

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ”

Revelation 1:1-16

When the travel group I was leading landed on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Greece, we walked up to the highest point where there is a cave and a monastery built over the cave, where John may have had his revelation while serving his prison time.

Of all the books of the Bible, Revelation is the one that mystifies and unsettles people the most. From numerical signs to monsters, the book of apocalypse in the Bible can be difficult to wrap our minds around but the message that Revelation really brings is *hope*.

Revelation is a survival guide for the suffering, a book of promises for the persecuted, a banner of hope for the beaten down. Not just for John in his time and his age, but for every church in every age, including you and me.

The book of Revelation begins: “**The Revelation of Jesus Christ. . .**” (Revelation 1:1, NASB).

The word “Revelation” in Greek is Apok-lup-sis. It’s where we get the word “apocalypse” from. It means “unveiling” or “uncovering”.

This is the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

Continuing in verse 2: “. . . which God gave Him to show to his servants, the things which must soon take place; and he sent and communicated it by His angel to His servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.” (Revelation 1:1-3, NASB).

This is the only book of the Bible that promises a blessing to those who read it – and not just those who read, but those who see, hear, and obey.

Now we get to lay our eyes on Christ. As we unpack the first chapter of Revelation, we're going to see seven key elements.

Seven signifies a completeness, a wholeness, a fullness. And you see the number seven all over Revelation.

Each of these seven elements provides an unveiling of Christ and a word of extravagant hope to you, no matter what you're wrestling with.

The first element is clothing. Look at verse 13: Jesus is **“...dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest”**. (Revelation 1:13, NIV).

Just as a soldier's uniform tells you something about that person's role, so too, these garments reveal the role of Christ. These are the garments of a priest. Not just any priest, but one who Hebrews 4:14 (NIV) describes, is able to “empathize with our weakness”. He has been “tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin”.

This is a priest who is wholly with us and wholly for us

When we go through a season when we lose our joy and are spiritually empty, we give up on God, because we feel like he is giving up on us.

But Jesus is patient and gentle with us. Through refocusing our daily patterns, and changing our thought patterns. Jesus ever-so-gently puts us back together and restores our joy in him. That's the kind of priest he is!

Continuing in verse 14, we begin to scan Jesus from head to toe. It describes, **“The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow...”** (Revelation 1:14, NIV).

This reminds us of a verse in Isaiah that compares the forgiveness of sin to being as white as snow.

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool” (Isaiah 1:18, NIV).

Here is Jesus, the high priest, the sinless one, the ultimate sacrifice for sin. The white *wool* and white *snow* declare that there is nothing we have done or left undone that through the power of Christ cannot be forgiven.

The third element: “. . . **and his eyes were like blazing fire**” (Revelation 1:14, NIV).

I don’t know about you, but I need this. Jesus doesn’t just look at us, He looks into us.

If we’re honest, isn’t that something we all long for? To know and to be known. To be vulnerable without shame. To be loved in our deepest and darkest places. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt, the one who sees us is *committed* to completing the good work he started in us.

The fourth element: “**His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace. . .**” (Revelation 1:15, NIV).

This imagery is a callback to King Nebuchadnezzar, who dreamed of an enormous status. In this dream, the feet were made of a mixture of clay and iron. As powerful as the statue appeared, all you had to do was throw a rock at the feet, and it would crumble from the bottom up.

Feet of glowing bronze reveal that in Christ, there is no weak spot. Jesus is flawless. We can trust him – to be our rock, our fortress, the firm foundation of our faith – even when everything feels shaky.

The fifth element is in verse 15: “. . . **and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters**” (Revelation 1:15, NIV).

His voice, oh, that voice! Psalm 42:7 (NIV) says, “Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls”.

We need that voice so bad. We need that voice to lead us, guide us, comfort us, and fill us with extravagant hope. I think we all do.

The sixth element: “**In his right hand he held seven stars . . .**” (Revelation 1:16, NIV).

These are the angels of the seven churches. Here we’re reminded, never give up on the church, because God has never given up on her.

Verse 16 continues, “. . . **and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword**” (Revelation 1:16, (NIV). This sword is God’s Word, the Bible.

And now, the final element: “**His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance**” (Revelation 1:16, NIV).

The one who declared, “Let there be light”; He is the light of the world. Jesus *illuminates* the cosmos, and he *illuminates* our lives. When you find yourself lost in the dark, Jesus makes a way where there is no way.

Friends, this is *just* Revelation chapter 1; the launching pad of the great unveiling of Jesus Christ where we encounter, and are empowered by him.

This Jesus has come for us, right in the middle of whatever we’re wrestling with today, and he is holy and faithful and true. “What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (Revelation 3:7, NIV).

He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, the Bright and Morning Star.

He is the Lamb, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the Alpha and Omega,

The Beginning and the End.

You can trust him with whatever you're facing!

He will give you the strength you need to rebuild and the grace you need to be renewed.

He will give you the power you need to overcome and the presence that will carry you through.

He will give the hope that rises above and the joy that shoves darkness down.

I don't know what you're wrestling with today. I don't know what your pain, your prison, your Island of Patmos looks like, or how rugged, how isolated, or how lonely you feel today.

But the extravagant hope through the great unveiling of Jesus Christ is he will meet you there.

The question is simply: **Where do you most need to set your eyes of Jesus right now?**

Maybe on this Ash Wednesday, you need to center on the garments of Christ, remembering he is your priest, and he is praying specific prayers on your behalf.

Or maybe you need to zero in on that white hair and snow, that affirms as far as the East is from the West, God has removed your sin. It's time to stop playing those old tapes of the past.

Or maybe, like me, it's those blazing eyes. They remind us God doesn't just see us; he sees in us. No matter what we're facing, we are not alone.

Or perhaps, right now as we begin the Lenten Season on the way to the cross, your life has become so shaky, so uncertain. The one with bronze feet invites you to rediscover solid ground with him.

Or maybe, it's that deep, rushing voice. You need God to speak into your situation, your circumstance. Because one word from God changes everything.

Or maybe, it's the gift of a double-edged sword. It's been so long since you've read the Bible, or more importantly allowed the Bible to read you. Christ wants to take your hand and lead you into deeper places of healing and repentance than you've ever been before.

Or maybe, you've been plunged into so much darkness, you need the light of Christ to break through and break out.

I don't know your place of pain. I don't know what you're wrestling with today.

But what I do know is Jesus is giving you're a golden invitation to a fresh revelation, a great unveiling of who he is and how he's going to see you through, these 6 weeks, see you through the darkness of Good Friday to the light and joy of the empty tomb on Easter morning.

May the peace of God . . .

#332 – I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say