

## **Behind Closed Doors "A new Vision of Jesus" Rev 1:9-20** Sunday 24th May 2020

Good morning, I bring you greetings from Tabor Baptist Church in South Wales. And this morning, I wish you God's peace and trust that you're keeping well during this lockdown time. We're here on this Sunday morning to seek the face of God. We're here to worship him to fall down before him. We've been able to sing some hymns and now we're going to turn to God's word. But before we do that, shall we pray... let us all pray:

*"Loving, and eternal God in heaven we thank you that we are found in your presence this morning and in the quietness of our homes. We thank you that where two or three are gathered together in your name you are there in the midst. And Father in heaven as we come into your courts with thanksgiving. And as we enter beyond the gates, we praise you in our hearts. We pray oh Lord that you would draw near to us as we are drawing near to you. Father in heaven we know that you dwell in unapproachable light: No one has seen you or can see you. Yet we thank you that you have made yourself known in your Son Jesus Christ. And Father we thank you that by, and through him we can draw into the very presence of God. We ask all that you fill our hearts with joy. We pray heavenly Father that you would strengthen our hearts through your Word... that it might be true nourishment to our souls this morning. We pray that you might give us a fresh vision of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we would see something of His beauty and His Majesty and His glory. We ask o Lord that you by Your Spirit would invade our lives and invade our thoughts; that we may we be taken up with you.*

*Father on this Sunday we realise that some of our brothers and sisters are going through the most difficult of times. We think of those from our church who have been on the front line and have had such a difficult experience. We pray Lord for them that you would draw near to them and strengthen their hearts and encourage them. We pray too for our dear brother, Mal,...we ask that as he has had a difficult experience during the week that you draw near to him and comfort him. Father, we ask that he would know your presence that you would lift him up. Father, we pray too for our brother Ian's granddaughter that you would just intervene in that situation. And Father as this week as we have heard news from overseas, we pray for Andy and Tanya Ball in the Ukraine. We pray for their fellow church workers suffering with COVID and for the many Ukranian church members suffering in hospital: ...we pray, oh father that you will be gracious and merciful. We think too of the situation in Brazil where many are contracting this awful disease. we pray for the church at this time will be a beacon of hope and we pray Father that you would will be merciful to many people. And as so many are dying throughout the world we pray that this wake up call will truly be heard and men and women and boys and girls would turn to the Saviour. We just thank you Lord, that we know that we are in your hands and our lives, our very breath is in your hands and underneath us are the everlasting arms and we are trusting you. We understand that you will be with us this morning. Be with our dear older folk as they are Lord shut in and alone with very little human contact. Father be with them, we pray. So we commit this service to you. We ask this all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ again asking You to cleanse us from every sin. AMEN"*

Well, I want to tell you about a 90 year old man in lockdown. He's frail and he's isolated... isolated from his family and his church, and yet God is with him. Now one Sunday, this old man who is all alone, is taken up by God in the Spirit to another realm! He joins in the very worship of heaven!! He's taught monumental and inspiring truths about history and about the end of time. Above all, these old frail man has a vision of Jesus Christ, as he is now is in heaven. Who is this man? It is John, the apostle. Where is he? He's on the island of Patmos just off the west coast of Turkey, a small island 10 miles by 6. Why is he there? Because of his faithfulness to Jesus Christ. He's a pastor in Asia, a pastor of the church in Ephesus, and one of the most influential persons in that region. People look up to him from all the churches. So why is he on the island of Patmos? Well he's in exile because of his faithfulness to Jesus Christ. You see this all take places towards the

end of the first century, when Domitian that terrible Roman Emperor is persecuting Christians and banishing key people to labour camps on prison islands. So John is in lockdown. He cannot attend church. He's isolated. He's on a small, barren, rocky Prison Island and yet there Jesus comes to him in a vision, and he's told to write down what he sees!! And so we have the book of Revelation. Please turn with me to Revelation chapter one, verses 9 to 20. Isn't it wonderful what God has done for his people, when they're in confined situations? The Book of Revelation is given to us because John was confined on Patmos (similarly some of Paul's letters are written whilst behind locked doors in prison). So, let's read Revelation chapter one, Verse 9 to 20. Shall we hear the Word of God.

*<sup>9</sup> I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."*

*<sup>12</sup> Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. <sup>14</sup> His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup> His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; <sup>16</sup> He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. <sup>17</sup> And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup> I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. <sup>19</sup> Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. <sup>20</sup> The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches*

Brothers and sisters, we have the great privilege this morning of considering this vision that the Apostle John saw of Jesus Christ. So our message is entitled "**Behind closed doors – a new vision of Jesus**". Firstly, we'll look at what it means to know Jesus. Secondly, we'll look at who is Jesus. And then thirdly how may you find Jesus.

### **1) What it means to know Jesus**

Jesus. Some have been brought up in Christian homes. And some say there was never a time that they didn't believe. Right from the age of three or four when they first began to understand about Jesus they just accepted it all. And yet, there came a time when the truth about Jesus Christ became so precious and so real. And if that's you then it was then you could say you really knew Jesus because you experienced him. Now, I want to just use a human illustration. Think of finding your first boyfriend or first girlfriend. That first time when you fall in love. Nothing mattered more than your boyfriend or girlfriend. That's all you could think about and often all you could talk about. You see the relationship was very real and precious to you. And that's what it is to know Jesus Christ... It is not some distant thing. It is not a cold thing. It's not like looking at a textbook or reading some facts about Jesus. No it is an encounter; an encounter with a living Christ. You know you're such a sinner, and yet you're amazed that he should love you, and you embrace him and he fills all of your thoughts.

For John who was exiled to Patmos, his first encounter with Jesus Christ was at the lake of Galilee. Their Jesus came to him and his brother. And he and his brother they left everything to follow Jesus Christ. Jesus was more important than their livelihoods and their family; in fact more

important than anything else. And then after John had listened to the teaching of Jesus Christ and had witnessed his miracles he began to grow in his knowledge of Jesus Christ. In fact, he became a close companion, a close friend of Jesus; the one who laid his head upon the bosom of Jesus. He also had deep experiences of Christ. Jesus privileged him by taking him up the mountain with two other disciples, and before John's eyes Jesus was transfigured as his clothes became white like a laundry white sheet and his face was dazzling in its beauty there. John saw something of the reflected glory and deity of Jesus upon that mount. And then in Gethsemane he saw the heart of Jesus, as Jesus was prostrate in prayer: The man Christ Jesus, sweating great drops of sweat like drops of blood coming from his brow as he prayed to his Father in an agony. There in the Garden John saw the heart of Jesus, the compassion of Jesus, the love of Jesus for sinners as he prayed "Not my will, but yours be done." And then after the resurrection... after Jesus had risen triumphantly from the dead, John met him again behind locked doors. There in the Upper Room he saw the tender heart of Christ speaking peace to his soul, and he saw his tenderness in restoring Simon Peter. You see all the time John was growing in his knowledge and his experience of Jesus Christ. And then now at the end of his life, aged about 90 years old he has a new vision of Jesus, a vision that he's never seen before: Jesus in His glorified state! He'd seen him with a resurrection body, but now this is something even more glorious. You see, Jesus has been taken from this earth and he ascended, and he's been coronated, and now there's something even more glorious that he views. The words cannot really describe what he saw. He describes the vision of Christ in a series of metaphors. And so we see aspects of Jesus's majesty in his power and uses imagery to describe what he say. He refers to the mouth of Jesus, the feet of Jesus, the head of Jesus, the eyes of Jesus. And every description says something about his character and his personality and his being. The experience of seeing Jesus was so overwhelming that we read in verse 17, that when John saw him he fell at his feet, as dead. He was as if he could not move. He was just so overcome in the presence of the glorified Christ.

What is it to know Jesus? It's to know him in a growing relationship. First you confess your sin and you turn to Jesus in repentance, you embrace Him as your Lord and then you get to know him. There are many lessons of humility that you learn along the way. You begin to understand more and more of his Lordship. You learn what it is to suffer with him. You discover more of his character and more of him. In one sense it's like a good marriage where the couple deepen in their love for one another as they get to know one another. So as the time passes, you deepen in your love for Christ. Now John is at the end of his life and in perhaps the most difficult situation that he's ever found himself he sees Jesus with fresh eyes. He is as an old man who is frail and isolated on a place where the Romans have put people to forced labour. Perhaps he's in a labour camp on this little island 10 miles by six. And it's there, that he has a vision of Jesus: A vision that he's never seen before.

My friend maybe you're feeling your weakness during your lockdown; maybe you've started to reevaluate your life and you've asked yourself some questions. Where is my treasure? Is my treasure here upon the earth or is my treasure truly in heaven? Where is my confidence? Where is my hope? You see, when our routine changes and when we are put in positions that we never thought we'd be in, it should cause us to reflect upon our relationship with God. Vernon Higham, that great servant of God, who's now in glory suffered very much on this earth. At times he was very weak and spent many days upon his bed, only getting up to preach on a Sunday. But in that situation, then in all his weakness Vernon Higham had a new vision of Jesus. And he wrote it down. His experience is in our Hymnbook. In the hymn he explains something of the experience that he encountered in all of his weakness. He says this, "*I saw a new vision of Jesus, a view, I had not seen here before; beholding in glory so wondrous with beauty I had to adore. I stood on the shores of my weakness and gazed at the brink of such fear. 'Twas then that I saw him in newness regarding him fair and so dear*"

What is it to know Jesus Christ? It is to experience Him! Oh that you and I would know him, more and more.

## 2) Who is Jesus?

In order to experience Him we need to know who he is. How can we know Him? Well, we can understand him as he was upon this earth as we read the Bible. We have four Gospels. And as we meditate upon the wonderful truth that God has given to us about who his Son we will also get to know the Father, because he who knows the Son knows the Father also. We are just so glad that we are not left in the dark but we have the Bible and so we can see this lovely Lord Jesus displayed before us in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But who is he now? He's no longer upon the earth. Who then is this glorified Risen Lord Jesus Christ? Well we have a vision that helps us to understand a little more. Yes, we only see in part and we only know in part; we see as it were through a mirror dimly, but we do see something of the glorify Christ as we contemplate this vision. So let's turn to verses 13, and following to see the description that the apostle John gives of our glorified Saviour. First of all, notice he says that he's one *"like the Son of Man is in the midst of the seven golden lampstands."* He's one who is amongst the churches and described as one like the Son of Man. The title Jesus most often used about himself was this "The Son of Man." And automatically when we think of that title "Son of man" we think of his humanity. You see Luke traces Jesus's ancestry right back to Adam. Jesus is the archetypal man or the prototype. He is **the** Son of Man and he is the last Adam. He is the perfect man. But you know the title "Son of Man" is also a messianic title. We go back to Daniel chapter seven verses 13 to 14. And there we told that the Son of Man is coming as one displayed in majesty in power, as the great king of the nations; as the God-Man. One who rules overall. let's look these verses. Daniel says, *"As I was watching in the night visions behold, one like the Son of Man coming with a clouds of heaven. He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. Then to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed."* Who is the Son of Man? Yes, he is the carpenter's adopted son. He is the one, the child who grew up in Nazareth, he is from Adam, but he's also from heaven! He's the Messiah. He's the God-Man and he's the ruler of the nations.

But why does it say *"One, like, the Son of Man?"* Paul in Romans chapter eight tells us that Jesus, the Son of God came in the **likeness** of sinful flesh. You see, he was like us in every way but without sin. This is staggering isn't it?... that God should take upon himself human flesh, but not sinful flesh. He is the one who is limitless, who is infinite; the one who is outside of this universe and who is beyond all things. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end; the one who spans the universe and beyond. How incredible that He should be made like us and should somehow become like one of us. a speck in the midst of this vast universe. How extraordinary that God should become a man. Why? For the love of the human race!! This blows our mind that the Son of God should come into this world, take upon himself our humanity to redeem us. It staggers us that He should retain his humanity and go back to heaven in a human body all glorified. And now there's a man in heaven who is God! I remember in my 20s. It when I used to sing a hymn by myself. I loved it, the words were very poetic and some might say quaint, but the words it drew my heart out to the Lord Jesus. The hymn spoke about his voice, about his eyes, about his feet, about his lips, about his human brow. I'll just give you some of the words. They're old fashioned, but I trust that they will draw you out in praise to the Saviour

"And didst Thou love a race that loved not Thee?  
And didst Thou take to heaven a human brow?  
Doest plead with man's voice by the marvellous see?  
Art thou his kinsman now?  
Oh God, oh kinsman loved, but not enough.  
Oh man with eyes majestic after death.  
Whose feet have toiled along paths our pathways rough  
Whose lips drawn human breath."

John saw **a man** in the glory. In his vision he refers to his eyes, to his feet, to his mouth. He sees one walking amidst the candlesticks those seven golden lampstands. The one who loves his church and refines his church. The one who is jealous for his church: The great elder brother of the church who sanctifies and washes his church by His Word. John, the elder statesman, the great pastor of the church in Asia is now on his own far from the churches in Asia. But in his vision he's reminded that the Son of God, one like a son of man, is the pastor of the churches, and he can trust in Him. Now let's go on and consider the imagery in the vision. The first thing he saw was the robe with a golden sash around it. In verse 13 the Son of Man is clothed with a garment down to his feet and is clothed about the chest with a golden band. Here we have a picture of royalty and of regal splendour. Here we see the King of kings and the Lord of lords in his majesty. But surely we also have a picture of the Great High priest of his people. You see the Old Testament High Priest would wear a robe and around his chest. The sash was of various colours and woven into the sash of various colours, was a golden strand. So here in John's vision we see our great High Priest far greater than any Old Testament priest. Notice the whole of his sash is pure gold. He's greater and grander. He is the one who truly intercedes for his people. He is the one who purifies his people. And perhaps that robe reminds us too of his robe of righteousness, with which his people are clothed. Some people believe his feet refer to his very people for the robe goes right down to his feet covering his people.

And then *the head and the hair like wool, white like snow* (Verse 14). This is imagery. I believe that goes back to Old Testament pictures of the Almighty. As we think of the head, white wool we go back to Daniel chapter seven, and verse nine, and there we read the following: "*There as I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated. His garment was white as snow. and the hair of His head was pure like wool.*" Daniel was speaking about the Almighty and John sees Jesus who is shown to be equal with the Almighty. You see Daniel speaks of the Ancient of Days with hair like pure wool which speaks of his infinite wisdom, and Jesus is put on exactly the same level as the Almighty, the Ancient of Days. Jesus is infinite in wisdom and spotless in purity. His head is white, like the snow. You see all of his thoughts and all of his words, and everything about of his being speaks of Holiness. He is holy, and his name is holy. How wonderful to be able to turn away from our own unclean hearts and away from so much filth in this world, to look away from ourselves and to look up to Christ. He is robed in majesty and unsullied in beauty and glory. Oh that these thoughts of our Lord Jesus Christ will be so impressed upon our souls that will gaze in wonder upon him. And wonder of all wonders one day we shall see Him as He is ! One day there without sin all of his people will glorify the Saviour.

And then in verse 14 we read about his eyes. His *eyes are like a flame of fire* penetrating and burning into the deep recesses of the human heart. Daniel too like John, had a similar vision of the risen Christ and speaks of his eyes in similar fashion. We read in Daniel chapter 10 verses five and six: "*I Daniel lifted my eyes and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz. His body was like beryl; his face, like the appearance of lightning, **his eyes like torches of fire**, his arms and his feet like burnished bronze in colour and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.*" Daniel too saw the Lord of all history, omniscient, all knowing, all seeing with nothing hidden from him. And John saw those same fiery eyes: Those eyes of love, burning in jealousy for his church and the eyes of a perfect judge who judges with perfect acumen like no human court. Human judges sift evidence and make verdicts but sometimes make mistakes. Why? Because we cannot always see clearly. But the burning eyes of Jesus penetrate into the darkest areas of human existence and He sees all. Oh, if you haven't bowed the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ come now and confess your guilt. He sees with his fiery eyes everything about your life. Oh come and confess your sin to Him and He will forgive you

And then in verse 15 we read about his *"feet like fine brass"* ...perhaps blazing molten, red hot and gleaming. Here we see Him in his majesty and purity coming to sanctify his church. You see

we read in the next chapters of the waywardness of the churches in Asia. Ephesus is loveless, Pergamos is compromised, Thyatira is corrupt, Sardis as lifeless, and Laodaceia is lukewarm. The Lord Jesus Christ walks amongst the candlesticks, amongst those golden lamp stands with feet like fine brass. He's come to purify his people, those compromised churches in Asia Minor. He stands over them. Yes, he's stands over all me as the governor of the whole earth but judgement must first begin at the house of God. He will purify his bride. But perhaps those furnished feet also refer to the man of sorrows who when he trod this earth was as a man perfected through all of his suffering. And on the cross He who came through the fires of God's judgement and now he is strong, on behalf of his church. So him comes not only to judge, but to strengthen. And Jesus today walks amongst the churches of Great Britain and those of Europe too. He walks amidst his church in the vast continents of the world: Asia, South America, North America, Africa and Australia. Ye the Lord Jesus walks amongst the churches. He chastens his people out of love and He sanctifies his people. Oh that we would understand what He is doing today during lockdown.

And then we read this that he has *"a voice like a sound of many waters."* Ezekiel heard that same voice. We read it in Ezekiel 43 verse two about his voice. It is like a gushing, mighty, crashing, magnificent, roaring of the waters. A sound so awe inspiring, so powerful, and yet pleasant. The voice that spans the ages and speaks from heaven now. Yes He speaks through His word as his servants preach throughout the nations. He pleads. He commands. He invites. He urges. He warns. He woos. He speaks through His servants. He will not be silent. Yes, it may be lockdown, but through the internet and across the air waves Christ speaks to the nations. He's speaking in Africa now. He's speaking in Greenland now. His voice is like the sound of many waters, it will not be silent.

And then we read in verse 16 that He has seven stars in his right hand. Oh he's so majestic. He can just pluck seven stars out of the sky and hold them in his hand. The reference to the seven stars is a reference to seven messengers. The seven are the messengers of those seven churches that we read about later in the book of Revelation. But seven also is a number of completeness, and so it's as if he's saying all his messengers, all the messengers to the churches are in his hand (whether you see the messengers as literal angels, or whether you see them as pastors and teachers) Each one is secure in His hand. *"And out of his mouth comes a sharp two edged sword."* This is the Word of God coming out of his mouth. Why? Because the word of God is His very breath, it comes from his mouth. It is God breathed. But it is a sword too that cuts in every direction. It is double edged. It convinces, it converts, it wounds, it heals. It is living and active is sharper even than any two edged sword, it penetrates to the dividing of a joint and marrow and to the dividing of soul and spirit. You see Jesus comes with a sword, as a warrior. Have you felt the power of the Word of God upon your life? It is always sharp. When Jesus gives comforting words it touches a specific area of our lives. But that same words may also be used to cut to a cold and unconverted heart. Spurgeon noticed that it was when the Word of God was cited that people were converted. And he said it was every part of the Word of God that could save. He could preach on election, and people were converted. He could preach a message to the saints and people were converted. The gospel is so full and the Word of God is so powerful that it can change any life. Now our Lord Jesus Christ is pictured before us as a warrior. He fights against all ungodliness. Look at chapter two, and verse 16. Here we have the compromising Church of Pergamos, and they're told this: *"Repent or else I will come to you quickly and fight against you, with a sword of my mouth."* You see God's word is there to kill sin God's word is there to stamp out wickedness. God's word is there to thrust and to cut and to penetrate, and to slay all that is contrary to him in our lives. Do your work Lord Jesus even in us!!

But then brothers and sisters we come to the final image. He has a countenance like the midday sun. All those seven stars are eclipsed by his face. We think of seven stars in his hand but what is that compared to the brightness of the midday sun? If it was 70,000 stars, they're nothing compared to the full inexpressible infinite splendour of the face of the Son of God. Yes John saw

his glory, on the Mount of Transfiguration and was left in a daze. But now he sees something of the full splendour of Christ and he's left as one who is dead. So who is this man in glory? We've seen this morning in the vision of John just something of His Majesty and splendour. He is the glorious God-Man ruler over all. And notice that Jesus says to John: **"Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last,"** Is this not wonderful? Sometimes as you look at the description of Jesus fear is struck into your heart, and you begin to tremble. But he comes to you and says, *"Do not be afraid. I'm he who lives, and was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore."* He is awesome, but He is also kind and tender. So to close...

### **3) How may you find Jesus?**

You may not have a vision. But you have his Word, the Bible. And Jesus said *"More blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"* More blessed are those who have believed the written record of the Lord Jesus. You can read the Gospels and can read the epistles. You can read the book of Revelation. You can find Jesus there. Do you believe what you read and hear? Does it affect you? Do you confess your sin in his presence? He bled and died for sinners and will forgive all who come humbly before him. Will you not come now? May it be that he puts his right hand upon you and says, 'Do not be afraid. Come.'

But perhaps you have already come to Jesus Christ. Perhaps the majority hearing this message are Christians, but feel cold and far from Jesus. Maybe you feel like John isolated, cut off from the church, and discouraged and maybe even you're feeling a little frail. Remember, John. He was given a fresh vision of Jesus in his old age in confinement. You may not see an actual vision but in the Word of God all that you need to see is there. Oh that you will see Christ that your heart will be warmed and that you will be drawn out to him in worship. During lockdown may we experience the risen Christ anew. Jesus walks amidst the churches and he is seeking worshippers who will worship him in spirit and in truth. John was in the spirit on the Lord's Day and saw the glorified Christ. May you also be in the spirit this day. Amen