

**Text: Revelation 1:9-20**

**Title: “Worship Unveiled ... It’s Personal”**

Last Sunday evening we had a very important church family gathering to share our hearts about the vision God is giving us for a new day of congregational worship at our church. It was a healthy discussion. What the evening revealed to me was that many of us are passionate about worshipping God. And if that passion can somehow be merged in unity it can become something very powerful in our witness to our city. In the end the hundreds who took part in the discussion were overwhelmingly supportive of the direction to go to a unified worship service. That doesn’t mean we don’t have questions, but we’re going to trust God to guide us through this time as we look to Him. Now we will need a few weeks to prepare physically, musically and technically, so our first Sunday in our new worship arrangement will be Sunday, March 20.

At the end of the evening I saw young people going to older people, and older people going to younger people saying, “I love you and we need you.” I envision a stronger church that could look like this. VIDEO - <http://vimeo.com/30916605>

Let’s open our Bibles to Revelation 1. Perhaps the most important preparation for a new day in the life of our church is heart preparation. So today I’m beginning a five-part series from Revelation entitled “Worship Unveiled ... Timeless Worship in the Revelation.” Revelation is the unveiling of Jesus Christ. The book is about Jesus and how He is to be glorified in His people. The vision God has given us is worship that resembles the worship we will offer to God for eternity ... a worship that encompasses every generation.

When we think about worship, we think about what happens in this room with hundreds of people around us. The Revelation has a lot to say about that kind of worship, but it all starts with personal worship for John. Personal worship precedes congregational worship. Congregational worship without this kind of personal worship is *hypocrisy*.

**Revelation 1:9 - 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.**

John, the Spirit-inspired author of the Revelation, during Jesus’ earthly life was one of His the three closest followers. Since the ascension of Jesus back to heaven John has become the pastor of the church in Ephesus, one of the most important churches in the NT world. But under the severe persecution of the Roman emperor Domitian, John has been arrested and sent to prison (exile) on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. I have visited the island of Patmos and the cave that is supposedly where John received the Revelation. Listen, Jesus can make Himself glorious to us even when we are alone in the darkest places.

**Revelation 1:10 - On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,**

So it's the Lord's Day and John is "in the Spirit" ... in tune with the Holy Spirit. Are you filled with the Spirit of Jesus today so that you will hear what He has to say and see what He wants to show you about Himself? We see later in our text that the voice is the voice of Jesus, and as clear as the blast of a trumpet He speaks.

**Revelation 1:11 - "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."**

So Jesus is speaking, not just to John, but to churches, seven ancient churches in the province of Asia ... and to our church, and others like ours. And because John was faithful to do what Jesus told him to do ... to write it on a scroll (in a book) ... we get to see Jesus as John did. John got the vision; we get the book. Jesus wants to unveil Himself to us through His Word. We get to gaze on Jesus just like John did through the Word of God. The Word is central in our worship, personally and congregationally.

**Revelation 1:12 - I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,**

**Revelation 1:13 - 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.**

Remember John is essentially in prison. He's separated from everyone and everything that is dear to him. And in that moment of personal worship he sees Jesus. Oh how we need Jesus ... to forgive our sin ... to give us perseverance in our troubles ... to give us strength to face our pressures ... to make sense out of our complicated lives ... to have stability when the world around us is so confusing and our culture is steadily sliding away from the truth. We need to see Jesus.

So what is it that we see about Jesus that overwhelms us in personal worship? We see...

## **1. CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST.**

When John turns toward the voice that is speaking to him the first thing he sees is seven golden lampstands (candles on tall stands). Later down in v.20 we're given the meaning of this symbol. The lampstands represent the churches to which John will send this revelation. Churches are supposed to shine the light. Notice that John saw in v.13 that "among the lampstands was someone 'like a son of man' ..."

So Jesus is in the midst of His churches then, and He's in our midst today. Do you see that? Christ isn't just *over* our church; He is *in* and *among* our church and others like ours. He is not distant. We see in Revelation 2-3 that most of these churches were far from perfect, but He was still among them. With all of our weaknesses and shortcomings and selfishness, Jesus is still near and moving among us.

Now John saw one who is “like a son of man.” That was one of Jesus’ favorite ways of referring to Himself in the Gospels, indicating His complete humanity. But also it is a title that takes us all the way back to the OT book of Daniel where this title refers to the Messiah as a mighty ruler. So that’s the next thing we see about Christ:

## **2. CHRIST POSSESSES EVERLASTING AUTHORITY.**

So John sees Jesus among the churches as One with the power of a king over all the nations of the earth. We must see this about Jesus. The One who moves among us when we assemble is the One who has all rule and authority in heaven and on earth now and forevermore. And in our personal and congregational worship Christ must be exalted in this way. We must encourage ourselves with this truth if we are to stand strong in the face of all adversaries and pressures. Notice Jesus was...

**Revelation 1:13 - Dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.**

The way in which Jesus appears to John with the robe and the sash would immediately take John back to the OT and the uniform of the high priest. The high priest was the one man who stood as a link between God and His people. So the One who is among us isn’t just the eternal King with ultimate authority, He is the great and final High Priest. He has offered the sacrifice of His own body and blood to put to an end all the system of animal sacrifices by the priest in the OT. So we see the next amazing truth about our Christ:

## **3. CHRIST HAS SECURED OUR ETERNAL REDEMPTION.**

Jesus stands *among* us today. He stands *by* us today as the One who possesses everlasting authority and as the One who has secured our redemption forever ... no more sacrifices needed. But notice...

**Revelation 1:14 - His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.**

Now this vision would have taken John back again to the OT book of Daniel where God is called by the title “Ancient of Days” whose hair was white as wool. And here in v.14 Jesus is seen by John with His head and hair as white as wool or snow. So there is this dignity about Christ ... the dignity that comes with age. But here’s the thing: With us aging means that our life is fading ... our eyes grow dim, our hearing grows dull and our strength deteriorates. That’s what aging does to us in a fallen world tainted by sin. And we don’t like to be reminded of this so we usually don’t respect age. But when Jesus is described as old with white hair, He possesses all the benefits of age in terms of dignity and wisdom without any of the weaknesses that we ascribe to aging here in our life. He’s weathered every storm and there’s still fire in His eyes. He misses nothing that happens in the whole universe. So from all of this we gather ...

#### **4. CHRIST IS THE ALL-WISE, ALL-SEEING ETERNAL GOD.**

But then it goes on to say...

**Revelation 1:15 - His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.**

The great commentator Matthew Henry wrote: “His feet were like unto fine burning brass, strong and steadfast, supporting his own interest, subduing his enemies...” This adds to the demonstration of Christ’s magnificent glory and character.

And then there’s His voice! We are not surprised that the Messiah doesn’t squeak when He speaks ... He roars! He makes Himself heard! Anyone who has heard a thundering waterfall knows what John is describing here. What a voice! Combine that with what we learn in v.16...

**Revelation 1:16a - In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.**

Later in Revelation 1 we’re given the explanation that these seven stars are the pastors or messengers who speak the Word of Christ to the churches (seven golden lampstands). These stars ... the ones who speak Christ’s Word to His people ... are held securely in His right hand.

Out of his mouth comes a sharp double-edged sword. This type of sword was used by Roman soldiers in hand-to-hand combat. This sword is effective because it can both cut and pierce. This is the Word of God.

**Hebrews 4:12 says “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.**

So here’s the next thing we see about Christ:

#### **5. CHRIST SPEAKS WITH UNRIVALED POWER.**

Oh how we need to hear Him speak in His word. We worship with the word of God in our hands, our heads and our hearts. We worship Jesus as the One who speaks with unrivaled power.

**Revelation 1:16b - His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.**

As John gazed into the face of Christ it was like looking into the blinding light of the sun ... too dazzling for human eyes to look at for long. What an awe-inspiring, stunning vision of Christ!

#### **6. CHRIST IS BRILLIANT IN HIS GLORY.**

So we're not surprised that John said...

**Revelation 1:17a - When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.**

You would too. John is absolutely overpowered by the greatness and glory of the resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ. Now this is interesting. While John walked with Jesus for those three years of Jesus' earthly ministry John and Jesus were close. In fact, John refers to himself in the Gospel of John as "the one whom Jesus loved." John seems to be the one who was always closest to Jesus. There was such a relaxed intimacy between them. And now sixty years after Jesus ascended back to heaven, John sees Jesus again, but this time with such brilliant glory and thunderous majesty that he falls down like a dead man ... overpowered by a vision of Christ.

John will go on in the Revelation to see greater things about the eternal purposes of God in Christ, but first it's personal for John.

**Revelation 1:17b-18 - Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 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.**

**ILLUSTRATION** – One of the boys my wife works with in her ministry came out of church and was running with his buddies to get on the bus. One of our men heard one of the boys yell to another, "We got us some Jesus today!"

That's the way it should be every day!