jesus? The closest earthly friend that Jesus of Nazareth had was the Apostle John. When they were at the Last Supper, John was reclining against the chest of Jesus. They were that close. When Jesus died on the cross, he looked down and the only disciple with the courage to stand at the cross was John, and Jesus asked him to care for Mary.

Tradition tells us that John was the youngest of the 12 disciples. He was literally only in his early twenties when Jesus called him. For about 60 years, Jesus and John had been separated. Now, how do you think John reacted when he saw Jesus? The one he's been preaching about, and the one that he's been praying to all these years? He reacted the same way you and I are going to react. John fell at his feet as if he were dead!

If you don't think Jesus is the holy God now, you will then. And if you think you're going to slip up to him and give him a high five, you're wrong. We're going to fall at his feet. We're going to collapse because of the glory, and the holiness, and the majesty of who Jesus is. In fact, John must've wondered, "Who is this? It doesn't look like the Jesus I knew and loved." But it was Jesus.

1. A word of comfort (1:17-18)

Jesus reached out his right hand and he put it on John to comfort him. I love that is the same Jesus who went through his ministry touching people, reaching out and saying not to be afraid. I imagine John remembered that time that they were caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee and Jesus was fast asleep in the front of the ship. When they thought they might die, they rushed to awaken Jesus and beg him to do something about the waves. Jesus smiled and said, "Don't be afraid. Everything is under control." John may have remembered Jairus' daughter, so sick at home and near death, asking for Jesus' help. When a messenger told Jairus it was too late, Jesus gave him the same message—don't be afraid. Go

the gospels and see how many times Jesus reaches out his hand and tells somebody not to be afraid. Some of you are lonely. Some of you are confused. Some of you are troubled. Jesus wants to reach out and touch you just like he did John and say, "Don't be afraid."

How do we know it's Jesus with John? Because he identifies himself in verse 17-18. He says, "I'm the one who controls everything. I'm the one who keeps the keys to the grave. I'm the one who keeps the keys to hell and to Hades. I'm in control of death. Don't fear anything!"

2. A word of command (1:11)

Jesus tells John what he wants him to do—write down the vision of what he saw. That’s the command.

CONCLUSION

I heard a story about an old man who, every time he prayed, he began his prayer by saying, “Jesus, it's just Jim. I want to talk to you...”? He was known to be very plain spoken in his prayers. One day when Jim was very sick and close to death, his pastor came to see him. And Jim said, “Pastor, it won't be long. I think I'm going to go and see my Lord.” And the pastor said, “Now, what makes you think that it won't be long?” Jim explained that the night before he’d had a dream where Jesus came and sat by his bed. “Jim, it’s just Jesus,” the Lord had said. “I’m here for you real soon.”

The only relationship that will not be altered by death is the relationship that you have with Jesus. Because if you have an intimate relationship with Jesus right now, when you die, it will be that much better. It’s the only relationship that is the same today, tomorrow, and forever.

OUTLINE

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2. Spiritual (1:10)

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