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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

We are going to see Jesus whether it be in the rapture or whether we die and see him. The time will come when we will be face to face with Jesus Just as in that song that we read by Terri Breck: "Face to face with Christ, my Savior / Face to face what will it be? / When in rapture I behold him / Jesus Christ who died for me."

When you see Jesus what do you think he will look like? Most of us have in our mind what we think Jesus looked like when he ministered for three years. Then we have in our mind what he looked like in his post-resurrection appearance when they recognized him but sometimes they didn't, how he could appear through walls. But the description in the Bible is not his earthly appearance, nor his post-resurrection appearance it is his post-ascension appearance, after he went back to heaven where he is right now. We're going to see what he looks like. As I told you this morning, David Koresh claimed he is the Lamb in the book of Revelation. He is even beginning to waffle a little bit on some of the statements that he has made but how in the world could a guy ever come to the place where he's believing and saying the things that he is saying? The entire Christian Adventist movement has an interesting origin.

In the mid 1800s there was a Baptist named William Miller, who from the study of the book of Revelation and from the study of the book of Daniel, came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was going to come back in October of 1843 and he formed a movement of people. It really wasn't even a denomination, because they were from different denominations and he, himself, was a Baptist. They gathered around and when Jesus did not return in 1843, he said, "I figured it wrong. It's actually October 1844 a year later and the movement grew and by the time October of 1844 rolled around, there were almost 100,000 followers in America of William Miller and they were called "The Millerites." Many of them sold their property, quit their jobs and gathered on a hill in upstate New York and on October 22, 1844, they were waiting for Jesus to come back. Of course he didn't return.

Some of them left the movement but he changed his doctrine to say, "It wasn't that Jesus was returning to earth it was that on October 22, 1844, Jesus entered into the Tabernacle in heaven and there was a denomination or a Christian group that was founded from that movement called, "The Adventist Movement." They have divided into different groups. The largest and best-known group is the Seventh Day Adventist Church. My step-grandfather was a preacher in the Christian Adventist Church. They weren't Seventh Day Adventists who met on Saturdays. They are really not a cult in and of themselves, they believe pretty much what we do but they still have a strong doctrine in the fact that Jesus Christ is going to come back and immediately establish his kingdom here on earth. There have been several branches and breaks and divisions in that group and this group that's in Waco bases their foundation on what the Bible says in Isaiah 11:1, "Out of Jesse a root shall grow and the branch shall be the Messiah." This branch is referring to Jesus Christ an Old Testament prophecy. Jesse was the father of King David so that's where they get this term, "The Branch" the branch out of Jesse out of David, "The Branch Davidians." In a fire fight with the cult's leader a few years ago, David Koresh took over. He exercises absolute "mind control" over those followers.

Let me give you the classical definition of a cult. A cult is generally a religious movement tied to a human individual. For Baptists, is there any human personality we trace our roots back to? No. Jesus Christ is the head of our church but we do consider the Mormon Church, the Church of Latter Day Saints to be a cult because they trace their beginnings and their origin back to Joseph Smith. That is the classical definition of a cult, any kind of religious movement that orbits around a human individual as its center. Koresh claims to be the Lamb in the book of Revelation to whom we will be introduced in Revelation 4. I’m here to tell you without equivocation that David Koresh is *not* the Lamb in the book of Revelation. The Lamb in the book of Revelation is one who has been slain from the foundation of the world. He died for our sins and the Lamb of God in the book of Revelation is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This book Revelation is all about Jesus.

Look in 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. 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.’” John says, “I turned around 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 a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were 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 out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”

John says, “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. 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. Write, therefore, what you seen, what is now, and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels” or, literally, the messengers “of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE VISION

Verse 19 is the key to understanding the entire book that is the threefold division of the book of Revelation. There are three parts to the book of Revelation. If you want to understand it, you have to have this key to unlock it. First of all there is the past. “Write the things that you have seen,” Jesus said. What did John just see? He saw a vision of Jesus that we’ll be talking about tonight. Then Jesus said, “Write the things which are” that’s the letters to the seven churches chapters 2 and 3 “Then, write the things which shall be hereafter” the future that’s beginning in chapter 4 to the end of the book. Today we’re going to look at that first section in its entirety, the past, the things John saw.

1. The physical circumstances

Notice three things about John's vision. Find out what was going on when John saw Jesus. First of all there were some physical circumstances. We learn in the Bible there are some physical surroundings there. It says in 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." So we know where John was when he received this vision. I shared with you earlier the Roman Emperor Domitian, had John boiled in oil. These Roman emperors had colossal egos and Domitian was one of the first ones who made it law throughout all the Roman Empire that every year every citizen of the Roman Empire must burn incense to him and must declare that Domitian was Lord of the Universe. John, of course, and many other Christians didn't do that. Many of them were put to death. When they boiled John in oil he did not die. I can imagine he was terribly disfigured can't you? And received terrible burns on his body. We don't know that, but I assume he did. They had a little law that if you tried to execute somebody and they lived, you could not execute them again; no double jeopardy, you might say.

Instead, they took John to the island of Patmos. When you think about him living on an island it was not Gilligan's Island. It was not some tropical paradise. I have seen the island of Patmos and it is a tiny, barren, windswept little island 23 miles southwest of Ephesus in the Aegean Sea. Why did Domitian put John there? Because John could no longer preach from there. He couldn't go around preaching the good news of Jesus Christ if he was exiled to this island but God always has the last word, doesn't he? Because while John was on this island, he received this vision from the Lord and what a blessing it is. Notice what John says in verse 9, "I am your companion in suffering." John knew the Christians were suffering and were persecuted. Every Christian who didn't burn incense to the Roman Emperor was sometimes being put to death. He says, "I'm suffering, you're suffering we are partners in suffering." It is a heresy that is being taught that says Christians never suffer. I don't know where they get that teaching, but they certainly don't get it from the Bible because Christians do suffer. The question is. When we suffer do we do it to the glory of God?

2. The spiritual circumstances

Those were the physical circumstances but there were some spiritual circumstances as well. He says in verse 10, "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit." This is the first time the phrase "Lord's Day" is found in the Bible. We assume it is on Sunday. The Jews worshiped on Saturday but the Christians began to worship on the first day and we believe this is the reference to the "Lord's Day." The Bible never says Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. Did you catch that? Some people say, "Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath and Sunday is the Christian Sabbath." You just try to find a chapter and verse on that. You won't find it. In fact, all of those Old Testament regulations concerning the Sabbath are passed away, nailed to the Cross of Jesus Christ and the Lord's Day, Sunday, the First Day, is when we gather and worship but we are not to obey the Sabbath laws for Sunday and it's called the "Lord's Day."

John says, "I was in the Spirit," meaning he was praying in the Spirit and he was praying so intently he was almost carried away in his prayer. Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever been praying and lost all sense of time? Any of you who have ever been through *Master Life II* you know one of the things in it is a four-hour prayer retreat. To me that's one of the most

valuable things that happens in *Master Life II*, because people go off and they spend four hours alone in prayer. Every time I have done that the time just passes so fast.

I recall one Sunday evening after a church service when God was doing some things in my life as a college student. I went back to my dormitory room and I laid there on my dormitory bed and I began to pray and talk to the Lord and I just continued to pray and pray and pray and I can't explain this to you but if it's anything like being caught in the Spirit I was. It was as if I prayed all night but I wasn't even aware of it. It was almost like I was sleeping and praying at the same time but the next morning the very moment it seemed like that I regained my consciousness I was continuing to pray and it's like I said "AMEN." It was like God just captured my spirit. That's what John was saying, "I was praying on the Lord's Day and I was just caught up in my prayer." And then he said, "I heard a voice from behind me." Look at what it says. "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet." There are a lot of similes in this passage of scripture. It wasn't a trumpet it was a voice *like* a trumpet.

Have you ever heard God speak to you? Very, very few times have I ever heard what I thought was God actually speaking to me, except in the Bible. I remember in 1970 when I was a lifeguard at Shako Springs Baptist Assembly. It was between my junior and senior year of high school. I didn't go to that camp to do business with God. I went because it was a good job. You could get a real good suntan if you were a lifeguard and you could meet plenty of girls too, I learned. I was having a great time being a lifeguard at this Baptist camp. But on the evening of July 24, 1970, I was seated about halfway back in the church auditorium. I don't even remember the name of the preacher who was preaching but he made this statement. He said, "God called me to preach when I was 17 years old and I have been doing that ever since." When he said that, as clear as I have ever heard anything in my life, a voice from behind me said, "David, that's what I want you to do." You ask, "Was it an audible voice?" NO. It was a lot louder than that! But it was so real to me; I literally jerked my head around in the pew to see who had said that. I scared the lady behind me to death! So I know what John is talking about and some of you do too! That happens very seldom but that's the way God called me to preach and I knew from that time on that it was what God wanted me to do. John said, "I heard a voice from behind me." Those are the circumstances of the vision that he had.

II. THE CONTENT OF THE VISION

1. The position of Jesus

Notice the content of the vision. What did John see in this vision of Jesus in the book of Revelation? As I shared with you earlier, what he saw was not some long-haired, rock musician guitar player in Waco. What he saw was a vision of the post ascension Jesus. Notice the position of the Lord, where he was standing. "I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me and when I turned I saw seven lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone 'like a son of man.'" John turned around and what he saw were seven lampstands with candles and he saw someone like a Son of God. Notice how he describes the way he was dressed. "He was dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet." That was what only priests wore; no one else wore robes that went all the way down to their feet. A priest was the only one who kept his feet covered with his robe and so it was a picture of the priestly role of Jesus. Then he said, "He had a golden sash

across his chest" that was the signal and the sign of a judge and so we see Jesus is not only priest but he is judge. So that's the position of the Lord standing in these golden lampstands, which represent these seven churches. What that means is Jesus is in the midst of his church even today. This is the main part of the message.

2. The picture of Jesus

Look at the picture of the Lord. In all the Bible there is only one physical description of Jesus and this is it! What do you think Jesus looked like when he was on his earthly ministry? Have you seen these pictures put out by the Baptist School Board in Nashville? Jesus has long brown hair, real fair looking skin big blue eyes and he looks so handsome. I'll tell you I have been to Israel and I've never met a Jew that looked like that. Sometimes we think Jesus was a real handsome man but the Bible says just the opposite. "There was nothing about him" the Old Testament prophecy said "that caused him to be attractive to people." He was just an ordinary looking guy. There was nothing physically attractive about him but when you see Jesus face to face either at the rapture of the church or when you die and stand before Jesus what do you think he is going to look like? Do you think he's going to be that brown haired, blue eyed or brown eyed, fair skinned or dark skinned? What do you think he's going to look like? I believe he's going to look exactly like he looked when John saw him so you had better be ready to see Jesus as he is described here.

(1) His Hair and Head

There are seven descriptions given of him. First, notice his hair and his head in verse 14. "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow." This is a picture of wisdom, of holiness and purity. John said, "When I turned around, I looked and I saw this man. He was like a son of man and his hair and his head were white as snow and white as wool," signifying purity.

(2) His Eyes

Next, notice his eyes. It says, "His eyes were a blazing fire." These are similes. It didn't say his eyes were on fire it says, "His eyes were like a blazing fire." Have you ever seen somebody like that? Who seemed to have fire in their eyes they were so intent in their gaze? If you want to cross-reference this sometime don't look it up now. We don't have time. But 1 Corinthians, 3:13 the Bible says, "One day all of us will appear before the judgement seat of Christ" that's Christians and our works are going to be judged by fire and the fire will burn up all the wood, hay and stubble but that same fire will purify the gold, silver and precious stones. Where is that fire going to come from? Could it be all Jesus has to do just look at us and that fire will try our works?

(3) His Feet

Next it says, "His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace." It doesn't mean his feet were bronze, it just says, "When I looked at his feet, they were glowing white hot." Feet are a symbol of judgement. How he is standing steady and his judgement is sure.

(4) His Voice

"His voice was like a mighty waterfall." Have ever been to Niagara Falls? I've never been but those who have tell me you can hear it long before you ever see it, because the noise of the cascading water is so loud. John said, "His voice was like a mighty waterfall."

(5) His Right Hand

In his right hand there were seven stars. We know from verse 20 that these seven stars represent the seven angels or the seven messengers of the seven churches. The word *angelos*, translated *angel*, can also mean human messenger. So I believe that in these letters to the seven churches when it talks about these seven angels it is talking about the pastors of the churches, the seven messengers.

(6) His Mouth

"His voice his mouth was like a two-edged sword." What does that mean? That means when he spoke, it cut in both directions. That's what the Bible says in Hebrews 4:12 "The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword." When Jesus comes back, as it describes in Revelation 19, that's the only weapon that's going to be needed at the Battle of Armageddon. They're not going to need 50 mm machine guns. They're not going to need to have some kind of FBI unit. They're not going to need armored cars. The only weapon used at the real Armageddon is the two-edged sword that comes out of the mouth of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

(7) His Face

His face is described as brilliant radiance in verse 16. "His face was like the sun shining in all of its brilliance." This is how I believe Jesus looks right now and I believe when you and I see him; this is what he is going to look like. Do you want to parallel this description of Jesus? What happened to the apostle Paul in Acts 9, when he is on his way to Damascus and he sees Jesus? He describes two things that are parallel with this. Paul said there was such a bright light; he couldn't even look at it. He said it was a light brighter than the midday sun. Then he said there was a voice. The sound was like thunder it was such a loud sound he fell to the ground.

I thought for many years before I read this passage of scripture that when I see Jesus he would be flesh-toned and brown haired and blue eyed and I was just going to go up to him face to face and just sort of look him in the eye and shake hands with him, hug him and say, "Jesus, I am so glad that I am here now!" That would be kind of like looking into the noonday sun. It's kind of hard to look at it, isn't it? His glory his "Shekinah" glory has to be shielded and veiled or it would literally kill us. So that's what John saw. That's the content of the vision of Jesus Christ, the only physical description of Jesus in the Bible.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE VISION

What happened as a result of what John saw in the book of Revelation when he saw Jesus? I suppose the closest earthly friend Jesus of Nazareth had was the apostle John. When they were at

the last supper, the Bible says John was reclining against the chest of Jesus. They were that close. When Jesus died on the cross, he looked down and the only disciple as far as we know had the courage to stand at the cross was John and Jesus had such a close relationship with John that from the cross he said, "John, take care of my mother. Mary you let John care for you like your only son." Tradition tells us John was the youngest of the twelve disciples and was only in his early twenties when Jesus called him. This is about 90 A.D. when all of this is taking place. We can date the book of Revelation about 90 A.D. So for 60 years Jesus and John were separated. How do you think John reacted when after 60 years he sees his Lord, the one he has been preaching about, the one he has been praying to all these years? I kind of picture in my mind that it's going to be like one of these shampoo commercials. Where you have two people out in a field and they are running toward each other and the music is playing and it is in slow motion, freshly shampooed hair bouncing all the way. Then finally they meet each other and they embrace and they go around and around and around as the music plays. That's kind of how I pictured Jesus and John would get back together. **WRONG!**

I want you to see how John reacted when he saw Jesus why? Because I think it is the same way you and I are going to react when we see Jesus. "When I saw him," John says, "I fell at his feet as though dead." If you don't think Jesus is the holy God now, you will then! If you think you're going to slip up to him and give him a high five and say, "Man, I'm so glad to see you, Jesus!" you're wrong. I imagine every one of us is going to react the same way John did. We're going to fall at his feet. We're going to collapse because of the glory and the holiness and the majesty of whom Jesus is. In fact, John must have wondered, "Who is this? Who is this? It doesn't look like the Jesus that I knew and loved. Who is this?" but it was Jesus all right because I want you to see what happened as a result of the vision.

1. A Word of Comfort

First of all there was a word of comfort. I love verse 17. John is at the feet of Jesus as a dead man and Jesus reached out his right hand and he put it on him and he said, "Fear not." I love that. It's the same Jesus who went through his ministry touching people, reaching out and saying, "Fear not." I imagine John remembered the time they were on the Sea of Galilee and how they got out in the middle of a storm in the Sea of Galilee and the ship was tossing back and forth. Jesus was up in the front of the ship asleep. Finally, they thought they were going to die and so they rushed up there and they woke Jesus up and said, "Jesus, you have to do something." Jesus smiled and said, "Don't be afraid. Everything is under control." John recognized his voice by that, "Don't fear." I imagine John might have remembered the time they were on their way to the home of Jairus, where Jairus' twelve-year-old daughter was sick unto death and how on the way there a messenger came and said to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. Don't bring Jesus. There's no use for him to come." And how Jairus broke down and wept bitter tears because his daughter died. Jesus turned to Jairus and said, "Don't be afraid. It's going to be okay." Do you want a study that will bless your heart? You just go through the gospels and you just see how many times Jesus reaches out his hand and tells somebody, "Hey, don't be afraid."

Some of you are lonely. Some of you are confused. Some of you are troubled. Jesus wants to reach out and touch you just like he did John and say, "Don't be afraid." How do we know it is Jesus? Because he identifies himself. Look what he says in verse 17 He says, "Don't be afraid. I

am the First and the Last." He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega." He says, "I am the same one that I was before and that I am right now." Then he says in verse 18, "I am the Living One: I was dead and behold I am alive for ever and ever and ever!" And he says, "I hold the keys of death and Hades." He says, "I'm the one who controls this thing. I'm the one who keeps the keys to the grave. I'm the one who keeps the keys to Hell to Hades. I'm in control of death. Don't you fear anything, John! I'm in control!" So he comforts him. Although when we see Jesus we will probably fall down like a dead man. Don't be afraid because Jesus will say, "That's all right. Don't be afraid. It's me."

2. A Word of Command

Not only was there a word of comfort but there was a word of command. He says, "John, this is what I want you to do. I want you to write down what you have seen" What has he seen? The vision of Jesus. "I want you to write down what's now," the seven churches, all the churches of all the ages. "And then write down what will take place hereafter."

CONCLUSION

I heard a story about an old man who every time he prayed he'd begin his prayer by saying, "Jesus, it's just Jim. I want to talk to you." He was known to be very plain spoken in his prayers. "Jesus, its just Jim. I want to talk to you." He did this for many, many years and the story goes that old Jim got sick and he was in the hospital and he was close to death. His pastor came to see him and Jim said, "Pastor, it won't be long now. I think I'm going to go on and see my Lord." The pastor said, "Jim don't say that. What makes you think that it won't be long?" He said, "Last night in a dream Jesus came and sat by my bed and said 'Jim, it's just Jesus and I'm here for you real soon.'"

The only relationship that won't be altered by death is the relationship you have with Jesus, because if you have an intimate relationship with Jesus right now, when you die it will be that much better. Even my relationship to my wife after I die it will be different. We will be separated for awhile. That relationship will be different but the relationship you and I have with Jesus is the only one that is the same today, tomorrow and forever!

OUTLINE

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE VISION (vs. 9-11)

1. Physical circumstances: Had banished John to Patmos
2. Spiritual circumstances: John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day when he heard the voice

II. THE CONTENT OF THE VISION (vs. 12-16)

1. The position of the Lord: In the midst of seven golden lamps
2. The picture of the Lord:
 - (1) Head and hair: White as wool and snow
 - (2) Eyes: Blazing fire (1 Corinthians 3:13)
 - (3) Feet: Glowing bronze
 - (4) Voice: Mighty waterfall
 - (5) Right hand: Seven stars
 - (6) Mouth: Two-edged sword
 - (7) Countenance: Brilliant radiance

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE VISION (vs. 17-20)

John fell down as a dead man. He hears:

1. A word of comfort: "Don't Be Afraid"
2. A word of command: "Write"