

The Son of Man in The Midst of the 7 Candlesticks

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 00] I'm going to sing now to God's praise from Psalm 135, Psalm 135, singing from the beginning to verse 7.

Praise ye the Lord, the Lord's name praise, whose servants praise ye God, who stand in God's house, in the courts of our God, make abode. Praise ye the Lord, for he is good, and to him praise us, sing, sing, praise us to his name, because it is a pleasant thing.

For Jacob to himself, the Lord, the Jews of his good pleasure, and he hath chosen Israel for his peculiar treasure. Because I know assuredly the Lord is very great, and that our Lord above all gods in glory hath a seat. For things so ever pleased the Lord, that in the heavens did he, and in the earth the seas, and all the places deep that be.

He from the ends of earth doth make the vapours to ascend, with rain he lightnings makes, and wind doth from his treasures send. And so on. We sing these verses. Psalm 135, from the beginning.

Praise ye the Lord, the Lord's name praise. Praise ye the Lord, the Lord's name praise. His servants praise ye God, who stand in God's house, in the courts of our God, make abode. Praise ye the Lord, for he is good, and to him praise the Lord. Sing praise the Lord. Sing praise the Lord. Sing praise the Lord. Sing praise the Lord.

[2 : 29] To his name, because it is a pleasant thing.

For Jacob to himself the Lord did choose of his good pleasure, And he hath chosen Israel for his peculiar treasure.

Because I know, absolutely, the Lord is very great, And that our Lord, above all gods, in glory hath his seat.

What thing so ever pleased the Lord, that in the heaven did he?

And in the earth, the seas and all the places he had been, He from the ends of earth doth make the vapors to ascend.

[4 : 47] With rain he lightnings makes, and wind doth brough.

From his treasures end. So we turn to the book of Revelation, chapter 1, And we can read again.

Verse 17. When I saw him, When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead, And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first, and the last.

I am he that liveth and was dead, And behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death.

So I am going to bring this short study that we have carried out in the prayer meeting, Over the last number of weeks to an end this evening.

[6 : 04] The theme that we have tried to follow was the theme of the God of glory, Or the glory of God, particularly as it is in the experience of the people of God.

As we have discovered, I hope, the title is such that it gives a breadth and a depth To what the scripture brings to our attention concerning God's glory.

It's really something that we could go on at length, Trying to discover more and more of what is beyond us in many respects.

And sometimes we have seen that in the way that God revealed himself to individuals.

We saw how he encountered Abraham and Jacob and Moses. We saw how he encountered the church in the experiences that they had at Mount Sinai, And in their worship in the tabernacle and in the temple.

[7 : 41] And some similar experiences that we encountered to us of the people of God, Recognizing that they were in the presence of God.

And such a presence was often a presence that overwhelmed. Now there is obviously a lot that can be said about the God who is glorious, His character, His work, His work in salvation, Speaks of who he is and what he is about.

And, well, we are, as I said, just touching on the very outskirts of what can and could be said about it.

That we realize that there is more to this than physical manifestations.

There is more to this than experiences that touch our emotional life or our spiritual life. There is more to this than can ever be contained within words.

[9 : 03] And I hope that is sufficient grounds, that it gives sufficient impetus to you as individuals to study this for yourselves.

And realize that your God is like no God, no other God. There is but one God, the living and true God. And when He chooses to reveal Himself to us, it is for a purpose.

And that purpose is often a purpose that we need time to understand for us, what lies behind this revelation.

And often, often it was the case that those to whom the Lord revealed Himself were discovering the hidden depths that there was to the glory of God that had been kept hidden from their sight.

And it was the means by which they were further encouraged to go on with the Lord in His strength. So we are concluding this evening for no other reason than that.

[10 : 20] It is just a suitable time for us to bring this short series to an end prior to our communion. But I want us to conclude with these words that we find in the book of Revelation.

And words that speak of an encounter on the part of one of the disciples of Christ, to whom was entrusted a task for the good of the Church of Christ.

And the experience of the Apostle John at this point is the experience of somebody who was not at all ignorant of the glory of God as it is in Christ Jesus.

He had several encounters with the God of glory through his Son. He had very often been in company with others as he saw God working through Christ and deliverances wrought by his hand.

And even when we spoke of the Mount of Transfiguration, John was very much to the fore there, although Peter was the voice that we hear most.

[11 : 49] John saw everything that Peter saw and experienced everything that Peter experienced, along with James. So he was not a stranger to glory or to glory as it is in Christ Jesus.

But here we want to explore what Christ says to him and through him.

And understand that there is greater glory to be revealed through the Church of Christ than any of us have hitherto experienced.

No matter how much we could think of our own experiences. And most of the Lord's people will possibly be able to speak of occasions where they were left alone with the God of glory or with the Son, Christ Jesus, through the presence of Jesus or through the presence of his Holy Spirit, convinced of this glory as being uniquely his.

And that was retained by all who experienced it and did this, something that they returned to all their days. But we want to look at these words this evening.

[13 : 19] And we can begin by noting how the Apostle John came to be where he was. We read in this chapter that the description that John gives of himself is a reminder to us of the need that we have to keep our feet firmly on the ground, as it were, regardless of how unique the experience may be.

He says, I, John, in verse 9, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

It's as if John is saying there, look, I'm not all that different to yourselves. There are comparisons.

I am one with you as a member of the Church of Christ. I may be an apostle. I may be used by God to work for him in a very distinct way.

But in another sense, I am your brother in the Lord. I am somebody who shares with you in your sufferings. I am somebody who understands who you are and what you are and what you are going through.

[14 : 45] I'm not a stranger to that. And I suppose these words might be read by us as something that John says in order to trivialize the seriousness of what he is about.

about but there's more to it than that there's a an empathy on his part there's a sympathy there's a a communion of spirit with the church even though he is commanded to to minister to the church in Christ's name in a very specific way so we need to remind ourselves of that and John is not alone Paul and Peter are the same they they recognize and they acknowledge the place that God has given to to them within the body of Christ as as witnesses to the truth as ambassadors for Christ that they have an important role to play but at the same time they always emphasize the need that there is to to see that they are that they are fellow believers that they have the same calling in a sense that they are sinners saved by grace and that's what I want to to emphasize that even though there is a need to give place to them as apostles and as God's servants entrusted with a very significant and important role we should never lose sight of the fact that they are what they are by God's grace they have come to know Jesus Christ in the same way everybody else has come to know Jesus Christ they have faith in him for the salvation of their souls like every other sinner who has experienced salvation by Jesus' hand but he says he was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ we're not told why he was in Patmos he doesn't tell us himself how it came about that he is in Patmos

Patmos is an island of the Greek of Greece somewhere out in a it's not a very hospitable island it's not a very interesting island as far as geography is concerned and but most of what we know about how John came to be in Patmos is derived from from the early church historians and not from the scripture itself church historians remember John was an elderly Christian at this point so he's well well known throughout the church and the knowledge of the church often was quite significant so the early church historians were able to to recount to others information concerning John's residence in Patmos and he was put to Patmos by reason as he says himself of persecution

Nero was the arch persecutor of the church and he was instrumental in putting countless Christians to death but the emperor that followed Nero Diocletian was every bit as vindictive and possessed of a persecuting spirit he put into place we are told in a very significant way emperor worship and claimed deity as an emperor of Rome and all who were part of the empire were meant to acknowledge him as their god and Christians refused to do that and they were they were persecuted because of that and in a sense that is what John is saying to us uh in in verse 9 here he is saying that he was he was in Patmos for the word of god and for the testimony of Jesus Christ he preached God's word which forbade the the elevation of any any any person to divinity that was exclusively God's place and those who believed the truth and followed the truth were to suffer because of that and John was no different so the early historians say that's why he was in Patmos there's another reading to it as well possibly and it's probably equally important in many of the experiences God's people are involved in God who is God of providence can sometimes as he did in the experience of Paul and the Philippian jailer the enemies of their soul are instrumental for putting them in prison or in the case of of John putting them into exile in this island of Patmos but that doesn't mean that God's word is prevented from working and in a sense John's ministry continued in Patmos and we have to remember that his witness was a faithful witness even though he was in exile but more than that I think you can understand that this encounter that he had with the Lord Jesus Christ took place in the place that God meant him to be and we also have to remember that there are occasions in our life when we may read our providence as being entirely against us that it is something that that is a bitter experience and that it is something that is entirely negative and yet it is in these places that God meets with us it's at those times that we discover something of what God means us to be and that happens so often in the experience of God's people the very thing that you would expect to be to be the means of suppressing faith is the thing that fans it into flame so John the apostle is here and uh uh uh he encounters Christ at this point did I say it it is clearly Christ that he encounters

but he encounters him in a way that he had not encountered him before John describes in detail what was an unforgettable event it took place he says on the Lord's day it took place when he was in the spirit the day might appear irrelevant but it was a day that John kept a day that was important to John even though he was I don't know which one of the commentators was making this aside as it were even though John was separated from his brothers and sisters in the Lord even though he was not in a place where he would be under the microscope as far as believers were concerned he still remembered the Lord's day he still kept the Lord's day he still worshipped the Lord as he could and should do and there's a testimony to his faith that that is the way it is and the Lord's people are like that it wasn't unique to John wherever you are in the world just because you're away from your local community doesn't mean that you forget what the Lord has made precious to you and this day is one such day you remember it and you keep it as best as you can however much that is at odds with the local culture that you may be in at the time but John remembers and he knows that he is under this the teaching of the spirit as it were there he was in the spirit on the Lord's day and he heard behind him a great voice as of a trumpet and I think reading through this several times you get the feeling that this event was so unique in the experience of John of this as if it was indelibly imprinted in his psyche so that every detail of it is is remained has remained in his mind every single bit of it is fixed in his memory and it's as if he can go to the very place at the very moment that these things took place and he heard the voice and the voice he says was a great voice as of a trumpet I don't know what a great voice like of a trumpet is like what kind of musical instrument John was familiar with whether it was whether it was the loudness of the voice or the clarity of the voice or whatever this is how he describes it and I think as you go through this description that he said before us that you have to curtail your own thinking and remind yourself that this was truly a unique experience for John the voices of a great trumpet he heard and he turned we find in verse 12 to see the voice that spoke with me and I think you can't really see a voice what he means by it I think is that it was an instinct on his part having heard the voice having understood the voice that it was a voice of great import or significance he turned towards it in order to see

[26 : 27] who it was that was speaking to him and then he records what the voice said to him i am alpha and omega the first and the last what thou seest write in a book and send it into the seven churches which are in asia to set ebesus smyrna pergamos theatira to sardis and unto philadelphia and unto lyosia these are the seven churches of asia that are written to the lectures that we find in chapter 2 and chapter 3 to the seven churches these are the words that are given to john to disseminate to these churches and the authority that is contained within the voice either suggests and there is a division of opinion that it is either the voice of an angel or the voice of the lord himself there are angels mentioned that speak the truth to john later on in the in the in the chapter in the in the book but there is no doubt that the words come from god there is an authority recognisable as god's voice either speaking to him through the messengers that are the angels or through the lord himself he recognises that this is something that he needs to do these are the instructions that are given concerning the letters that are to be delivered to the church and he knows that the person that is speaking to him preeminently is the person of the lord jesus christ and he's never met the lord jesus christ in this way before he's met him face to face he spoke with him he ate with him he slept with him he experienced miracles at his hand all of these things were true but what has taken place at the point at which john meets with him here is that the lord has been crucified and slain and risen from the dead and been glorified and ascended to god's right hand in verse 8 we read i am alpha and domica the beginning and the beginning and the ending said the lord which is and which was and which is to come the almighty again in verse 11 i am alpha and domica the first and the last and what those see is right in a book and then again in verse 17 when i saw him i fell at his feet as dead and he laid his right hand upon me saying and to me fear not i am the first and the last so in these words that john hears there is the understanding that this person that is speaking to him is divine what he lays claim to are distinctives that are divine the alpha and the omega are the first and the last letters of the greek alphabet but they are words that the lord uses to identify himself as the one who is the the precursor to life and the one who will bring life to an end he sustains life in all the ways that life is sustained many of the commentators draw attention to the connection that we have with the old testament prophets as they describe to us

god himself in chapter 44 of the prophet isaiah where the lord describes himself god describes himself in this way he says in verse 6 of that chapter thus says the lord the king of israel and his redeemer the lord of hosts i am the first and i am the last and beside me there is no god god now these are the words that jehovah uses of himself again in chapter 48 the same words identify the lord of hosts as the one who is the first and the last and jesus is not embarrassed he's not confused he's not in any way ignorant of the truth implied by these words they are words that are relevant to himself that are applicable to himself as the son of the most high god he is god in all respects the first and the last i am he says that and uh that is not words that are uttered without having in them the understanding that this is the lord jesus christ you know when he describes himself here as or as john sees uh he sees uh he sees someone like unto the son of man now what does that mean again it doesn't mean that john is identifying him using that description as the lord jesus christ but rather that he is seeing the person that is before him with this human features identifiable to him the ezeziel and daniel used this designation but i think the significance of that designation is not so important as the other words that are used concerning him that he is the alpha and the omega what he saw was no left no doubt in his mind that the person that he saw was the lord jesus christ was the lord jesus christ risen exalted glorified and that impressed itself upon his mind and the description that follows we could enter into the detail of it but i think there's a danger in overestimating what jesus reveals himself as in the sense that john is left to describe to us what he sees he sees glory he sees a person that is all glorious he sees aspects to his character displayed in the description that he gives of him as he understands it can read it he saw one like unto the son of man clothed with a garment down to the foot he is the man clothed with a golden girdle head and hair were white like wool as white as snow and his eyes were as a flame of fire and so on i'm not going into the detail of that because i think the comprehensive picture suggests to us

all the elements that in themselves are speaking to us of glory it's an accumulative emphasis on the glory of the person that he saw a glory that speaks to us of of humanity but a glorified humanity a description that speaks to us of the glory that is divine that speaks to us of of his sanctified elevated holiness that is uniquely uniquely God's it speaks of purity it speaks of holiness some of let me give you just one example of how how certain theologians look at this in in minute detail for the example that i'm thinking of is clothed with a garment down to the foot and girt about the papes about the chest with a golden girdle suggestive of what suggestive of the attire of the high priest and is it not the high priest that is in glory the great high priest and is clothed in vesture that speaks to us of his holiness and the role that he has carried out in achieving holiness for his people the the clothing that is there it covers not just himself but his people a holiness a sanctification that he has secured for him for his people and it speaks of power that is without equal it speaks of of of judgment it speaks of of of all the aspects of the divine being that are in exercise on behalf of his own people that's the important thing what christ is to his people what he accomplishes for his people what he continues to accomplish for his people and john remembers all of these things just as if this person and his passion is all all glorious from head to toe its glory and it is he is in awe of it he is in awe of the vision that he is given of the lord of glory and what is the result of that how does it affect him well it affects him in this way he is he is forced to prostrate himself he he fell at his feet as dead and it suggests to us the the the vision that he possessed he experienced at that moment was a vision like no other and

I suppose there are many things you could say about that but as he prostrated himself filled with fear what we read is that the hand of of the lord his right hand is laid upon him saying fear not I am the first and the last the very thing that convinces him of this glory is the very thing that christ uses to sustain him as he confronts that glory is that not strange is that not something that makes you wonder you know if you're face to face with the god of glory who who could uphold you who could sustain you in that experience if not the lord of glory himself and that's what we have here christ has revealed himself to him and as don fortner says we are never so alive as at the moment we are dead in in his in his presence or dead at his feet we are never so alive and by that he means simply this that we recognize what we so foolishly fail to recognize in the dealings that christ or god has with us in our lives we so often lose sight of who he is and what he is and we lose out by it and the lord knows how vulnerable we are in the presence of his infinite glory but his hand is extended to him and john learns not just the glory that is there but the awesome wonder that accompanies it that he is in the midst of the candlesticks this is the christ who possesses such infinite power inestimable resources and all that comes with the passion of the divine and there he is he saw him and where he saw him was in the midst of the seven candlesticks the seven candlesticks we are told in verse 20 the mystery of the seven stars which thou saw'st in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks the seven stars are the angel of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks which thou saw'st are the seven churches christ in the midst of his own people the glory that is in the midst of his people and all that accompanies it we are reminded of in this encounter unforgettable encounter that John enjoyed with the lord when he was in Patmos well may god allow us occasional glimpses of something that doesn't change this is the god who speaks of himself as the forerunner to life the one who has life in his hands to sustain it and the one who has the last word with regard to life whatever it is he is at source and he is the one who who decides all these

I am alive he says forevermore have the keys of hell and of death the authority the power the last word when may god impress these thoughts upon us let us pray the lord of god we give thanks for just a glimpse of of the awesome glory that possesses christ and that he possesses and that he reveals to his people in time we give thanks that this is what awaits the people of god that they will ever be in the presence of that king of glory and that they may know in themselves that he is the one who has them in his hands and that he is in the midst of his people always plant mercy for our lack of understanding and forgive our transgressions in jesus name amen amen our closing sam is sam 68 sing in calic from vers 18 sam 68 and vers 18 dam this

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