

What is the most important message you have ever been asked to give?

Imagine for a moment the awesome responsibility that the Apostle John had in writing down the Revelation.

We have spent much of the summer looking at the early church from Acts 2 and answering the question, what are the markers of a healthy church? Ultimately, only Jesus, as the head of the church, defines the health of the church. He is committed to his bride who is preparing herself for the great wedding at the end of time (see Revelation 19).

Jesus inspects his church, and the seven letters found in Revelation 2 and 3 are a report card on the health of the churches in Asia Minor in 95 AD. While these letters were written to specific churches, they are applicable to all believers, even today.

The Situation

The beloved disciple and apostle John was a prisoner on a small island called Patmos, which lies in the Aegean between Greece and Turkey. Under Emperor Domitian, Christians were experiencing terrible persecution. John's revelation exhorted the early church as they were experiencing tribulations. They believed in the imminent return of Jesus, an expectation of the glorious eternal reign of Jesus, and this expectation gave them hope in the midst of trials.

If this letter was written with the expectation of the imminent return of Christ, how much more should we pay attention today?

The Vision

What John was allowed to see was way beyond what any human has ever been permitted to see. He saw the risen Lord Jesus in all his resurrected glory. I am sure, even in the Greek language, he struggled to describe what he saw and was told to write.

There are things that we can learn from John as he begins this book.

***He positioned himself* (v. 10).**

Even though John was in prison, he was worshipping the Lord. He was meditating and listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit. He had positioned himself to hear from the Lord.

Our worship cannot consist of a ninety-minute gathering once a week. We need to position ourselves daily, waiting on the Lord, meditating on His word.

As John waited on the Lord, the silence was ripped apart by a voice with the force of a trumpet. It was the voice of Jesus. John was an old man by this time, and he was probably one of the few people alive who had heard Jesus speak before his ascension, but that was

over 60 years earlier. John must have recognized his savior, but this time, his voice was different. It was glorious.

He looked (v. 12).

It was crucial that John turned around and looked. This might sound obvious, but so often we miss what God is doing because we don't pause to look. We miss simple things like beautiful sunsets, stars, mountains, and pieces of art because we are too busy and are unprepared to turn around and look.

The first things John saw were the seven golden lampstands. The lampstands represent the seven churches who were about to receive the letters. A candle's role is to convey light; the church is called to be the light of the world (see Matthew 5:14-16). The mission of any church is to be the light of Jesus wherever it is placed.

Next John saw Jesus, but he didn't look like the son of a carpenter who came from Nazareth. John saw Jesus in his resurrected and glorified state as the King of Kings (see Revelation 1:13-16):

- He was dressed in a robe with a golden sash around his chest. This depicts a King and a judge.
- He had white hair, symbolizing his eternal existence and wisdom (see Daniel 7).
- His eyes were like blazing fire, seeing through all pretense and disguise (see Hebrews 4:13).
- His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace. This is a picture of the judgment and purification that Jesus will bring when he comes again.
- His voice was like the sound of rushing waters. The voice that John first heard as a trumpet became a rushing waterfall.
- Out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword, which we know is the Word of God, the same Word Jesus used to defeat Satan's temptation. This sword is our offensive weapon in the armor of God in Ephesians 6. Jesus destroys his enemies with the Word of his mouth (see Hebrews 4:12, Psalm 46:6).

He Responded (v. 17)

John fell down in terror and worship. Remember, this is the beloved disciple who leaned against Jesus at the last supper; he was part of the inner circle and knew Jesus as a friend. But now he was seeing Jesus as he really is in his glorified state. He was struck down by the majesty and the glory of the presence of the King of Kings.

I believe if we were to see what John saw, we would have the same response. It wouldn't be that we would be overcome by Jesus's beauty and glory; rather, I believe we would be overcome by our sinfulness in light of his holiness. His glory would expose how far short we fall from his glory.

Throughout history, when God has brought about revival in different regions of the world there has been an overwhelming sense of fear and awareness of sin leading to repentance (see Hebrews 12:28-29).

John saw the majesty of Jesus and was moved to respond. He became a messenger, proclaiming the most profound message in history—the end of history itself culminating in Christ's return and eternal reign.

That is how John responded. How has Jesus impacted you, and how are you responding?

Maybe today you need to do what John did: begin each day in the Spirit, praying and meditating on the powerful word of God.

As a church, let us reorient our hearts to worship Jesus as he is today as we read in the words of the Revelation.