

The book of revelation is for our instruction, for our encouragement for our motivation. It's easy to become discouraged in these days and times and even depressed about the state of the church.

False teaching, scandal, immorality etc... If you are anything like me you can become discouraged and disappointed in the church but this passage draws our such great hope and reminds us that God is at work in His church...

What is the Lord of the church doing and what is the Lord of the church saying...

I believe as we look at this passage we will see what Jesus is doing with John -causing him to look internally and personally at himself and his church. That he would see what God is saying to him. And we can be encouraged that as people that are a part of His church God has something to say to us.

We can be highly encouraged as we look at Jesus and His church. That He is in control and at the very center of the church.

Now this same John who we have been learning about in the Gospel of John was a man that walked with Jesus.

John is a man of deep character and his ministry and life are a direct outflow of his time with Jesus. A man who had walked, had seen and heard Jesus as well as served with him... through the present circumstances becomes more familiar with and will discover new aspects of the person and ministry of Jesus. He had seen the living and crucified Jesus and even witnessed the risen Jesus but will be in this place given a vision of the glorified Jesus.

Now you must realize the things that John speaks about here are not future events but present things. And we can be encouraged... Presently that right now these things are happening.

As we look at this man we see an example of one who was called and committed to Jesus. I want to spend some time looking at John himself because his experience may be extraordinary but he is also an ordinary man like ourselves one who in preparation saw God.

V 9-10

Humility - doesn't address from authority but willingly identifies with the church....

Separate - had been set apart for God and faithfully served

Surrendered - he lives for another kingdom and willingly submitted to God's will

Sacrificial - would have lost everything for the Gospel

Spiritual - despite suffering and circumstances was consistent in seeking and worshiping Jesus

John was sent to the island of Patmos.... for the expressed reason because he was faithful to the Word of God and committed to courageously preaching the message and demonstrated by his life person of Jesus. He was set apart, surrendered and a man that had experience deep sacrifice and loss as a means of the Gospel. He was a pastor and shepherd of the churches in Asia Minor, was an apostle and leader in the church. In fact he was primarily the leader of the church in Ephesus.

Yet we see despite the present persecution and difficulties he was a man who had consistently worshiped... prayed and was a man of the scriptures... he was caught up in the Spirit on the Lord's day...

The opening of his heart, eyes and ears came as a result of preparation, expectation and anticipation. He wasn't ruled by experience but through experience saw Him. And isn't that how God so many times works in suffering and desperation a doorway is opened to see and hear.

As John worships he will hear Jesus, see Jesus and be commissioned for mission by Jesus.

John doesn't write as one who has authority but a witness... One who has seen the Lord. He is a redeemed man, marked by faithfulness and worship. Familiar with the love and grace of God as well as the character of Jesus. He is also very close to the reality of the second coming of Jesus. And ultimately desires the the worship of Jesus among the nations.

He's a man amazed at the revelation of Jesus. Revelation 1:8 the Alpha and the Omega... He realizes it's Jesus... The everlasting God... The one who is, who was and is to come.... the Almighty! And we will read how He heard and saw Jesus. This is a personal revelation... As Paul had. An experience but at the same time reality.

At his most bleak and desperate hour he experienced and saw Jesus. On this cold, dark and isolated island he would have the most glorious ministry in which he would engage and that would be to see, hear and serve Jesus by communicating this .

This is not a dream or vision it is reality of a new and different dimension.

John at this point would be the last of the apostles. He was the leader of the churches and a pastor in Ephesus. He was isolated, separated and persecuted. Away from those he loved. Separated from the mission and church he led and was there for one reason...

He was faithful to preach the word and to the character and testimony of Jesus. He loved the Gospel message, the mission and Jesus himself.

And in the passage we have no other more complete vision of Christ and Him moving and working in His church. That even in the midst of tribulation, persecution, and difficulty the Lord is at work completing His work in the church.

This should bring instruction, encouragement and motivation. This as we will see is not something in the future but presently happening... Jesus working and moving in His church.

V. 11 Write to the churches...

John hears and is given a mission... He is to take a message to the Seven churches a complete mission. The promise of despite the present situation in the church that Jesus is victorious and will be faithful to complete the work of the church. That he and his mission is and will forever be triumphant. Matthew 24:14

This is a sound of proclamation and authority that you see through out the book announcing and declaring the truths and events of God. A sound that would come from the Lord Himself. It is His voice.

Before he could truly look out he first had to look up... As many are looking for a vision for ministry what is desperately needed in this day is a vision of Jesus. For us to be effective as Christians we need a vision of Him!

Then hearing I turned to see... Who does he see he sees Jesus. Before he is to work he is to see. And we must first see Jesus and have a personal revelation of Jesus that compels us to live and serve.

Seven lamp stands... These first things he see are the character and conduct of the church of Jesus. It is no longer one lamp stands as we saw in the OT but a diverse group of lamp stands... And God is gloriously at work in the church throughout the world. Jesus said you are the light of

the world... Church is the light of the world and they are to be lights in the world the local church is the hope of the world. They are golden lovely, precious, and valuable. They are the center of any place they inhabit. Complete and whole church. But also this is oil lamps... Set a part and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

John sees one like the son of man... Jesus in full glory. Daniel 7 sees the lord of the church moving in his church. Encouraging and comforting. Jesus said I will not leave you nor forsake you. Lo I am with you always... And any great man God called was centered around the promise of His presence.

Read Daniel 7:9-14

A picture of Jesus now unfolds... How is Jesus today moving and working in His church...

Jesus doing his priestly work... Hebrews he intercede and Hebrews 4 we have a faithful high priest on in which sympathizes with our stress and struggle. The temptations pain and grieving. The high priest who in the old testament would sacrifice the lamb became the actual sacrifice.... By his own blood.

Jesus is a faithful, personal, merciful and gracious High priest which knows the various troubles and concerns... He knows our suffering because he identified and suffered for us... He endured the cross for the joy that was set before him... You and I.

Character and ministry represented by His clothing... A perfect person, one in which peaceful, untainted and unstressful ministry flows. His ministry to us is personal, intimate and life saving. It draws out peace and grace in us... He himself bring us from glory to glory.

Purity... Showing his desire for purity in the church. Peter would speak of the calling of the believer and holiness to which God has made them and given them to be. We are given the divine nature and everything for life and godliness. In Ephesians Paul would say that they were to be a separate and holy church not living like the Gentiles.

He is working to purify the church... It seems to be pointing to his work that separates us and that we are to be holy as he is holy. It's amazing that we see in the church leaders and followers alike dabbling and playing with sin... He disciplines and prunes the church... To remove sin... He desires Holiness!

Snow.... Absolute unblemished purity.

Eyes that would know intimately the heart and works in the church and of the believer. Piercing and exacting the holiness of God in the believer. His holy wise omniscience knows all things... Should create a sense of fear... A fear of God and a fleeing of sin.

Feet of bronze the stability and firm foundation of his ministry and church as well as a judgment on sin. He is at work in the church graciously and mercifully serving yet disciplining and judging the church. Purifying and pruning the church. Discipline that has been tried and found true. It was the strongest metal in that day... Speaking of his amazing strength. Refined judgment.

We don't do the work of Judgment He does the work of purifying discipline.

He then describes the voice. The powerful voice of the church. He speaks to the church with authority through his word. Faithful spokesman.... His model and desire for men who would speak with authority and prophetically through the church. He's not speaking of small little truths or sweet devotional thoughts, not 4 ways to improve your marriage or your best life yet... he is

speaking of the power of his Word. The powerful transformational word of God. Eternal truth.

He then speaks of holding the stars which are the leaders of the church. He controls and is sovereignly leads the leaders of His church. It is His church. The lord will in every generation have true and faithful leaders in His church. He holds them in His hand... Speaking of His own strength. Zechariah 4:6

We are committed to training men who will boldly and faithfully lead and speak on behalf of the church. Men that he gifts and calls and sets apart to lead.

The Lord of the church is present in the church, empowers his church, purifies and gives wisdom to the church, he authoritatively speaks to the church

Then we see this large double sided sword.. A protecting Sword. Lord protecting His church the lord defeating the enemy and building His church... No weapon formed against you or the church will stand. This is a sword that inflicts serious damage and kills. His weapon being the word. The Sword of the spirit waging spiritual warfare...

His face the very glory of God is like the blazing brightness and glory of the sun... Psalms 84 the lord is a sun and shield. This was the type of picture we see of Jesus at the transfiguration. The picture here is that the glory of God is seen above those that lead and serve... The ministry of men should be shadowed by the light of the person of Jesus... My prayer is that when you come here or any church that you don't see the leaders you personally are amazed and enamored by the presence and person of Jesus. That this morning in some way through prayer, worship and the word you will leave with more of Jesus.

When you go to a church go that you may see Jesus! We need the light and life of Jesus. We need to be more in the presence and see the face of Jesus. And I pray as leaders we lead you and draw you nearer to Jesus not ourselves.

When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead... He saw and was seen. An uninhibited vision of Jesus. We are never so alive as when we are at the feet of Jesus totally abandoned to Him.

This whole experience drew out not only new discoveries of who Jesus is but in John created a whole new awe and reverence of God. It established in Him a holy fear... He was amazed and yet at the same time afraid. It was as if the wind and life was mocked out of him and he was caught up in worship.

At the same time like Isaiah recognized... Wow I don't belong here... This is holy ground.

We have nothing to fear... Perfect love casts out fear... He touches Him... He says don't be afraid I have died and come again to life for you... The power of grace.

We see he holds the keys to the kingdom and of hell he is completely in charge... The devil is under His control. This is not a struggle for power He has the power.

Here He commissions John. Arise and Go! He touched him...

Before we can be a part of the mission of God we need to see and experience the Glory of God. Before we receive a vision for mission we have to see the author of mission.

We need a sense of awe that draws us to worship.... That is our message, that is our mission that is the Model ... The risen Lord Jesus in all of His glory.

Now I want to just for a moment look at one thing Jesus says to the churches that I feel is the most important point he will communicate... That from this point and from this church all of the messages come together.

Jesus begins with the church at Ephesus... A church of great responsibility, a church at the very center of the area and mission... John was the pastor here, Paul ministered here for 3 years, Timothy ministered here it was a famous church... The city was large and very important politically and religious and economically and strategically. This was a church that God had great plans for. And this letter is written to not only the pastor but the whole church... The people of the church...

Jesus inspects... They worked hard, they were very patient and tested against false teachers and were teachers of the word and had not become weary... Their flame of their ministry was burning brightly... Paul warned this church that they were to guard against false teachers and wolves from among you.

But he began to give an examination of the church... They had left their first love not lost left.... When you lose something you don't know where it is when you leave something you do...

Their church, the service, the dedication, and worship were amazing....

Their love for God and love for people had over time been eclipsed by their service and commitment to philosophy and doctrine... Their business had drained them of love for God and one another. Performance had crushed their intimacy.

Nevertheless you have left your first love... a heavy challenge despite their good works they left the thing that was to be most important and central to the church. Without love all is in vain. Lose love lose everything.

You can say you love God but don't love his people... But the truth wouldn't be in us... We left first love for God and others... When love dies doctrine, systems and philosophy are the coffin...

But he says repent and get back... To the things at the beginning... Prayer, the word and worship...

Remember the hunger for God's word, the commitment to pray the desire to worship and love and serve others...

Love develops, deepens, and discovers... Over time but takes discipline and intention.

What does this all mean... We need to grow in our understanding and love for the Gospel, we must learn to love the mission and model of Jesus. This all happens through an ongoing love for Jesus through the simple things...