

What Jesus looks like

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[0 : 0 0] Now you'll find it very useful to have your Bible open at Revelation chapter 1. That passage which we read.

And the question that I'm asking this morning is, what did Jesus look like? What did Jesus look like? If you have a children's Bible, perhaps from your own childhood days, then Jesus will be a blue-eyed blonde.

More Anglo-Saxon than Middle Eastern. Well, although we don't know what Jesus looked like, we absolutely said that it wasn't like that.

We do not know how tall Jesus was or how much he weighed. We were not meant to know. And actually, we don't need to know. In fact, the most detailed description of Jesus in the Bible is here in Revelation chapter 1.

But it's not a photographic description. It's a theological description. A theological description. I suppose the best comparison that I could make is with poetry.

[1 : 1 7] Poems don't give us information. They give us an experience, don't they? My love is like a red, red rose that's newly sprung in June.

My love is like the melody that's sweetly played in June. Now, Burns doesn't tell us anything about what his sweetheart looked like.

He is telling us how he feels about her. John realized that the church in his day needed more than information about Jesus.

They needed an experience. An experience. They needed to see Jesus. They needed to see that the lamb who was slain was alive.

And that forever and ever. They needed to see that the one who had been laid in a borrowed tomb held the keys of death and Hades. Now, what was true for the church at the end of the first century is equally true for the church now at the beginning of the 21st century.

[2 : 3 0] Actually, it's always been true. Always. When the church loses sight of what her Lord Jesus is really like, she quickly goes astray.

And too often, throughout history, the church has turned Jesus into a projection of her own day and age. A Jesus who accommodates himself to the times.

That's why our children's Bibles used to portray him as a blonde European. We had enlisted Jesus into imperialistic, westernizing propaganda.

Today, I'm afraid, the Lord Jesus is treated more like the genie in the lamp. Whenever you need him, just rub your hands in prayer. And he'll appear and he will grant you whatever you desire.

He is at our then control. But the truth, my friends, is this. That the real Jesus is far more wonderful. Far more magnificent than anything we could imagine.

[3 : 4 1] Far more awesome. And this is the Jesus we need. This is the Jesus that the church in Scotland needs today.

So let's just look at this text more closely. Revelation chapter 1 from verse 9. I, John, your brother and companion of the suffering and kingdom and patience and endurance that deserves 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. John identifies with those who are suffering for Jesus.

He's not some ivory tower academic. He's not some cheerleader leading, trying to boil them on from the sidelines. He is one of them. He is one with them in their suffering for Jesus.

He is their brother and companion. Though he is in exile, though he is separated from everybody that he loves, though there are no other believers for him to meet with, on the Lord's day, I was in the Spirit.

[4 : 59] Despite his loneliness, despite his suffering, he still worships. And is it not the case that we are more likely to hear from God, experience God, when we are in a spirit of worship?

John says in verse 10, And I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. Now we need to understand that the book of Revelation belongs to a literary style called apocalyptic.

Apocalyptic literature was common in the ancient world, especially among the Jews, and it's characterized by the use of symbolism and metaphor to convey its message, rather than straightforward prose.

And actually, if we try to interpret it literally, we're going to tie ourselves up in knots. So, let's not make the mistake of trying to imagine a loud booming voice like a trumpet.

In Old Testament times, the trumpet was blown as a call to action, sometimes for worship, sometimes for war. John is told to write his message on a scroll, just like many of the prophets of old.

[6 : 20] Write to seven named churches. Seven is the number which symbolizes completeness. So, this is a message not just to those seven churches, but to the whole church, then and now.

He turns to see the voice. And what does he see? Verse 12. And when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the seven lampstands was someone like a son of man.

The lampstands are the lampstands that gave light to the temple in Jerusalem.

And we'll come back to them later. There are seven of these lampstands, and walking among them is someone like a son of man.

And that's a quotation from Daniel chapter 7, verse 13. It's very early on. What does Daniel tell us about this son of man?

[7 : 29] He tells us that he saw one like a son of man coming for the crowds of heaven. He approaches the Ancient of Days, the Lord God Almighty, who gives him authority, glory, and sovereign power.

All peoples, nations, and men of every language worship him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. And his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

This one like the son of man is no less than the central figure of history. The one to whom all peoples of every age owe allegiance.

Now, we tend to think of the title son of man as emphasizing our Lord's humanity, as opposed to son of God, which emphasizes divinity.

But Mark chapter 14, verse 61 tells us that when Jesus was on trial before the high priest, He is asked, Are you the Christ, the son of the blessed one?

[8 : 38] And when he answers, I am, And you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of the mighty one and coming on the clouds of heaven, The high priest tears his clothes and cries out, Why do we need any more witnesses?

He says, We have heard the blasphemy. Blasphemy. You see, calling himself son of man was a claim to divinity.

It was one of the most audacious claims that Jesus ever made for himself. What John says, That he saw someone like a son of man.

He's not using a long-winded way of saying, I saw a man. He is saying, I saw Jesus. I saw Jesus as Daniel saw Jesus.

I saw the Jesus to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. What does Jesus look like?

[9 : 41] He is dressed in a robe, reaching down to his feet with a golden sash around his chest. He is dressed like the high priest.

The high priest. Back in chapter 1, verse 5, John spoke of Jesus as the one who has freed us from our sins by his blood. That is Jesus, the sacrifice.

Here now is Jesus, the high priest. The one who offers the sacrifice. In Hebrews chapter 7, verse 27, we read, Unlike other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people.

He sacrificed for their sins once for all, when he offered himself. The next thing John notices is the head and the hair and the eyes.

Verse 14. His head and hair were white like blue. As white as snow. Now white is the colour of purity. White hair also speaks of age, doesn't it?

[10 : 53] Where else have we come across someone with hair as white as wool? Daniel 7 again. Daniel's description of the ancient of days.

Wait a minute, wait a minute. How can Jesus be the one who is like a son of man who approaches the ancient of days and be the ancient of days at the same time? And then again.

How could Jesus say to his disciples, John chapter 14, verses 9 and 10, Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father?

Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in you? And what about his eyes which were blazing fire? John is telling us that Jesus is not only pure, he is purifying.

Purifying. Fire gives warmth and light. But it also cleanses. It burns away impurities. The eyes of our Lord Jesus not only look at us, they look through us.

[12 : 08] They penetrate the masks and the veils we hide behind. Next in verse 15, are the feet. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace.

Now, where else do feet figure in a vision? Daniel again. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a giant statue destroyed by a giant boulder.

The head was made of gold, the torso of silver, the belly and the thighs of bronze, the feet, a mixture of iron and clay. And do we not still refer to someone having feet of clay, meaning that our high hopes of them have been disappointed?

Now, iron and clay do not mix well together. At its base then, at its very foundations, Nebuchadnezzar's statue was flawed. When struck by the boulder, it toppled over.

A bronze base is firm. Bronze is a combination of iron and copper. Iron is strong, but it rusts.

[13 : 20] Copper will not rust, but it is pliable. Combine the two into bronze, and the best quality of what is preserved.

What are we being told? Jesus has no feet of clay. Jesus will never disappoint you. His kingdom is built on a firm foundation, and will never fall.

Okay, so far we've been looking. Now listen, listen. What kind of voice does Jesus have? Well, he's not one of these great big fellows that has a wee squeaky voice.

His voice matches his appearance. Verse 15. And his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. Maybe you've been to Niagara Falls. It's deafening, isn't it?

Like the thunder of a mighty waterfall is the voice of our Lord Jesus. His is the voice that commanded the wind and the waves to be still. His is the voice that called Lazarus from the grave.

[14 : 29] And then in verse 16, John notices his hand. In his right hand, he held seven stars. Now at that time in history, only seven planets had been discovered, which is what the stars in Christ's hand represent.

People in those days were incredibly superstitious. They believed that their lives were controlled by the movement of the stars and the planets. But who controls the stars?

Who controls the planets? Jesus. Jesus does. This is a very powerful way of saying, the stars do not run your life.

Jesus does. The Son of Man is Lord of the Universe. At the very end of the chapter, verse 20, we read, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.

The pagans imagined that their lives were in the hands of gods and goddesses, the stars and the planets. The truth is, our lives are in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15 : 35] And he sends his angels as ministering angels, ministering servants to his people and to do his will. It really is, as the song says, he's got the whole world in his hands.

The writer to the Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 12, tells us, 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. And John uses the same metaphor of the sword to demonstrate what happens when Christ speaks.

Christ's words conquer. They cut through any resistance. They divide good from evil. They quell rebellion. They establish righteousness.

The kind of sword referred to there, it's not one of these long, narrow swords that you get at sword fencing. It's known as a companion sword.

[16 : 43] It was a sword that was used for hand-to-hand combat. When Jesus speaks, he invades your space. He gets up close and personal.

Last of all then, John describes the face of Jesus. Verse 16, his face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. This is a Jesus who was transfigured before Peter, James, and John.

Matthew 17, verse 2, his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Later on in Revelation, at the very end of the book, John tells us that the city, which isn't really a city, it's really the people of God, that this city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it.

For the glory of God gives it light and the lamb is its lamb. God is light and Jesus is the light of the world.

That's what Jesus looks like. That's what he looks like. And no wonder in verse 17, John says, when I saw him, I fell down on the street. There's no dead. How often has the experience of the divine terrified God's servants?

[18 : 12] Isaiah in the temple, Ezekiel on the banks of the river Kibar, Paul on the road to Damascus. And I ask you, how often has the experience of the divine caused you to fall on your knees or to lie prostrate on your face on the floor?

The answer speaks volumes about just how spiritually impoverished we are. John continues, 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 forever and ever. And I hold the keys of death and peace. Here again is a Jesus who is claiming divine attributes.

Isaiah 44 verse 6, This is what the Lord says, Israel's king and redeemer, the Lord almighty. I am the first and the last. Apart from me there is no God.

Friends, when we worship the Lord Jesus, we are not robbing the true and living God of the worship that he alone is due. when we worship Jesus, we are worshipping the true and the living God.

[19 : 41] Now, we're nearly finished. But before we do, there's just one last thing we need to note. We need to go back to those seven golden lampstands, the seven menorah of verse 12.

The menorah gave light to the temple in Jerusalem. And verse 20 tells us what the menorah symbolize.

The seven lampstands are the seven churches. They symbolize, they represent the seven churches. Why? Why?

Because the role of the church in the world is to be light. Jesus himself said, you are the light of the world. Let your light shine before me. Oh, it may be hard to shine for Jesus when all around you is darkness.

It may be hard to shine for Jesus when the world is trying to snuff you out. But here's why we can always shine, always. Jesus is with us.

[20 : 48] Among the lampstands was one like the Son of Man. Among the lampstands. Jesus is no absentee landlord. He is no king over the water.

He is here in the church, in the midst of us. Not outside looking in, not up above looking down. He is right here in the midst of us.

As poor and as weak and as beleaguered as we are, Christ is in the midst of us. As frightened and as puzzled and as confused as we are, Christ is in the midst of us.

As faithless and as compromising as we might be, Christ is in the midst of us. what a comfort that must have been to those to whom John was writing.

And what a comfort that should be to us whatever our circumstances. Only if one final question remains, one last question.

[22 : 02] Do you know this Jesus? This Jesus? If you have a picture of Jesus in your mind, I guess it's going to be one that you've carried from your childhood.

The Jesus of the soft hands and the soft eyes. Gentleman Jesus who never raises his voice, who never intrudes when he's not wanted.

I have to tell you, that is a false Jesus. A false Jesus and therefore a totally useless Jesus. totally useless.

John has given us a description of Jesus as he really is. Jesus of the blazing penetrating eyes. Jesus of the bronze feet and the voice like a waterfall.

Jesus whose word is a sharp double edged sword and whose face shines like the noonday sun. John is saying to us, behold you are God.

[23 : 10] Behold your God. Let's pray together. Oh, heavenly father, please help us to see Jesus as he really is.

Forgive us if we have created a Jesus in our own image, a convenient Jesus, a Jesus who never says no to us, a Jesus more like the genie in the lamp than the Jesus presented to us in the Bible.

Forgive us for that, oh Lord, and help us to see him, to see Jesus as he really is, the Jesus we need, the first and the last, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

In his name we pray. Amen.