

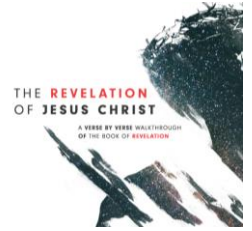
Title: Revelation, Part 4: A Portrait of Jesus

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Rev. 1.9-20

Big Idea: John paints a portrait of Jesus with words, that blesses us in 9 amazing ways.

Memory verse of the month: Rev. 2:4-5 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.



I want to pose this question to you this morning.

What do you think Jesus looked like?

Here are some various paintings from history. (various images) This is a Rembrandt. This is a common look seen on stained glass windows. These two are quite ancient. I'm not sure about this one. Now this one (Sallman image) is a very famous painting by an artist named Warner Sallman. He painted this in 1940 and half billion of these have printed since then.

Throughout the ages, artists have painted portraits of Jesus by combining their **palate of colors**, what the Bible says, and their imagination. When the artist did that, their painting reflected what they *assumed* Jesus looked like. And, because we don't have a photograph of Jesus we don't really know what he looked like. The scriptures only give us a few clues. He was probably very healthy and strong because as a young man he worked as a carpenter. In his three years of public ministry he walked everywhere so he kept in good shape. He didn't have any vices that affected his health. But, he was Jewish and according to the prophet Isaiah not particularly striking in appearance. So, he probably had dark hair (probably shorter than we imagine), a beard, and olive toned skin. And archeological remains of Jewish men in that day indicate that most Jewish men were less than six feet tall.



We don't need to know what he looked like to follow him. Scripture often reminds us that God cares more about what's inside (our hearts) than what's on the outside. It's not that important. But, we do need a portrait of his life and his work and how he relates to us.

In today's passage in this series on Revelation we'll see an amazing portrait of Jesus, using visual imagery, that pictures the nature of his character as the powerful conquering savior-king, yet also as a personal and present companion, friend, saviour, and helper.

Big Idea: John paints a portrait of Jesus with words that bless us in 9 amazing ways.

I want you to imagine that the colors on this color **palate** represent different characteristics of the nature, life, and work of Jesus. From this passage we're going to understand these qualities of Jesus and place them on this palette. And I will give you some homework with this color palette that we will give you as you exit.

Don't forget that there are many scholars who value God's word who interpret Rev differently. Here's the key concept we must all agree on.

No matter how you interpret this book, **we can all agree on this:**

Jesus is coming again, sooner than later.

We don't know when so we'd better be ready.

So let's jump in.

I'm going to read Rev 1.9-20 out loud and you can follow along in your Bibles or just listen along.

Rev 1⁹ 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. ¹⁰ On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹ 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."

¹² I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

¹⁹ "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰ 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

John actually receives two visions in this section, the one telling him to write what he sees and the second his vision of Jesus.

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, (1. 9)

He immediately disclaims any place of eminence. He calls himself a brother and companion and that he shared in their suffering.

Suffering here relates to persecution and patient endurance relates to a spirit of courage and even conquest that transforms suffering. These early Christians were suffering and looking forward to God's future Kingdom.

As we endure suffering, we more fully participate in God's Kingdom, his rule and reign now. And we respond to suffering and hardship when with patient endurance, refusing to compromise.

Believers who suffer for their faith have these deep, common experience of suffering, yet enduring, and being reminded that they share in God's rule and reign in one sense now, yet not yet, because the final fulfilment of God's plan is yet to be. True kingdom living requires patient endurance in difficulty and suffering.

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, (2 Tim 3.12)

was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

He was exiled to this Island called Patmos because of His faith. He talked about Jesus and the authorities did not like it so they banished him to this island. But wouldn't being on a beautiful island be a good thing? Hey, what if you were banished to live on Jamaica or Hawaii or Cozumel. Would that be punishment? In those days Patmos was not a tourist destination as it is today, but a penal colony, an island prison. He was not relaxing in a hammock on the beach drinking mango smoothies. He was probably relegated to hard labor, merely existing, with limited food and clothing, sleeping on the bare ground in a dark prison, working in chains under watchful eye of the military overseers.

We don't really listen to those who can't identify with our struggles when they try to give us advice, do we? Yet, for those who have walked where we have walked, they understand.

John was suffering for his faith just as many of the people he was writing to were suffering for their faith. However not all of them were because some were quite enjoying their lifestyle and spiritual compromise. To those, as we will see in the next few weeks as we look at those cities, he told them they needed to repent.

¹⁰ On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit,

This was something like a trance. He probably began with a time of prayer, John seeking God, and God brought him into this spiritual state of not being conscious of time or his physical surroundings and He gave John this rapid succession of stimulating visions to write down.

and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,

This was apparently an angel getting his attention with this trumpet sound.

¹¹ 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."

12 times in Rev God commissions John to write something which means that these are not just human dreams but God sent visions.

He is given this vision so that he can see the ultimate reality of how God is working behind the scenes, behind all earthly appearances of things. This is where the eyes of faith come in as John is giving us a glimpse behind what is seen to what is unseen.

I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that these churches were in a circle and the letter was meant to be circulated probably in the order he lists these cities.

Each church had a particular context, the culture of the church, its distinctives, what it was known for (both good and not so good). Like WP. One of the distinctives is our multi-cultural flavor. God has assembled this amazing palate of different languages and cultures and nationalities and even a broad range of demographics and ages as well. We're so committed to it that we have four language congregations as congregations in WP and pastors for all those language groups, English, Spanish, Arabic, and Mandarin. Now on the other hand, we have a lot of work to do to create a deep culture of discipleship and small groups to help foster discipleship and community. And we are committed to that in the months and years ahead.

Next week we'll begin to look at those churches and their distinctives.

In each church John calls them to be victorious in their specific situations, in their specific setting in this grand seen and unseen spiritual battle the world is engaged in. There is a spiritual war going on, and each church has its particular section of the battlefield. The broader historical context for all the churches was Roman domination and persecution.

Yet, all the Christians were not poor and persecuted. Some were doing quite well yet were compromising with the oppressive system and they needed to repent.

"Whether the visions bring consolation and encouragement or warning and painful challenge depends on which of the groups of Christians depicted in the seven messages a reader belongs to."-Bauckham

Today, the message to the Christians being persecuted in Communist China or Iran is, be encouraged, I am with you and we know who wins. And today the message to us in the west might be, repent of your materialism, compromise, and comfortable Christianity.

And the ultimate larger issue was this cosmic battle between good and evil as God establishes His Kingdom.

So John gives us seven different contexts in these churches, lens through which we can read and understand this book. It is most definitely a book to be read and understood as a powerful promise that we can prevail under persecution and difficulty. It also is a book that warns us to not compromise with the world systems and to repent when we do.

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me.

Now we come to the second part of the vision, his vision of Jesus. I'm going to read this passage again, in phrases, and try to visualize in your mind this image. After I read it, I will show a painting I got permission to use that best captures this passage.

And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.

His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man,"

Alpha and Omega image

This image of all the images I saw, best captures the vision John had. An Australian painted this and Australians have white skin and his painting reflected that. Jesus we are pretty certain had olive toned skin.



This initial vision sets the tone of what follows in the rest of the book which elaborates on these descriptive snapshots.

Lampstands: In the passage we read earlier, John records Jesus' words as he explains that these seven lampstands represent these seven churches. And seven, is the number that represents perfection, wholeness, or completion. So, taken as a whole, these seven churches represented by the seven golden lampstands represents the universal church throughout the ages. Taken individually we could see them as symbols of the local church.

They are gold which was the most highly valued metal. Even today, although other metals are worth more, gold is still the standard metal when we speak of something value (worth its weight in gold, good as gold, a heart of gold).

This reminds us that God supremely values the church. It's His valued possession. That implies we must never undermine or minimize the value of the church.

I said a few weeks ago that John makes over 500 allusions to the OT? Here is another example. These golden lampstands parallel the 7-branched golden lampstands (we call it a menorah) first mentioned in the biblical book of Exodus (25:31–40). On Mt Sinai God revealed to Moses the design of the lamp. It was placed in the tabernacle, the portable temple to light up that room called the holy place. Followers of Jesus are called to be the light of the world.

Although the menorah disappeared over time, it later became a popular symbol signifying Judaism.

The flame, which gives light, represents the power of the HS.

And the center candle of the menorah represents Jesus, in the midst of His people.

John now describes Jesus, this supreme light of the world, in 8 ways with very vivid language. He describes Him as fulfilling the OT descriptions of the Messiah by using terms drawn from the OT.

Next week when we begin looking at the distinctiveness of these 7 churches, the descriptions of these church in all but one opens with a description of Jesus taken from one of the descriptions in this section. It's like John is giving us the trailer to the full-length movie to come.

These 8 descriptions are meant to evoke awe in us as we contemplate the risen glorified Jesus. There are two levels of understanding here. One is that Jesus is like a powerful military conqueror who will judge evil, will defeat the enemy. Jesus is not wimp.

dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

John draws words from imagery from the OT about God's power and majesty to picture the indescribable reality of the glorified Jesus.

The robe may also signify Jesus as the great high priest who speaks on our behalf as our intercessor. As majesty and intercessor, the robe going down to the feet implies his authority.

¹⁴ *His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow,*

White hair in eastern countries commands respect and indicates wisdom of years. We subconsciously ascribe wisdom to someone who is older. And grey hair generally implies age. Some people prematurely get grey hair and a lot of grey hair gets colored. But in general, we ascribe wisdom to old age and grey hair. And the color white speaks to divine purity.

Lest grey hair might imply feebleness of old age, John describes his eyes like blazing fire. On the one hand it pictures Jesus as judge who knows and acts against his enemies. On the other hand, it pictures Jesus' divine insight that penetrates to the core of every situation we may face. He knows us intimately. The gospels give us the impression that those who had seen Jesus close up and looked into his eyes would never forget them.

¹⁵ *His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace,*

His feet glowing like bronze is related to brightness of shining metal which is connected to the glory of God as well as triumphant judgment of those who reject Him. It was a military image with bronze depicting a fierce warrior about wreak havoc on his enemies.

and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

This is not such much what he say, but what the heard. If you've ever been to Niagara Falls and heard the roar of the waterfall, it evokes power doesn't it?

¹⁶ *In his right hand he held seven stars,*

The right hand is symbolic of power and protection/safety. Stars are usually identified with angels.

and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.

It's interesting that many painters don't include this because it is so shocking. This painter captured it in a respectful way. The sword was the primary image of Roman might. A sword is a weapon of offense and this one was a short one made for close fighting. It points to decisive action against those who oppose his will and to the penetrating quality of His Word.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hb 4.12)

If we engage God's word and heed it, it penetrates, reveals, lays bare our sin, and leads to pardon.

His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

He describes his face as brilliant light and brilliance is the word for strength.

This vision was so overwhelming for John that he fell at his feet in fear and awe. Jesus placed his right hand on him and told him not to be afraid. He reminds him that he is the Lord of History, that he defeated death

And I hold the keys of death and Hades.(18)

When somebody has keys it grants the holder access to things within. So, Jesus has authority over the spirit world and complete control over the power of death.

He tells him to write this vision down that intertwines the past, present, and future perspectives. (alpha and omega)

He tells him that the lampstands are the seven cities and then he says this.

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,

He could be referring to angels assigned over these churches. Perhaps God does assign angels to geographic locations.

But, since angels also means messengers, he could be referring to the pastors over these churches. We can't be dogmatic and the key is to get the gist of what John is saying which probably refers to the essential spirit of these churches.

Whatever, when we gather together, it's a reminder that this is now our eternal home. We are simply passing through.

So let's go back to our big idea.

Big Idea: John paints a portrait of Jesus with words that bless us in 9 amazing ways.

- **Present** He is present with you in every detail of your life. Remember he stood in the center of the seven candlesticks. Jesus is not aloof or distant from us in our daily lives. In fact Jesus calls himself the first and the last meaning that he is perpetually present with you, in your highs, your lows, your delights, your heartaches.
- **Intercessor** His robe reminded us of his role as priest. Rom 8 says that Jesus makes intercession for us. He is right now praying for you as the great high priest.
- **Wisdom** Remember that gray hair was a sign of wisdom. We all need wisdom. Scripture says come to Him and he will give you wisdom you need.
- **Noticer** Remember his eyes remind us that he knows you intimately, your needs, your hurts, your joys, your strength, and your sins.
- **Judge** His feet of bronze reminded us that he is the perfect judge. If someone has deeply hurt you it's not your job to give out justice. Jesus will judge fairly and perfectly those who have harmed you. In this life he often uses the laws and the court system and the government to do it. But in eternity, Jesus will judge perfectly.
- **Protector** His right hand reminded us that He protects us and comforts us. Jesus is our place of safety and comfort.
- **Convicter** The sword reminds us of the penetrating quality of his word, the bible. So along with the Holy Spirit, as we read and encounter God's word, he convicts us of sin when we've gone astray so that we might confess it.
- **Light** His face was like the brilliant sun. As we live our daily lives, we are to be the light of the world. But, we don't produce that light. We reflect his light just like the moon has no innate light. Rather, it reflects the sun's light. Our light is borrowed light.
- **Victor** Jesus defeated death and holds the keys to death. Because He has defeated death, so will you if you have placed your faith in him.



So what are the personal, day-to-day implications for each of these qualities? That's my assignment for you this week. We're going to give you a copy of this palette as you leave today. Carve out an hour this week and reflect on each of these 9 qualities of Jesus and ask yourself this question.

[In light of this quality about Jesus, what would Jesus have me do, think, or feel differently?](#)