

Place: Lurgan Baptist 30:9:2003

Reading: Revelation 1:9-20

EXPLORING THE FUTURE

2.THE COMING CHRIST

What the church needs today is a new awareness of Christ and His Glory. We need to see Him "*high and lifted up.*" (Is 6:1) There is a dangerous absence of awe and worship in our church fellowships today. We are boasting about standing on our own feet, instead of breaking and falling at His feet. For years Evan Roberts the leader of the Welsh revival at the beginning of this century prayed, "***Bend me, bend me,***" and when God answered, the great Welsh Revival resulted. The need of the hour is this, we must regain our vision of the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ. And this must begin in the church. We must see Him as He is enthroned, exalted, sovereign, ruling, reigning, and then we must be brought into humble submission to His Lordship. Then and only then, will we experience that fresh movement of the Spirit of God that we so desperately need !

An aged man, probably in his nineties, John was the last living apostle. The year is about AD 95. and while imprisoned on Patmos John heard a loud voice like a trumpet speaking. The voice was none other than Jesus Christ ! John was told to record Christ's final call to His church. He was instructed to write in a book what he saw and heard and send it to seven churches in Asia Minor. But before John is told what to write to the churches he is shown Who is the Head of the church. The church must see Christ's sovereign

Lordship before she hears what He says. As John turns to the voice he sees the awesome vision of Jesus Christ. Not the Lord Jesus as He once was, in the form of a lowly bond-servant. But Christ as He is, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Here in (Rev 1) we see **The Coming Christ.**

When John received this vision the Emperor Domitian was on the throne in Rome, and he was the most cruel of all Roman Emperors. He declared himself to be God sentencing to death those who refused to worship him. These early believers did refuse to worship Domitian, thus they were sentenced to death by the thousands. Some were throw to the lions in the great coliseum, some were burned at the stake. Others were wrapped in the skins of wild animals and fed to the dogs or dipped in tar and lit as torches for the emperor's garden. Still others were crucified, including, mothers with babies wrapped around their necks.

My the early Christians including John faced great problems. But rather than focus on each painful step of his walk of faith, in the midst of such suffering and stress, John

"turned his eyes on Jesus, he looked full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth grew strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." My sometimes when faced with great problems, our tendency is to focus on the hands of God, what He has not done for us, and what we want Him to do for us, instead of focusing on the face of God.... simply who He is. Often, in the midst of great problems we stop short of the real blessing that God has for us, which is a fresh vision of who He is.

Now it maybe that this vision of the Lord in (Rev 1) explains an interesting episode at the end of (John 21) when at the sea of Galilee the Risen Lord commissioned Peter with the words, *"Feed my sheep,"* then prophesied that Peter would one day die a martyrs death. At that point Peter speaking of John said, *"Lord and what shall this man do?"* (Jn 21:21) *"Jesus saith unto him, if I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee ? Follow me."* Now because of a misunderstanding of this conversation between Peter and the Risen Lord, word went out among the disciples that John would never die, until the Lord returned. I wonder does (Rev 1) provide the explanation. John did remain alive to see the Coming of the Lord. He foresaw the Lords Coming as an event in history, but He also saw it in the form of a vision from God. Now tradition tells us that John lived to a ripe old age and was buried in Ephesus, but he did live to see the Coming of the Lord. He saw the Lords Coming in symbols of royal garments, of brilliant light, of blazing fire, of thunderous sound, of supreme power, purity, wisdom and holiness. John saw The Coming Christ.

(1) THE AWESOME SIGHT

The Book of Revelation is a book of symbols and these symbols are important. (1:3) In this opening chapter we discover truth conveyed in the form of symbols. The Lord Jesus is described in a way that is not intended to convey His actual physical appearance but various aspects of His character, His attributes and His role. Its interesting to notice the stages through which John passed in receiving this particular vision. In (1:10) he says *"I heard,"* in (1:12) *"I turned,"* in (1:12) *"I saw,"* in (1:17) *"I fell."* Now the first thing that John does is to turn and see Who is addressing him. (1:12-13)

What are the seven candlesticks ? *"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."* (1:20) And Christ walks in the Midst. The Lord Jesus was always in the midst. In the days of His childhood they found Him in the temple *"sitting in the midst of the doctors."*

(Lk 2:46) When they nailed Him to the Cross, Christ was *"in the midst."* (Matt 27:38) Today He says to us, *"Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them."* (Matt 18:20) As the Lord of the Lamp stand's He walks in

the midst of the churches. This is the Centrality of Christ in relation to each local church.

What a revelation of Glory for an aged apostle who vividly remembered the garments that were stolen, the head that was crowned, the hands and feet that were pierced. How thrilling it must have been for John who had witnessed the Suffering of Christ, now to see the Glory of Christ. They had tried to confine him physically on an island 10 miles long and six miles wide but now he's transported away from it all and in the Spirit on the

Lords day what better to begin with than with a sight of the Lord Himself. What compensation for an aged saint being denied the usual privileges of the Lords day. Who did John see ?

(a) THE RESURRECTED CHRIST:

" *One like unto the Son of Man.*" (1:13) That describes the Humanity of the King. It was a full 60 years since John had at last seen Jesus. But he immediately recognises Him as " *the Son of Man.*" (Dan 7:13-14) The Saviour has not changed. He became a man at His birth in Bethlehem, He was resurrected as a man, He ascended to heaven as a man, and He will return as a man. And so John recognises His Lord, The Resurrected Christ, the Son of Man.

(b) THE REIGNING CHRIST:

The next thing that John notices about the Lord Jesus is His clothing. He was clothed " *with a garment down to the foot* " (1:13) This describes the Authority of the King. In ancient times, this was the recognised apparel of Authority, Dignity, and Ruler-ship. In OT times, a long robe was the attire of spiritual leaders of high rank, whether it be the High Priest (Exod 25: Zech 3:4) a King

(1 Sam 24:5) a Prince (Ezek 26:16) or a Judge.

(Ezek 9:1) This is how John sees Christ. Wearing sovereign apparel. Bearing the garments of regal majesty. Adorned with absolute authority. His verdicts are undisputed. His authority is unlimited. His reign is unrivalled. (b) From His clothing, John's focus looks upward to behold Christ's head and hair. He is:

(c) THE RIGHTEOUS CHRIST:

" *His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow.*" (1:14) Is this not the Purity of the King ? This dazzling white is a symbol of Christ's absolute sinless holiness. (Dan 7:9) Holiness means Separate-ness ! It comes from a Semitic root that means " *to cut.*" Something would be cut in half and the two parts separated. It means that Christ is Separated from all mankind. He is a cut above us. Unlike us. Totally other than us. Infinitely perfect and pure. The Lord Jesus does not conform to any standard. He is the Standard. The Bible claims that Christ " *knew no sin.*" (2 Cor

5:21) He "*did no sin.*" (1 Pet 2:22) He "*had no sin.*" (1 Jn 3:5) It is holiness that Christ requires of His church. We must be separated from the world different, not like the world.

The Lord says, "*Be ye holy for I am holy.*"

(1 Pet 1:16) Despite the degenerating morals of our day Christ has not lowered His standard one iota. H. Bonar said, "*I looked for the church and I found it in the world: I looked for the world and I found it in the church.*" While peering at Christ's head, John notices His eyes. John sees Christ with fiery lasers flashing out of each socket. He is:

(d) THE REVEALING CHRIST:

"*His eyes were as a flame of fire.*" (1:14) That refers to the Sagacity of the King. He has vision that penetrates or burns to the core. Today we might say He has X-ray vision. A.W. Tozer writes,

" Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing but all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed." M. Henry wrote, "**God not only sees men, He sees through them.**" He sees right through us. He knows about everything we've done. He knows about every thought we've ever had. He hears every lie we utter. Unlike any earthly Judge the Lord Jesus cannot be deceived. There was a story of a country man who was arrested for a watch. At his trial, the prosecution did everything they could to prove the mans guilt but there was not enough evidence. He could not be found guilty so the judge told him, "*Sam you've been acquitted. You can go home.*" And the man replied, "*Does that mean I have to give the watch back ?*"

The Lord Jesus cannot be deceived. Nothing escapes His attention. He never has to gather information or ask questions. He never learns anything. Who would teach Him ? He sees every Minister, notes every Member, observes every Ministry, views every Motive, with X-ray vision. From His fiery eyes John looks down to His red-hot feet, feet that are glowing like burnished metal in a fiery furnace. He is:

(e) THE RELENTLESS CHRIST:

"*And His feet like unto fine brass.*" (1:15) This speaks of the Severity of the King. Brass in the Bible symbolises judgment. When Moses lifted up a brass serpent in the wilderness, it was a foreshadowing of the cross where the Lord Jesus would become sin under judgment for us.

(Jn 3:14) Here Christ's feet, which appear as burnished brass, are going forth to judge. He is unstoppable: there will be no escape from the wrath of God when Jesus' burning feet touch the earth. But even today He will judge sin wherever He finds it. Especially in the church.

(2:4 14-15 20 3:1 15-16) Christ Especially hates sin in His own spiritual family. More so than in the world. Make no mistake The Head of the Church will judge sin in His

churches. " *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.*" (1 Pet 4:17) Now up to this point John has tried to describe the Appearance of the Lord Jesus but now he moves from Sight to Sound and he sees,

(f) THE REGAL CHRIST:

For he says that the sound of Jesus' voice is " *as the sound of many waters.*" (1:15) That speaks of the Integrity of the King. He speaks with a voice like mighty ocean waves crashing against the jagged rocks of Patmos ! David says that " *The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: The God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters.*

The voice of the Lord is powerful: the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." (Ps 29:3-4) Imagine arguing with Niagara Falls. Imagine standing at the foot of the Falls with some twelve million cubic feet of water roaring down each minute and trying to argue with a thunderous voice like that. One day soon that voice as the sound of many waters, will break the silence with a roar, and all voices raised in angry protest will be silenced, drowned out by His. This is **The Christ Who is Coming**. He is not coming as the bloodied and beaten Saviour but as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

(g) THE REGULATING CHRIST:

" *And He had in his right hand seven stars.*"

(1:16) That refers to the Sovereignty of the King. Who or what are these stars ? " *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.*" Angel (angelos) means, " *a divinely commissioned messenger.*" One sent from God with a message. The Lord Jesus is holding the seven stars in His right hand, the hand of power and that suggests that He has complete control of all things. He is the regulator of the universe. God is still in control, God's still running the show, God is still on the throne ! And one day Christ will restore permanent order and harmony to His creation. The vision unfolds further and John notes that out of His mouth proceeds a deadly weapon a sword. For He is,

(h) THE REVENGING CHRIST:

" *And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.*" (1:16) This is the Ferocity of the King. The sword is the Word of God. (Eph 6:17 Heb 4:12) Nothing can stand before God's Word. Ten times in (Gen 1) we read, " *And God said.*" Flaming suns sprang into being, and life in many forms arose vibrant from the dust. When the " *Word was made flesh,*" (Jn 1:14) demons, disease, and death fled. Whether it is the Word going forth to **Replenish the Earth** as in (Gen 1) or to **Redeem the Earth** as in the days of His flesh, or to **Reclaim the Earth** as here in this majestic scene, the result is always the same. Whether as Creator, Comforter, or Conqueror that Mighty Word is invincible. Finally, John sees Christ face shining with the glory of God. He is,

(i) THE RESPLENDENT CHRIST:

" And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (1:16) This refers to the Glory of the King. Once that face was marred and spat upon, here it shines in resplendent glory.(Matt 17:2) And it is this Divine Glory that John now beholds. Unveiled. Unmasked. Unadulterated. (Jn 17:5) What a vision of Christ. This is **The Coming Christ**.

(2) THE ABJECT SERVANT

The effect of this dazzling sight upon John was nothing less than paralysing. Before such an awesome sight, what could John do, what could any human being do, but fall at the feet of Christ as though dead. John had once walked with Christ for three years. He had witnessed His miracles and heard His sermons. He had leaned upon His breast in the Upper Room and watched Him die on the Cross. Finally he had rejoiced in His resurrection and viewed His ascension. But that had all happened some 60 years before. Now as he sees the Resplendent Redeemer in all His blinding brightness he drops as at His feet as a dead dog.

(a) HIS HUMBLE SUBMISSION

" And when I saw him I fell at His feet."

(1:17) Immediately, John collapsed to the ground, left to grovel on the floor. Very nerve fibre in his body was trembling. He was looking for a place to hide. Anywhere to get out from under the holy gaze of Christ. But there was no place to hide. John lay exposed before Christ. Undone. Unmasked. Unravelling. The holiness of Christ exposed John's own impurity. He caught one glimpse of the Holy One and his self-esteem was shattered ! Was it not the same for Isaiah ? When he saw the Sovereignty, Purity, Authority, of the Lord Jesus, he cried, *" Woe is me for I am undone."* (Is 6:5 Jn 12:41)

Was it not the same for Peter ? After a long days fishing endeavour, the Saviour told Simon to shove back out and let down his nets again. Simon snapped back, *" Lord you stick to the preaching and let us do the fishing."* Begrudgingly, Peter launched out. But to his amazement, his catch was so big that their nets began to break. When Peter saw this he realised he was standing in the presence of a Holy God. Instantly he fell at Jesus' feet, *" Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* (Lk 5:9) A vision of the glorified Christ will always drive us to our knees. Like John we must find ourselves at His feet. Lower and lower we must descend, driven downward by His Divine Presence. When we compare ourselves with others, we seem Respectable. But when we see ourselves in comparison to Him, we are Ruined. Shaken down to our roots. The closer we draw to the Light, the more the dirt of our own heart is exposed. This

must be the posture of the church flat on our faces before the Lord.

(b) HIS HOLY FEAR:

" And when I saw him I fell at his feet as Dead,"

(1:17) John collapsed at Jesus feet as a dead man. He was speechless, motionless, and all shook up. In contrast to the silly, frivolous, false and boastful claims of many in our day who claim to have see God, the reaction of those in Scripture who genuinely saw God was inevitably one of fear. Solomon wrote, *" the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."* (Prov 1:7) A fear of God. Lets face it. There's to little fear of God in

our churches today. But a true vision of Christ will instil us with Holy Fear.

Some years ago Queen Elizabeth was visiting in Los Angeles. She was being taken through some of the most underprivileged neighbourhoods. As she approached one project area in a ghetto she asked her driver to stop. When he did she got out of the car unannounced and went into a very poor apartment chosen at random. The lady of the house was overwhelmed. The Queen in her humble abode. Unaware of then proper protocol appropriate for addressing royalty, she did not know to curtsy or bow. Nor did she know to address the Queen as Her Majesty. Instead when she approached the Queen she wrapped both arms around her giving the Queen a warm bear hug. The Queen's entourage was appalled. The media was shocked. The Secret Service was aghast. No one touches the Queen. This woman had no idea how to address Royalty. There was no fear. No awe. No respect. Consequently her approach was inappropriate. Is that not where we are in the church today ? No fear. No awe. No reverence. May holy fear fill the church again.

(3) THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN

As John lay prostrate before the feet of Christ, the Lord did something that was typical of Him: He reached down and touched John.

(a) HE CONVEYS HIS SYMPATHY:

" And He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, fear not." (1:17) As you read through the Gospels you see that Christ was always touching people. When He healed a leper He touched him. When He restored sight to the blind, He put His hands upon their eyes. The touch of His Hand brought His strengthening grace. No wonder Christ reaches out and touches John. The elderly apostle, now in his nineties, has almost died of a heart attack because the Lord unveiled His Glory. He needs to be Restored and Reassured. Now in order to comfort John, Christ gives a fuller revelation of Himself. You see true strength always comes from a deeper knowledge of Christ and so,

(b) HE REVEALS HIS IDENTITY:

Here are staggering claims for Deity, uttered by our Lord. The idea is, "*John look to me and be comforted.*"

(1) " I AM "

John would recall those words "*I AM.*" John himself recorded the series of "*I AM,*" claims in his gospel. "*I am the bread of life,*" (Jn 6:35) and so on. "*I AM,*" was the divine name that God chose for Himself. "*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*" (Exod 3:14) Not "*I was that I was,*" nor "*I will be that I will be.*" But, "*I AM THAT I AM,*" the self-existent eternal, sovereign God. In taking this name the Lord Jesus is claiming, in no uncertain terms to be GOD !

(2) " THE FIRST AND THE LAST "

In the OT God said, "*I am the first, and I am the last and beside me there is no God.*" (Is 44:6 48:12) By saying, "*I am the first,*" Christ lays claim to eternal pre existence. By saying, "*I am the last,*" He is eternally immutable. He is the same "*yesterday, and today, yes and forever.*" (Heb 13:8)

(3) " THE LIVING ONE "

"*I am he that liveth.*" or "*I am the Living One.*"

(1:18) That was another name that was applied to God. To Joshua God said, "*Hereby ye shall know that the Living God is among you.*" (Jos 3:10) Peter used this name to describe God, "*Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God.*"

(Matt 16:16) Clearly when the Lord Jesus takes this title He is saying, "*I am God.*" "*John there's nothing to fear. I have conquered sin, death, Satan, and hell. I am alive forever.*"

(c) HE AFFIRMS HIS AUTHORITY:

" And have the keys of hell and of death." (1:18) Christ's keys signify His sovereign authority to open and close the grave. He decides who dies when. And He alone can get them out. "*John I have all power over death. You're not finished yet. Your life is not yet over. I'm not yet ready to take the key and put it into the door of death for you.*" My Is this not encouraging ? You see, despite cancer, growths, tumours, heart attacks, bombs, and old age you'll never go through the door of death until He puts the key into the door.

He is the All Sufficient One: "*I am the first, ,*"

He is the All Victorious One: “*I am that liveth,*”
He is the All Powerful One: “*And the keys,*”

Christ will be with us to the end, in the end, and beyond the end. This is the **Christ who is Coming**.

***“ When He comes our Glorious King
All His ransomed home to bring
Then anew this song we’ll sing
Hallelujah, what a Saviour.”***