

Series: The Glory of God in the Person of Christ #1245

Title: Awe and Anticipation

Revelation 1.12-18

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world.-It is a joy to end this first week of August together.

And if you benefit from our time together each weekday, then I want to encourage you to invite friends and family to tune in. And the God Is Podcast exists so that if someone is not available to listen when this airs on the radio, then he or she can go straight to the website and easily download the Podcast. It's not hard to do. Just visit godisministry.org, that's godisministry.o-r-g and you will see each podcast front and center on the homepage. You can listen right there or download it.

Let's open the Scriptures now to the final of sixty-six Books and read from Revelation chapter 1 and verses 12-18. Again, this is Revelation 1, verses 12-18. This is a fresh section in our ongoing pilgrimage through this chapter. I hope that you have found your place. As always, I read from the New American Standard Bible (the NASB). This is Revelation 1.12-18.

"¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; ¹³ and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴ His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶ In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. ¹⁷ When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

Wow. That is my reaction after reading this! Honestly, I find this to be one of the most compelling passages in the entire Bible, and even in this Revelation, which is packed with remarkable reading. The Apostle John's encounter, in his heavenly vision, with **"one like a son of man"** elicits two primary emotions from me: first, I feel fear. I'll say more about this in a moment. Second, I feel joyful anticipation. My two emotions are fear and joyful anticipation. And I feel both, deeply, as Christ's disciple. I believe in Him with my mind, will, heart, and soul!

And my emotions are deeply affected by who He is, as well. I think we're all emotional beings and if we can passively read a text such as this, so descriptive of Christ Jesus, and not have it affect our emotions, then I question: what's wrong with us? God has made us to be touched in our emotions by His formidable presence, and this is where I wrestle – down in my emotions – when I read and re-read and pause to consider *who* the Apostle John saw.

And I said I feel fear. The kind of fear I am speaking of is a reverential awe of Jesus Christ! I respect Him. I yearn for His love, affection, and approval. Yet I know He is perfectly holy. And I know, very well, how *unholy* I can act. I am definitely not worthy of His endearment. When I consider who He is and who I am, I often struggle to see the relational connection. And so when I read about His eyes being like a flame of fire or out of His mouth coming a sharp, two-edged sword, and His face shining like the sun – I have a foreboding sense of fear, a reverential awe.

I know this is not a bad emotion that I ought not feel. I know that, as Proverbs says, **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,"** and I do trust in Christ's grace for the forgiveness and removal of my wretched sin. But I cannot imagine seeing who John saw and being capable for a millisecond to be – in any way, shape, or form – able to withstand His presence! Fear. Do you ever feel this way about Jesus Christ?

But then there is this accompanying emotion of joyful anticipation! Recently, when we talked about the rapture of the church, when Christians like us will see Him, and His Second Coming later on the timeline of world history, when every eye will see Him (including people who are not Christians), I get excited. The truth is Jesus has delivered me from sin such that I can withstand His holy presence, fills me with a great expectation that words really cannot due justice. On the one hand reverential awe (fear), and on the other hand, joyful anticipation. I'd love to see Jesus, my Lord, with my own two eyes *today*!

Now, you might be thinking, "OK, Swallow, get off your emotions here. We're not supposed to trust our emotions. Come on, get off yourself now, and get back to teaching the Bible." Fair enough. We're coming back to Revelation 1, verse 13 now, but I decided to share with you how I *feel* about this text because, well this is how I feel! For me, I enter the Scripture with my whole person. Studying God's Word is not a purely intellectual or mental exercise for me. This Bible is my life because it's on these pages where I meet with my Master, my Teacher, the Lord Jesus. And it is here where He prepares me, He sanctifies me – He makes me more like Him, such that I will one day fall right into His wide and loving arms of mercy and cry "Jesus!"

With this as background, let me ask a question: how do I know John here is describing Jesus Christ? Whatever gave me the idea that the one in the middle of the lampstands is Christ? The answer to that is clear. It's when John writes, **"I saw one like a son of man..."** That's in verse 13. "Son of man" is a title for Jesus Christ, taken for Him and used some eighty-one times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He used this title to refer to Himself repeatedly.

And this then is who is in the middle of the seven golden lampstands. And what follows in verses 13-18 is the Apostle's description of what Jesus looks like, what He is wearing, and how Jesus responds to John. And remember, John knows Christ. John was His early follower, disciple, and one of the twelve apostles. Yet, the glorified Jesus John sees in Revelation 1 is very different looking than Jesus the Man John and his brother James met along the Sea of Galilee that day in northern Israel!

What we will learn in detail is what Christ looks like now. In these verses John tells us in stunning detail. All that is here describes Jesus, the Son of Man. And I just have time today to remind you of something I said yesterday and to tie that into where the Son of Man is standing.

John writes, **"in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man..."** Jesus is in the middle of the lampstands and remember: we said the lampstands are representative of all the churches. Revelation 1, verse 20 says, **"the seven lampstands are the seven churches."** So this is Jesus, the Son of Man, amidst His church! *His* churches. The churches always belong to Christ. He is the Head of the church. And the Lord will never abandon His church. In Matthew chapter 28 and verse 20 He says, **"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."** Yes, His indwelling presence is always in the genuine and authentic church! And Jesus will always defend His church. We are going to see that as we move through these verses together.

And the emotion this stirs within me, as one who has pastored the church, is this: hope! Oh, so many churches in our present context are in real trouble. I do not know about your church and I am not going to name any churches in particular. But rather I'll put this to you as a question: are you intimately involved in a church – the gathering of believers by faith alone in Jesus Christ – who hear the Bible being taught Book by Book, chapter by chapter and verse by verse weekly (a people passionate about knowing God's Word and applying it; obeying it)? Does your church worship God and honor Him? Are the people in your church steadfast, persevering in prayer? How many missionaries have you sent out into the world to proclaim with clarity the Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you feed the hungry, cloth the naked, and welcome right into your church family addicts, the homeless, the mentally ill, the widow, and the orphan? Does this describe your church?

This is the church of Jesus Christ, and because He is standing in our midst, it gives me great hope! As you worship Jesus this Lord's Day with God's people in your local church, think about Revelation 1 and Jesus, the Son of Man.

Lord willing, I'll be here on Monday, and I hope you will be too. Because, God Is!

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