

Revelation 1.12–19

The Living One

Amington

Sunday 10 May 2020

Revelation: Names of Jesus [2]

As though dead

< Start with camera on empty doorway – stand to the side >

I imagine most of you are watching this video inside a room with a door, much like this one – though probably without a cassock hanging off the back.

Have a look at it – really *look* at it. Notice its colour, its design, its size. Now imagine *< walk into the doorway and stand >* Jesus walks right through it. Picture it – how would you feel? What would you do?

< Move inside the room and sit down >

That actually happened to John. It was an ordinary Sunday. He was praying, singing, worshipping – when he heard a **loud voice behind** him (10).

He **turned round**, and saw Jesus – bright, brilliant **white**, **eyes like blazing fire**, **face like the sun shining in all its brilliance** (13-16).

Light that bright is piercing, hot, blinding, almost *sharp*.

If Jesus walked through that door < *turn and gesture* > my first thought was that I would run and throw my arms around him, as Mary did in the garden (John 20) – but perhaps I would actually react as John did:

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

Revelation 1.17 (NIV)

This might seem a surprising reaction. But when Moses goes up Mount Sinai the people are warned not to touch the mountain, or even go near it, or they will die. When David brings the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, someone touches it and dies. When Isaiah sees his vision of God he cries out, **‘Woe to me! I am ruined!’** (Isaiah 6.5, NIV). Or if you prefer the AV, ‘I am undone!’

Why?

God is so holy, brilliant, pure, and perfect that sin simply *cannot* be in his presence. He is like a **consuming fire** (Deuteronomy 4.24, Hebrews 12.29) – so perhaps falling down **as though dead** is the *right* reaction of reverence and awe – and perhaps *fear*?

Do not be afraid

One of the home groups had a chat about that this week. Fear in the sense of *reverence*: yes. Fear in the sense of *awe*: yes. Fear in the sense of *being afraid*: **no!**

(1) First, Jesus places **his right hand** on John (17). Under lockdown, perhaps more than ever before in our lives, we are learning how much we appreciate simple human contact. Video calling just isn't the same!

But there is even more significance. In the Law, the Israelites were not to touch anything 'unclean' – especially dead bodies – because the 'uncleanness' would pass from that to them, and *they* would be 'unclean' – a lot like a virus, perhaps.

Here, Jesus – the holy, pure, bright shining one – touches John, the one who is unholy and unclean.

(2) And then, he says, **'Do not be afraid'** (17). If only we could hear those words, hear them deeply, allow them to take root in our hearts. John had every right to be afraid: God's power and majesty are terrifying in their perfection.

'Do not be afraid.' As I said earlier; reverence, that's good; awe, that's good too; but *we do not need to be afraid of God.*

(3) Hear Jesus' reason why we don't need to be afraid:

I am the First and the Last. **I** am the Living One; **I** was dead, and now look, **I** am alive for ever and ever! And **I** hold the keys of death and Hades.'

Revelation 1.17b-18 (NIV)

To John, prostrate on the floor as though dead, Jesus says, **'Do not be afraid: I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!'**

Here I picture John looking up at Jesus, taking his hand, and then standing up. It's barely a parable, the picture is so obvious: Jesus, holy and pure, takes a sinful and dead man, and makes him *alive*.

But remember who Jesus is: he is not only fully human, he is also fully God. In Jesus can not only come *near* to God – we can *touch* him as well. How? We'll look at that more closely another time.

But for today it's enough to say that when Jesus touches us, we don't make *him* 'unholy', *he* makes *us* holy – and *alive*.

Prayer: what part of you is most dead, today? Where do *you* feel the trappings of sin and death most keenly in your life? We're going to picture those, and ask Jesus to touch us and make us *alive*.