

Revelation Ch1v9-20 - Glorious Christ

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[0 : 00] Your Bibles, Revelation, Chapter 1. So, Revelation, if you need a Bible, there's ones there. And there should be some sheets for taking notes, especially those who are in secondary school. Make sure you have one. If you haven't got one, make a fuss, make some noise, and make sure an older person gives you one, if they've taken it.

So, we're going to read this morning from Revelation, Chapter 1, verses 9 to 20. Let us hear God's Word to us.

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. On the Lord's day, I was in the Spirit. And I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 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.

[2 : 02] I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands. 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.

The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace.

And his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand, he held seven stars.

And coming out of his mouth was a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun, shining in all its brilliance.

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.

[3 : 17] I am the first and the last. I am the living one. I was dead and now look. I am alive forever and ever.

And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Write therefore what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later.

The mystery of the seven stars that you saw on 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.

Well, I don't know if any of you have ever read Revelation before, but I think we all know that it can be kind of a weird and both wonderful book at the same time.

Well, it's a series of visions given by God to John written down for us. So if you have a look very quickly there at verse 11, he says, Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches.

[4 : 30] That implies it's for all churches of all ages, including us today. And the visions are stunning and spectacular. Look at verse 19.

He's told, John is told to write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later. It encompasses a huge breadth of time, what was past, what is present, and what is future.

It's the time frame between the resurrection of Jesus and the return of Jesus. And all these visions that we're going to look at, and we're going to look at one in just a moment, help us to see the world and history from God's perspective.

And despite opposition to Christ and his church, God rules, and the church is on the winning side.

So, before we get into this vision that we have before us this morning, we're going to pray and ask, as we thought about this morning, that the light of God's word would shine in our hearts that we might see Jesus.

Let's pray for that. Father, thank you for your word, spoken all those years ago to your prophet John, who wrote it down so that we could read it and hear it today.

[6 : 05] and we ask, Father, that you would make these words come alive in our hearts so that we see Jesus clearly.

May we come to know him and love him and be blessed. We ask this for our good. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, three things we're going to see from our text. We're going to look at three things. We're going to look first at the reality we face, the vision we need, and the confidence we have. So first, the reality we face. John's opening words are like a bucket of cold water which is thrown in our face.

It wakens us up to reality. Look at verse 9. 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.

[7 : 26] Patmos Island, which is still there today, you can look it up on Google Earth or Google Maps, and it's beautifully situated between Greece and Turkey in the Mediterranean Sea.

But John's not there on holiday at his private villa chilling out. It was a Roman prison island where convicts and Christians were put.

They were probably mining and cutting and carving out marble. He's not sunbathing, he's suffering because, look at the end of verse 9, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Look, he's saying, if you're a Christian, expect to suffer. Verse 9, I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering.

We're partners, he's saying, and just as I'm suffering for the testimony of Jesus, so you will. If you today stand up for biblical Christianity, if you speak out for Jesus, you are going to face pushback and criticism.

[8 : 46] Why do you say, well, that's not what I signed up for as a Christian. I thought being a Christian would be a little bit easier than that. It would be comfortable and worry-free. And of course, one way to avoid any struggles and to maintain a comfortable life is just keep your mouth shut.

Don't say anything. Say nothing. and you can sunbathe your Christian life away. But that's not real Christianity.

Look closely at what the text is saying to us. He says, I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus.

You see, one of the ways to describe a Christian is to say they are in Jesus. His life becomes your life.

And we receive many blessings because we are in Jesus. Grace and peace and joy and forgiveness and hope. But that's not all, is it?

[10 : 00] John wants to underline the fact that if we are in Jesus we will suffer. In other words, we walk the same path that Jesus walked.

It's the way of the cross. But not only will we suffer, he says, verse 9, that the kingdom is also ours in Jesus.

To be in Jesus is not just to go through hard times but it's to be in his kingdom. kingdom. We were reminded of that if you have a look back at verse 5, the end of verse 5, to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father.

If we are in Jesus, we are now his kingdom, the special privileged people of God. We are, you are, Carigoline Baptist Church are his representatives here on earth in this town.

And God is extending and building his kingdom through us as we testify to Jesus. But his point is it's not easy.

[11 : 22] The world and the devil are actively opposed to God's kingdom. And if you are a Christian, it's going to be fighting against you. So just as Jesus suffered for the kingdom, so you're going to suffer for the kingdom.

But there's a third element as well that we share in if we're in Jesus. Not just suffering in the kingdom, but you see it there in verse 9? The patient endurance that are ours in Jesus.

Just as Jesus patiently endured the hardship, and just as John on the island in his suffering was patiently enduring, so he's encouraging us to patiently endure through these hard times.

Well, come on, John, it's easier said than done, isn't it? We can all talk about patient endurance today. How am I to endure when family resists the gospel and their responses are slow? How am I to be patient when keeping quiet just seems to be so much more appealing? It's hard. [12:38] How am I going to patiently endure as I suffer for the kingdom? Well, we need something, don't we? We need someone who is greater and bigger than ourselves.

Second, the vision we have. So the reality we face is that we're going to suffer for the kingdom and the vision we need.

Look at verse 10. On the Lord's day, I was in the spirit. Now, isn't that significant? There he is on this island suffering away, but he hasn't lost count of the days.

It's the Lord's day, the day of resurrection, and he remembers. I was in the spirit and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.

Well, that would get your attention, a trumpet blasting behind you, wouldn't it? verse 12. I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me.

[13:47] But when I turned round, I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man. John sees something, he sees lampstands.

Now, we're going to come back to them in a minute, but he also sees someone. Do you see it there in the middle of verse 13? Someone like a son of man.

The son of man is like a man, like a human being, just like you and I, with flesh and blood, but at the same time, they're different.

And a description is given of what the son of man is like. We can read it in verse 13. He's dressed in a robe, reaching down to his feet.

So this is someone with immense power and royalty. This is a king. He has a sash, a golden sash around his chest.

[14:54] Well, that was for the priests who served God. So this is a priestly king. His hair on his head, verse 14, was white like wool, as white as snow.

Someone with great wisdom and all knowledge. The grey haired, never laugh at the grey haired, they're very wise, you know. Their eyes, or his eyes, were like blazing fire, piercing, seeing right into people's hearts, exposing all their motives and all that's going on inside them.

Their feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, reminding us of his strength and unshakable durability.

ability. His voice was like the sound of rushing waters, like a thunderous waterfall, it was deafening.

Verse 16, in his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword, a warrior bringing judgment and justice, the two sides of the double sword.

And his face was like the sun, shining in all its brilliance, captivating, yet blinding. This is what John saw.

[16:33] Of course, it's not a literal picture, it's imagery that's meant to capture our imagination and to stir our emotion. This person, like a son of man, is full of beauty and glory and magnificence and greatness and power and authority.

Here is a king who comes ruling for God, a priest who is serving God, and he's all-wise, and he sees all things, and he knows all things, and he's strong and immovable and unbreakable, and when he speaks, his voice alone is heard, and when he opens his mouth, judgment and justice is done.

Can you see it? Can you see this person? But there is something more. Turn with me, please, to Daniel, back in the Old Testament in chapter 7.

Daniel chapter 7. The context is important for us here.

Daniel, this is about 600 years before John is writing Revelation, and he lived at a time when God's people had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians, and it was a time of awful suffering for God's people.

[18:07] people. You know some of the stories how a great big figure was set up and they all had to bow down and worship this idol, a time of suffering for God's people.

And like John, God spoke to Daniel at that time through visions. God spoke not of comfort, but of greater empires that were to come.

He told Daniel through the visions that not only were there the Babylonians, but coming after them were the Persians and the Greek and the Romans over the next 600 years, each of which, like the Babylonians, would oppose God's people.

But in the midst of these visions, Daniel has another vision, and it's very like the vision of John. Let's pick it up in chapter 7, verse 13.

Look out for the similarities as we read. In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man.

[19 : 20] Coming with the clouds of heaven, he approached the ancient of days, that is, God, and was led into God's presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power.

All that belonged to God was given to this one like a son of man. All the nations and peoples of every language bowed and worshipped him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Go to Daniel chapter 10, where the vision continues.

Verse 5, Daniel 10, verse 5. I looked up, and there before me was a man dressed in linen with a belt of fine gold from euphaz around his waist.

His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

[20 : 37] Can you see the similarities? Verse 18, again, the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength.

Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed, he said. Peace, be strong now, be strong.

You see, Daniel, in the midst of all the turmoil as he looks ahead of all these empires to come, is given another vision and he's promised that a man who is like God is going to come.

He would be greater than any kings of the past or any rulers to come. His kingdom would outlast every other kingdom. His rule will be won with absolute power and supreme authority.

What encouragement for Daniel and God's people as they went through their times of suffering. It would give them strength to patiently endure.

[21 : 45] Peace, be strong now, be strong. Now let's go back to Revelation. with all that in mind.

You see, what Daniel longed for, what he looked to, has become a reality for John and for us through his vision. This promised God-man has come.

For the only one who fulfills that is the God-man, Jesus Christ, whose kingdom is eternal, whose authority is supreme. No wonder John, Revelation 1, verse 17, when I saw him, I fell at his feet, though dead.

God is on display before him, and it literally knocks him off his feet. John's knees buckle at the captivating beauty and the terrifying glory.

You see, what we need today is a vision of the almighty God, a vision that puts everything and everyone in perspective and in their place.

[23 : 00] we've heard lots of kings and queens this week, haven't we? Long reigns, 70 years, over a great commonwealth, many nations.

Nothing to this, is it? A vision of the God-man, Jesus Christ, will strengthen your faith and fortify this church.

Look what Jesus says in verse 17. Then he placed his right hand on me and said, do not be afraid, I am the first and the last.

I am the beginning of history and I am the end of history. I have the very first word and I will have the very last word. Verse 18, I am the living one, I was dead and now look, I am alive forever and ever.

I am the eternal king, I rule over every event in history and over every circumstance in your life. So you do not need to fear.

[24 : 18] In fact, he is even over your death, not just your life. Look at the end of verse 18, he says, I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Hades was the realm, the place of the dead. And Jesus is saying, look, I rule that too. Remember, as John wrote, the churches were facing not just opposition, but death itself.

The Roman emperors and rulers wielded their sword as they pleased. Christians were dying, some of them were being slaughtered just because they stood for Christ.

Fear was gripping the church, and the comfort of the world looked so appealing, how easy it would be for them to just give up and give in. But the voice of the risen Jesus comes, do not be afraid, I hold the keys of death.

I have defeated death. I have conquered the grave. Look, what's the worst thing that could ever happen to you as a Christian? Well, the worst thing is you'll die.

[25 : 40] But know this, says Jesus, just as I was raised in glory and victory, so you too will be raised in glory and victory.

victory. I have the first word over your life, and I have the last word over your life. You see, being a Christian today, we can feel so small and insignificant.

We can tremble at the powers that oppose us. We fear the secular culture we live in. We fear their big arguments and their strong words.

we fear friends will leave and misunderstand us. We fear that we might become unpopular and ostracised at work. We feel the pull of the world and the comfort of an easy life.

How easy it is for us just to turn away, to give up and give in. Well, when fears overwhelm you, what is it that's going to enable you to patiently endure?

[26 : 47] When suffering comes in whatever form it may be, what's going to keep you going?

Cheer up? Go on, keep going.

We need a vision of the glorious Christ. We need to hear, we need to read what Jesus is saying.

We need to be knocked off our feet at the awesome power of God.

We need to sense his hand on our shoulder and to hear his words spoken to us today. Do not be afraid, Christian.

Do not be afraid. Look to Jesus and our fears will crumble in the presence of his glory. Listen to Jesus and our worries will melt in the knowledge of his greatness.

he rules with absolute power and supreme authority. I rule life and death. My kingdom will never end.

[27 : 57] Have you got that vision before you today? So the reality we face, it's going to be hard.

We need to patiently endure, so we've been given a vision. And third, it will give us great confidence going forward.

As John heard the voice, as he saw the God-man Jesus Christ, he also saw something else, didn't he? Let's go back to verse 12.

He said, I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me. But instead of seeing someone straight away, he turned and he said, I saw seven golden lampstands.

And among the lampstands was someone like a son of man. Verse 16, in his right hand he held seven stars.

[29 : 07] John sees the God-man Jesus Christ and he sees him, picture the scene, walking amongst these golden lampstands.

And in his right hand he's got stars. Lampstands and stars, what's all that about? Well, we don't need to speculate, do we?

Because we're told what they mean. Verse 20, the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this.

This is what it means. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. Simple.

Lampstands and stars, they're the churches. they are representative of God's church in all times and all places. So as we read lampstands and as we think about stars, think about Carigoline Baptist Church.

[30 : 16] What is John's vision of the church? What does he see going on? How does it give us confidence? Well, first, Christ is among the church.

John sees, we're told, seven golden lampstands. This is not a random image. God has chosen it carefully and specifically.

The lampstand was all part of the temple furniture and it stood right at the entrance to the holy place where God was to dwell, his presence.

So it was symbolic of God's presence and power. About 500 years before, so we talked about Daniel's 600 years and his captivity in Babylon and their temple had been destroyed.

Well, 100 years after that, Zechariah, the prophet, was praying to God about the temple and it had been destroyed and how was it going to be rebuilt and how would everything be put right again?

[31 : 26] And in response, God gives Zechariah a vision. You know what his vision was? Here we have it here.

He gives Zechariah a vision and God asked him, he says, what do you see? Zechariah answered, I see a solid gold lampstand.

What is it? What's this lampstand? And God answered, this is the word of the Lord, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord Almighty.

That's his encouragement to Zechariah. Your might, he says, and your power is not going to get you anywhere, but by my presence and by my power, by my spirit, I will be with you and I will go with you and you will achieve what you need to do.

Now, we're not building physical temples or building physical churches, but we are seeking to build God's church, aren't we?

[32 : 45] And it's hard. There's opposition. And we're wondering, how are we going to do it? And the answer, the Lord of history, the one who rules and reigns over all things and all peoples, is present among his church by his power.

If we could picture it now, God present, weaving in and out of the rows, I am here right now with you by my Holy Spirit, my presence and my power.

you see, we are not left alone to do this battle by ourselves. He is present among the church.

But not only that, the church is in Christ. John sees not just the lamp stand, but he sees seven stars in the hands of Jesus Christ.

Do you see it there, verse 20? The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lamp stands is this, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.

[34 : 03] Now I understand that the angels here are representative of the church. So one church, one angel. We can see this, just have a look at the beginning of the letters, chapter two, verse one.

John writes, to the angel of the church in Ephesus. And in verse eight, to the angel in the church in Smyrna, and so on.

In other words, the angel is representative of the church. So these stars, these representatives are in the hands of Jesus Christ.

The church is in the grip of Jesus. Well, it doesn't always seem like that. It often feels like we've fallen out of his hand.

And we can feel battered and bruised and isolated and insignificant. And we're wondering if we're making any impact at all. And we go to rock, we go to rooted, we talk to our friends and neighbours and we go, what's happening?

[35 : 11] Nothing seems to be happening. But what a vision we have. The church is safe in the grip of the Lord Jesus.

Nothing and no one can stop his church. Opposition will be faced, the Bible could be banned, believers may be imprisoned, Christians can be put to death, but the church across the world today is growing and expanding.

Come to the Radstock Round Table and meet people from all parts of the world where you will see churches planted and people coming to faith. You see, the reality is we do face hardship and the question is what's going to help us to patiently endure?

What's going to keep me going? for my next reign of 70 years, if that's what God gives us. What's he going to give me?

What's going to keep me? We need a vision of Jesus Christ in all his greatness and glory. Look at the one with absolute power and supreme authority, the one who has the first word over your life and the last word over your life.

[36 : 35] He's the ruler of all history. He's the conqueror of death. He's present amongst us as he walks through us by his power and his presence and he has us firmly in the grip of his hand.

The world says the church is finished. God says you ain't seen nothing yet. The church will be established.

It will reign forever and forever. Be confident. Do not be afraid. Feel his touch on your shoulder today.

Do not be afraid. Let's pray. Father, we confess that so often and so quickly we are swamped by our fears and our worries.

We picture ourselves trying to fight a battle that sweeps over us and waves crash over us and we're struggling to catch our breath.

[38 : 07] Help us afresh to see Jesus as we hear his words and read his words. Fill us with a vision of God almighty present in power putting his hand upon the shoulder of the church today saying do not be afraid.

thank you lord that you are over all things that the power and the victory belong to you.

In Jesus name amen. all my days well I don't know how many days I have I don't know how many days you have but I hope we can sing this song of gladness Homeless who can do not use to be or, and you can hear you