Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Vision of the Glorified Son, Part 1
Scripture: Revelation 1:9-17a
Code: 66-4

We return now to the study of God's Word and the great book of Revelation. We are in chapter 1 and our text for tonight begins in verse 9. Revelation chapter 1 beginning at verse 9. We're going to be looking at the vision of the glorified Son. This is the first great vision of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed to John in this wonderful book.

Now I remind you that the theme of revelation is Christ in His glory...as contrasted say with the gospels which are Christ in His humiliation. The theme of this book is the majestic revelation of the exalted glorified Son of God as we look at Him after His ascension in heaven and in His Second Coming majesty.
This particular description that runs from verse 9 down through the first part of verse 17 is equalled in grandeur only by one other description of Christ in the book of Revelation, and that is found in chapter 19 verses 11 to 16. That's very near the end of the book, this, of course, is very near the beginning. And these two glorious revelations of Jesus Christ set the pace. They are the brackets in which all the other revelations occur. This vision of Jesus Christ along with all the rest of them in Revelation must have been a monumental encouragement to the persecuted, distressed, discouraged, beleaguered believers in Asia Minor who first received this great book. They were under going persecution, extremely difficult persecution, persecution which under Domitian had resulted in John himself, the author, being exiled and banished to the isle of Patmos. And in this very difficult time when it looked as if things were bleak for the church, it was a wonderful thing to receive a book which predicted the glory of Jesus Christ in the future.
Not only that, which defined and described the present glory of Jesus Christ as we see it here in chapter 1. This vision of Jesus Christ is not a future vision, it is a present vision. It is not one that says this is what Jesus Christ will be like and what He will do in the future, it is one which says this is what He is like now and this is what He is doing now. And it is specifically a vision of the glorified Lord of the church. It depicts Jesus Christ in majestic glory in the present ministry to His church which was going on even then, and is going on even now and shall be until He comes again.
My prayer for you as you look at this vision with me is that it will open your eyes to see the glory of your Lord, the Lord of the church.
Now the passage opens in the first couple of verses with the setting of circumstances in which this vision came. Look at them with me, verses 9 through 11. "I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet saying, `Write in a book what you see and

send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.'"

Now in that opening John introduces himself as the writer and says some things about himself. And then he introduces the situation in which the first vision came...including a declaration from heaven itself to write down everything that he saw and heard. So you have here a statement about the author, a statement about his circumstances and a statement from God regarding his commission to write.

Before we can look at the vision itself, we must give some attention to these very important three verses. Beginning in verse 9 John wants to identify for us himself as the writer. He says, "I, John." Leaving the preliminaries of verses 1 through 8 he speaks almost here with amazement. He has mentioned himself a couple of times...verse 1 and verse 4...as John, and now he adds the demonstrative personal pronoun "I" as if to say almost unbelievably, I, John, had this experience and was commissioned to write this book. It's almost as if he is so utterly unworthy that it shocks him that he would have such an inestimable privilege. He doesn't relate himself to the readers in a position of authority, though he could as an Apostle, as that very unique Apostle in the inner circle with Peter and James, as one who reclined, as it were, on the very heart of Jesus at the Last Supper, as one who was ennobled with eminent gifts, one who was given the privilege of writing a gospel, the gospel that is intended to exalt the deity of Jesus Christ, one who was given the privilege of writing three great and glorious epistles. He doesn't exalt himself in any of those ways but rather speaks of himself in very common and familiar terms...I, John, your brother and fellow partaker. He reduces himself from any thought of elevation that his apostolic office or experience might have rendered him and he brings himself down as simply a brother and a fellow partaker. He wants no official status. In fact, he doesn't really speak as an Apostle here, he simply writes as an eyewitness. He is one among many believers. He is not writing authoritatively, he is not writing as an Apostle. He is not writing even as an elder, which he calls himself in one of his epistles. He is really only a witness to these amazing visions and revelations and he writes as nothing more than a fellow believer, a fellow partaker of the life of God, not commanding, not exhorting, not articulating argued doctrine, but simply bearing witness to what it is that he sees. He is a Christian brother. He is a Christian companion, sunkoinonos, a fellow partaker, or a fellow partaker with you. Just one of the believers.

And so we find John humble here, an humble witness to the incredible revelation of Jesus Christ that begins to unfold with this first vision. Specifically he goes even beyond that. Notice what he says in verse 9, "That I am your brother and fellow partaker in three ways, in tribulation, in the kingdom and in perseverance." Now he knows that these are three characteristics of the believers. In the first place, they are in tribulation. Not the tribulation in terms of some defined period of time in the future, but they are undergoing persecution and he is as well. He says I'm just one of you, a brother and a fellow partaker of persecution. He being exiled to this island could completely identify with the suffering church that was even being killed for the cause of Christ in some places.

Secondly, he says I also identify with you as to the kingdom. What do we mean by the kingdom? Not some future kingdom. Again we're talking in the present tense here. I identify you as a fellow member

of the kingdom over which Jesus Christ rules, not yet His earthly visible kingdom but the spiritual invisible kingdom...the very same kingdom he referred to back in verse 6 when he said that Jesus Christ made us into a kingdom. In other words, I am along with you a subject of Jesus Christ. I am a member of the redeemed community over which He is Lord and over which He is King. I have a common kinship with you in that I share with you the reign of Jesus Christ in my life and I wait for the glory of His millennial reign to come of which he will write later.

Thirdly he says, I can identify with you in the matter of perseverance...that very familiar Greek word hupomone which means to remain under. And it speaks of endurance and perseverance in difficult times. So John simply says to them, I am amazed, I am astounded, I am shocked that I as just a common brother and fellow partaker who knows what it is to be persecuted and to suffer, who knows what it is to be a part of the kingdom, who knows what it is to have to endure just like you, have been given the privilege of seeing and hearing and writing such great truth. And so does John in a humble and sweet way bring himself down to share with the persecuted Christians in joyful endurance the joy of waiting for the blessed coronation and reign of Jesus Christ.

Would you notice also in verse 9, he says that his particular circumstances, those which have come upon him, are in Jesus. That little phrase is so wonderful. He simply makes the point that these experiences are distinctly Christian, they belong only to Christians, for only Christians understand the tribulation of persecution in the name of Christ, only Christians enjoy the presence of the Kingdom, and only Christians have the supernatural power to endure awaiting the great coronation in the future.

Well, so much for John. Look secondly at his circumstances. He says, "I was on the island called Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus." You will remember that he said that same thing in verse 2, the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and I told you at that time that's two ways of saying the same thing...for the sake of divine revelation, for the sake of the truth from God. It came as the Word of God, it came as the testimony of Jesus, both phrases refer to the same thing. He says I am exiled to this island because I preached what I received from God and what I received from Jesus Christ.

Some would say the Word of God could be a reference to the Old Testament, the testimony of Jesus could be a reference to the New Testament...and so he is saying I am here because I proclaimed the whole revelation of God, because I preached the truth, because I spoke the Word without equivocation, without hesitation. Because of that I am on the island called Patmos.

Patmos is a barren place, a rocky little island. It belongs to a group of about 50 islands in the Mediterranean. It's shaped like a crescent and the...the crescent part, the open harbor part, faces to the east. It is about ten miles long and at its widest point between five and six miles. And it's just a barren rocky place. It was about 40 miles west of Miletus which was the nearest harbor to the city of Ephesus and where the Apostle Paul, you'll remember, met with the elders of the church from Ephesus. It is in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor, a really nondescript kind of place.

And banishment to such remote islands was a common form of Roman punishment. And if the crime was political, the person banished to the island could have a certain amount of freedom to do

whatever he wanted and move about. But if the banishment was criminal, then he was a part of what we would call a chain-gang.

So here was John, having committed what would have been defined by the Roman government as a criminal offense. Probably about 90 years of age and serving, as it were, on a chain gang, probably breaking rocks or something on the island of Patmos, a part of a penal colony.

Early Christian tradition says he was banished there under the leadership of Domitian when Domitian was reigning in the Roman Empire. Anyone who was banished lost all their civil rights and lost all their property. I'm not sure he had any property and would have needed any civil rights. But if he did have them, he lost them. And there he was in the mines and the quarries, a 90-year-old, at least, working.

Since he had been a leader of the hated Christians and probably the last of the apostles that was still around, by this time he is writing in about 96 A.D. Banishment must have been for him hard labor. Sir William Ramsey, the great historian, says John's banishment would be, quote: "Preceded by scourging, marked by perpetual fetters, or chains, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on bare ground, a dark prison cave, work under the lash of a military overseer," end quote.

Patmos has become famous. To this day if you go to that part of the world you can visit that little island and somebody will take you to a little cave overlooking the Aegean Sea and tell you the story that that's the cave in which the Apostle John was given visions of the book of Revelation. An island for criminals, but John makes it clear that his only crime was unshakable loyalty to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And so, the wrath of the wicked brought that saint nearer God as it always does. And the Patmos of persecuting Rome is suddenly the door to the most sublime and most majestic and most glorious communion any man has ever had with heaven. Doomed to a rock of exile, the Apostle soared on the wings of prophetic revelation to the very throne of God. Shut out from the world he traversed the heavenlies. And in these bleak circumstances, John was given the most extensive revelation of future things ever given.

I can't resist saying, isn't this often God's way? That we gain the greatest knowledge of God through the deepest suffering. And so, we hear about John himself and about the circumstances.

A further word comes in verse 10 as we hear about the commissioning. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet."

Now this is an interesting note here. He says I was in the Spirit. What is he saying here? Well simply this. He was somehow transcended from normal human apprehension. He had gone beyond sight and hearing and taste and touch and smell. He was experiencing something that is not experienced by the normal human senses. He says this is no merely human experience energized by my own mind, not even by my own human fantasy or imagination. He is saying I was brought by, or empowered through the Holy Spirit to an experience that is beyond the normal senses. I was taken into a condition in which God could supernaturally reveal things to me.

This would have been very much like the experience of Ezekiel, very much like the experience, if you want a New Testament counterpart, of Peter in Acts chapters 10 and 11 when he is given by God visions. John says I was supernaturally transported out of the fleshly world and I was in the Spirit.

Awake, not sleeping, this is not a dream. But his senses were empowered with clarity to perceive revelation from God.

He even tells us when this happened. Look at it. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day...on the Lord's day. It's so good that the translators of the New American Standard translated that "the Lord's day," instead of "on the day of the Lord," lest we think he's talking about some future prophetic, eschatological day. The term "the day of the Lord" is a term used for the final judgment of God. And we will see that unfold in the book of Revelation. But here it is good that it is translated "the Lord's day," to make a distinction. When we say it's the Lord's day are we talking about a final day of eschatological judgment? No. What are we talking about? Sunday.

Now some have suggested that this refers to that final day, that I was in the Spirit and I was transported to the day of the Lord. But that doesn't seem to fit this context because the vision that he is given here has nothing to do with the day of the Lord, absolutely nothing to do with it. Furthermore, the vision he receives here has nothing to do with the future. It has only to do with the present. Beyond that, this form in the Greek is an adjective rather than a noun...that is the form of Lord is adjectival. So it describes "day" correctly in an adjectival way...the Lord's day; rather than being a noun...the day of the Lord.

Finally, the Greek phrase here kuriakos hemera appears in a number of Christian writings from the very same era and refers to Sunday. I think we need then to see this as Sunday. The Lord's day came to be the customary way of referring to Sunday because it reminded everyone of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, John says...and I love these little notes..."It was Sunday on the isle of Patmos. And the vision came. I heard behind me a loud voice, like the sound of a trumpet."

You say, "Whose voice is it?" It's the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, that's who it is. And He will identify Himself after the vision. And to John that voice was like the piercing brilliance of a trumpet. In fact, if you're questioning whose voice it was and you don't want to wait, just look at verse 18, "The one who was dead and is alive forever more and has the keys of death and Hades," He's the one speaking.

Do you remember in the account of the giving of the law in the Old Testament the Bible says, quote: "There were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount...that's Mount Sinai...and the voice of a trumpet exceedingly loud." Very often God's voice, or the voice of Christ in supernatural glory sounds to the hearer like a great loud piercing trumpet. It was a brilliant, shrill and clear voice. And it came with a commanding clarity of a trumpet.

You might want to make a mental note that throughout the book of Revelation, a loud sound or a loud voice indicates the solemnity of what is about to be revealed. It is so common in the book of Revelation that I can't even take you through all of them. Chapter 5, chapter 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19 and several times in those chapters you hear this loud voice, loud sound and then comes the solemn revelation. This is the first of those. And what it indicates is the powerful sovereign commanding voice out of heaven. In this case, it is the voice of the risen glorified Christ.

Then the voice of Christ says, verse 11, "Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." That tells you to whom the book of Revelation was sent.
By the way, when He says "write in a book," just a little note, the word "book" there is the actual Greek word that referred to scroll. The scroll that was rolled up. And this is the word that doesn't refer to the animal-skin type scroll, but biblos refers to the parchment, the papyrus. Write it on papyrus. By the way, you will also be interested to note that twelve times in this book John is told to write something down...twelve times. Once he's told don't write what you saw. He is commanded here to write this down and to send it to the seven churches that have already been noted in chapter 1 verse 4. When it says Asia there it means Asia Minor which would be modern Turkey. These were seven prominent cities.
Just to give you a little more input. Historians tells us that these seven cities were the seven postal districts in Asia Minor. Which made them central points for the dissemination of information. And because they were the seven postal centers, they would have attracted the concourse and the influx and outgo of people and would also be the key place for instant dispatch to send these things further. And so they were suited to the spread.
They were also seven cities in Asia Minor where churches had been planted. And by the way, there were other cities where churches had been planted also, but they're not included among these seven.

Another interesting note is that if you study a map of Asia Minor you will see that the order of the cities is the route that a messenger would take if he was going to visit all those places. And so what He is saying is, "Write this down and send it off. And first it will go to Ephesus, and then Smyrna, then Pergamum, then Thyatira, then Sardis, then Philadelphia and finally it will go to Laodicea." That would be the route that a messenger would take. And we're going to learn a lot about those churches and those cities and the circumstances that existed there when we get into chapters 2 and 3 because they're carefully detailed.
And so is John commissioned. He tells us about himself, about his circumstance and about his commission to write. And then comes the vision, verse 12. "And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the middle of the lampstands, one like a Son of Man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet and girded across His breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow. And His eyes were like a flame of fire. And His feet were like burnished bronze when it has been caused to glow in a furnace and His voice was like the sound of many waters. And in His right hand He had seven stars and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man."
That's the vision. John had his back to the voice so in verse 12 he says, "I turned." And when he turned he saw the vision of the glorified Son. And he saw the Lord of His church and he saw Him in the midst of His church.

What is this picturing for us? The ministry of the glorified Son in His church. Here and now, not some future time. The voice is the voice of the risen glorious Christ. I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And as he turns, instead of seeing only the glorified Christ, he sees, first of all, seven golden lampstands. What are they? Look at verse 20, it tells you, second half of the verse. "The seven golden lampstands...what are they?...they are the seven churches."

So he is seeing then a vision of the churches. These were portable lampstands, made of gold, that would be set around a room. And at night a little oil lamp would be set in them for light. The church then is seen as God's lampstand from which the light of life shines. The church is the light of the world, as Jesus said. God's people are assembled in churches so that they can shine forth the light. Each church, a light in its own location.

The lampstands are golden. Why? Because gold was the most precious, the most lovely, most beautiful metal. The congregation of God's people are not only to be lights in the world, but they are to the heart of God the most costly, the most beautiful, the most precious and the most valuable thing on the earth...so valuable that He was willing to purchase them with His own...what?...blood. And there are seven of them.

Why are there seven? Seven is the number of completeness. You see that a number of times. You can see it even back in Exodus chapter 25 verses 41 to 50, in God's design for the temple and the tabernacle, a seven-fold lamp. You can see it in Zechariah chapter 4 verse 2, again both Moses and Zechariah had seven lamps on their stands. It's a symbol of completeness, symbolic of the whole people of God. And here, the whole church, the whole body of Christ.

So what do we have then? We have a vision of the church and in the midst of the vision of the church he sees in verse 13 one like a Son of Man. One, literally, who is the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. So he sees the glorified Lord in the midst of His precious church.

Now what is He doing there? Beloved, this is so thrilling. This is so exciting to my heart and I hope to yours because we're now going to find out what the glorified Christ does for His church, what He was doing then for His church, what He has been doing for 2,000 years for His church, what He is doing for His church now, what He is doing for us, what He is doing for you. First of all, He empowers His church...He empowers His church. That is implied in verse 13, "In the middle of the lampstands, one like a Son of Man." Son of Man is the messianic title for the Lord Jesus Christ and he sees Him the Lord of the church. And what is He doing? He is moving in the midst of His church.

It pictures Him there with His presence amidst the church. What is the import of that? Listen to this, Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always." Jesus said, "I will not leave you as orphans." Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, I will make my abode with him."

The great promise that Jesus Christ gave His apostles was that He would never leave them and He would never forsake them, but He would take up His abode with them. Beloved, I submit to you that what you see here is the living, exalted, glorified Christ in the midst of His church. And why is He there? For obvious reasons, to empower His church. Paul says in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives...where?...in me. And therefore, the life which I live I live not by the flesh but by His power." That's Paul's point. We are empowered by the indwelling

living Christ. He is present to lead. He is present to empower His church.
We do not worship some crucified martyr. We do not worship some dead heroic religious leader. We have continual communion with the living Christ. Are you reminded in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 where the Apostle Paul even says, "When we break bread and drink the cup, we are partaking with the very blood and body of Jesus Christ"? Will you remember the promise of the Lord Himself in Matthew 18 that when the church does its holy work on earth and only two are three are gathered there in that holy work of confronting sin, in that case, there am I...where?...in the midst? He is in His church to empower His church.
Secondly, He intercedes for His church. Verse 13 says, "He was clothed in a robe reaching to the feet and girded across His chest with a golden sash." Two things, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet. Kings wore such robes. In fact, Jonathan and Saul, Jonathan being even a prince, wore such a long robe. The Greek word is used in the Old Testament Septuagint version even to refer to the robe of kings. And not only did kings wear such robes but prophets wore such robes as well. In fact, there came to Daniel in chapter 10 a messenger from God and that messenger had a linen robe made out of fine linen that was all the way down to his feet and there the Septuagint uses the very same word that's used here, potores(?) again. So it is used in the Old Testament to speak of the robe of a king and the robe of a messenger from God. And so it could be that it indicates Christ's kingly role, it could be that it illustrates His prophetic role. Some think it simply speaks of the great dignity of Christ.
But there's something beyond even this. Most particularly and most uniquely this kind of robe in the Old Testament belonged to the High Priest. And most of the occurrences of this word in the Old Testament Greek version, called the Septuagint, refer to the garment of the High Priest. And it seems to me that what we see here is Christ in His priestly role. And then when you add the fact that He had across His chest this golden, not girdle so much, but a golden sash, we are reminded that the priests in the Old Testament wore on their chest a little above their armpits a sash...Exodus 28, Exodus 29, Exodus 39, Leviticus 16 speak of it. And I believe we see the Lord Jesus Christ in His priestly role acting as the royal High Priest in behalf of His church.
You remember, don't you, these wonderful words, "Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in all things that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of His people, for since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." He is a merciful and faithful High Priest. And what does a High Priest do? He intercedes. That's in Hebrews 2:17 and following. In Hebrews 3:1 He is called the High Priest of our confession. In Hebrews chapter 4 verse 14, "We have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." He is not a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin, let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. He is interceding for us before God.
We have this great High Priest among us. He's moving among the lampstands. He's moving in His church. He has unequalled capacity to sympathize with us in all our dangers and sorrows and trials and temptations. He was exposed to all of them and He is our sympathetic High Priest. And because

of what it says in chapter 1 verse 5 that He loves us and released us from our sins by His blood, we know that He will continue in that love to be a faithful, compassionate, merciful High Priest. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, so He knows the path of victory in every temptation. What comfort this is for the persecuted church to know they have the High Priest moving in their midst, seeking their blessing.

So we see the glorified exalted Christ is present to empower His church, He is present to intercede for His church. And then another ministry strikes the eye of John. He sees that He is there to purify His church...He is there to purify His church. Verse 14, "His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow." We'll stop at that point.

After describing His clothing in verse 13, he moves to His person, His head, His hair, then His eyes, then His feet, then His voice, then His right hand, then His mouth and then His face. And now He is not seeing the clothing. He's gone from the lampstands to the clothing to the very features of the exalted Lord of the church.

And here he sees Him primarily in His purging, purifying, disciplining, chastening work...though other features are certainly apparent as well. I don't think I need to make a big issue out of the fact that the New Testament is very clear on the standard that Christ has set for His church. Paul said He wants the church to be a chaste virgin. Paul said the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for the church that He might sanctify and cleanse her, that she might be glorious without wrinkle or spot or any such blight. Paul said He wants the church blameless and holy. Paul said that Jesus Christ reconciled the church in order to present her before Him, that is before God, holy and blameless and above reproach. Peter even reminds us that He wants the church as holy as He is. Hebrews chapter 12 says that if need by He'll discipline and he will chasten and He will scourge His own people for their purification. If He has to, John 15 says He'll take out the pruning knife and He'll cut off the succor branches that bleed the productivity of any believer. And sometimes His chastening is even fatal, as it was for Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, and as it was for some in the Corinthian church who were sleeping because they had abused the Lord's table.

Is it any wonder that Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 17, "Judgment begins with the household of God"? He will cleanse His church. He will purge His church. And we see Him here in that purging vision.

Notice, His head and His hair were white like wool, like snow. That's an obvious reference to Daniel 7:9. However, in Daniel 7:9 it is describing God. Here it is describing Christ. What a marvelous parallel that is to indicate again to us that Jesus Christ is in fact God. He has the same attributes and the same characteristics as God.

Would you see the word "white" for a moment? And please notice, this is not white like a flat white color. It's not white like a white piece of paper or a white wall, or a white garment. That is not the idea. It is...the word "white" which means a blazing, it is not a flat white color but it has the potential to mean a blazing glowing white light. He is seeing glory here. The symbol of eternal, glorious holiness. Whenever God showed His Shekinah, He was showing His holiness. It demonstrates His purity of life. It demonstrates the purity of His truth. He is wise and He is holy. He is blazing, glowing, brilliant,

shining light.
And then he adds, "And His eyes were like a flame of fire." What is he seeing? He is seeing the blazing, white, brilliant, shining glory of Christ and coming out of it like two lasers, one from each eye..come the very flames of fire. What is this? This is the holy, glorious, exalted Lord with searching, penetrating gaze looking to the depths of His church. That's what it is. In chapter 2 of Revelation, verse 18, the Son of God there also is seen with eyes like a flame of fire, penetrating in to see the church. We see the same thing at the end of the book of Revelation, chapter 19 verse 12, those gazing, penetrating, supernatural lasers that penetrate right through with holy intelligence, to reveal to Him everything He wants to see.
Listen, when Christ moves through His church in His holy glory, His penetrating eyes see absolutely everything. And His vision is accurate. There are no secrets. There is nothing hidden from Him whatsoever. That is why the writer of Hebrews says it very straight forward, "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," Hebrews 4:13. He sees it all. The Lord of the church is holy. The Lord of the church sees everything and He'll deal with the sin of His church.
Verse 15 points it up. "His feet were like burnished bronze when it has been caused to glow in a furnace." What is that? Red hot. You've seen metal in a furnace, glowing, burning brass, or bronze. By the way, as a footnote, all of the temple and all of the tabernacle furniture that was in any way used in a sin offering was always brass. When you see brass in this situation, you know it has something to do with sin. And here you have feet glowing hot...very clear reference to judgment. Any time anybody came before the king, the king always in ancient times sat on an elevated throne. And when a criminal came in to be sentenced, he was always below the feet of the king. He would bow down and look up to the feet and then the throne and the body and then the head. The feet of the king became the symbol of his authority. And here we find Jesus Christ with red-hot feet, moving through His church to exercise His chastening authority...blazing, molten, pure, refined, gleaming feet of judgment. This metal is pure, refined by the holiness and the glory of God and ready to deal out pain, if need be, to a sinning Christian and a sinning church.
And so, the glorious Lord of the church is present to empower the church, not just to empower the church, to intercede for the church. Not just to intercede for the church but to purify the church.
Fourthly, He is present to speak authoritatively to the church. The end of verse 15 says, "His voice was like the sound of many waters." When He spoke no longer was it the crystal clear sharp note of a trumpet, but John described it like the crashing of the surf against the rocks of the island. By the way, Ezekiel 43:2 has the same thought about God again. It is the voice of authority. It is the thundering voice like the crash of Niagara. The voice of power, the voice that commands. It is the voice that John 5:28 and 29 says will some day speak and every grave will cough up its dead victim from all the eons of human history, it is the voice of Christ speaking to His church. Yes, He speaks with authority to His church.
Remember Hebrews 1, "God at sundry times in diverse manners in time past spoke unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." He is the one who speaks to His

church. He speaks through the Word. He speaks to us through the epistles. He speaks to us through His Spirit.
The Lord of the church is there to empower. The Lord of the church is there to intercede. The Lord of the church is there to purify. The Lord of the church is there to speak. John sees something else, fifthly, He's there to control His church. Verse 16, "And in His right hand He held seven stars." Humm, what does that mean? Go down to verse 20. "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My hand and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the, literally, the messengers of the seven churches." In His hand He holds the seven stars. Some might think...well that's safety and protection. I don't think so. The majestic, holy glory of this vision of the Lord makes it more likely that what that means is that He controls the church. And each of those churches has a representative messenger, somebody who represents the church. And He controls them.
The right hand, also, is the right hand of power, it's the right hand of might, it's the right hand of authority, it's the right hand of strength. And you will see that same thought again in chapter 2 verse 1 and in chapter 3 verse 1, and they both suit the idea of control. The Lord of the church controls the seven stars. Who are they? The seven messengers. The word angelos literally means messenger, it can mean angel and does throughout the book of Revelation, but I don't believe it can refer to angels here because we have no teaching in the Bible anywhere that angels are the leaders of the church...none. Some suggest these are seven men who represent the seven churches, and I agree with that and most likely they are seven prominent leaders in the church...elders, pastors. And Christ is saying I hold you in My hand as a symbol that I hold all the leadership of that church in My hand and I hold that church in My hand. Each must be a significant leader to be held in the hand of Christ. They're not just messengers who are going to deliver the letter, as some think. And they're not angels because the Lord would never give a letter to angels to give to the church. But rather they are seven key leaders, representing the eldership of those churches. And He says I hold those key leaders in My hand as I hold all the leaders in that church in My hand. And by the way, there's a plurality of elders, as we know, taught in the New Testament, but there can be one who represents that plurality as a spokesman, even as twelve equal Apostles had one spokesman, namely Peter.
And so, He is saying I control the church. I mediate that control through the leaders. You see, that's what a spiritual leader in the church does, he's simply a tool through which Christ mediates His leadership. He is simply an agent by which the sovereign Lord of the church controls the church. That's why in the New Testament the standard for being a leader in the church is so high, because all you are is an intermediary through which Christ can control His church, and you have to be committed to doing His will no matter what the cost.
The Lord of the church is present to empower His church, intercede, purge, speak authoritatively, and exercise sovereign control. And then I love this, He's there to protect His church. Verse 16 says, "Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword."
Let me just tell you what this signifies--judgment, judgment. Over in chapter 19 verse 15, "From His mouth comes a sharp sword so that with it He may smite the nations." You know what this says? The Lord of the church has a sword and He wields it in defense of His church. Chapter 2 verse 12, "To the

messenger of the church in Pergamum write, `The one who has the sharp two-edged sword says...'" Verse 16, "Repent or I'm coming to you and I'll make war against them with the sword of My mouth." Listen, anybody inside the church that threatens the life of that church, anyone who tries to sow lies, any unbeliever who comes in to corrupt the church as they tried to in that church in chapter 2, He says I'll take My sword out and I will use it...I'll use it.

He'll protect His church. And He doesn't mean to fight the battle on the outside, He means to fight it on the inside. The word "sword," rhomphaia, is a large two-edged broad sword that would do tremendous damage. It's almost as if He is echoing, "I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." Here is the Lord of the church defeating His enemies, those who attack His people, those who would destroy his church, inside or outside He'll take the sword of His mouth and He'll deal with them. His word is potent and destructive and so is His power.

Finally, the Lord of the church reflects His glory through His church. The end of verse 16, "His face was like the sun shining in its strength." He simply says here that I looked at His face and it was like the blazing sun. Takes us back, doesn't it, to the first glimpse he had when he said His head and His hair were white like wool, blazing white. Here he sees it in full brightness.

Now listen carefully, this is wonderful and we're going to close, but listen to this. John saw His face and it was like the sun at its blazing fullness on a clear day. John borrowed that expression from Judges, way back in Judges chapter 5 verse 31. In Judges 5:31 it says, "But let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its strength." Listen to this. He says I saw His face and it was like the sun shining in its strength, the sun at its blazing height. And back in Judges that's what the Holy Spirit wrote about those that love God, that they were like the blazing sun at its height. The link is wonderful. In Judges 5:31 the ones that love God are like the blazing sun. In Revelation 1:16 Jesus Christ is like the blazing sun.

What's the point? The point is that the Lord shines in His church and He shines through His church. We who love Him reveal His glory to the watching world.

By the way, that note in Judges 5:31 about the faces of those who love Him shining like the sun is linked with the idea of judgment in the very same verse, Judges 5:31. And that also supports the interpretation of the two-edged sword here as a sword of judgment to protect the church from destruction by its enemies.

So, the Lord will show His glory through His church. That's what He desires to do. That's what He will do. In Ephesians 3:21, "To Him be the glory in the church." He wants to shine through His church. There it is, the opening vision. The glorious, exalted Lord of the church, present to empower, to intercede, to purge, to speak, to control, to protect and to be glorified through His church. There you have His work.

And what was John's response? "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as a dead man." Absolute shock, overwhelmed, motionless, almost lifeless. One other time, on the Mount of Transfiguration, it says he fell on his face and was afraid. This time it's even worse, he's like a dead man. Why? The awesome glory of the Lord of the church has struck him. And may it strike us.

Father, we thank You for this word, this incredible vision. We thank You that You have opened our eyes to see the glorious Lord of His church doing His marvelous work and we, with John, would fall motionless at His feet, overwhelmed, for this is not, this is not the view of Christ we get in the gospels, so humble and meek and suffering. This thrills us and encourages our hearts to see Him as He is now, even in our midst as we gather tonight. May His glory shine through us in His great name we pray. Amen.

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