

Lessons: Matt. 17:1-13; Rev. 1; AE 611

John's Vision of the Lord

John was one of the twelve disciples who were called by the Lord. He had followed Jesus for the three years of His public ministry. John had witnessed Jesus teachings and His miracles. John was known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. It was John who rested his head on Jesus' bosom during the last supper. John was one of the three disciples who saw Jesus transfigured on the mountain. John was there at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified. And it was John who was given the command by Jesus, "Follow Me" at the Sea of Tiberius just before Jesus ascended into heaven.

But now, many years had passed. Christianity had spread and there were churches throughout Asia Minor. And now John was an old man, living on the Island of Patmos, an island near the country of Greece.

And here the Lord appeared to John in a totally new way. John records in the book of Revelation that he was in the spirit on the Lord's day. He heard behind him a loud voice, a voice like the sound of a trumpet. John turned to see the voice behind him, and there was One like the Son of Men, standing in the midst of seven golden lamp stands. He was clothed with a garment down to the feet. About His chest was a golden band. His head and His hair were white like wool. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like fine brass, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand were seven stars, and out of His mouth went a two-edged sword. His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

When John saw this vision of the Lord, he fell down at his feet as if he were dead. But the Lord came to him and laid His right hand upon him, telling him not to be afraid, but to go and write these things which he had seen to the churches in Asia. What a contrast this vision was for John. It was a totally new way of seeing the Lord. Now, in his vision, given on the Isle of Patmos, John was able to see and behold the very essence of God.

I John's vision is a vision that each of us is to behold, as we come to see the Lord as He is now revealed in His second coming - to see His very essence. This first chapter of the book of Revelation describes the very process, the very miracle that each of us is to experience in our relationship with the Lord.

John was on the Island of Patmos. The Island of Patmos: the Writings say because it was near Greece, because it was a land where the gentiles dwelt, it represents a state of mind that is ready to be enlightened. Think of a time in your life when were in a state, ready to be enlightened. A time when you have no pre-conceived notions, no biases...but a state of humility and simple innocence...a time when you were ready to open up your mind and be led by the Lord alone. This is the Island of Patmos.

John turned to see the voice that spoke with him. The Writings tell us that to turn ourselves to the Lord is a state where we acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ is the one God of heaven and earth. This turning is said to be an inversion of our lives. Here, our spiritual lives are literally transformed. We Go to the Lord's Word and see Him there in a new way.

Let us look at some of the details of John's vision: it is a picture of how we can picture the Lord in His second coming. The Lord in the midst of the seven lamp stands - the lamp stands signify the Lord as to the Word. The Lord clothed with a garment down to the feet - His garments picture the truth that surrounds Him - it is called the Divine proceeding. He was girded about the chest with a golden band - it is a picture of Divine love, and a band of love that brings all things together. His head and hair were like wool - we are told this signifies the Divine wisdom in firsts and in lasts. His eyes like a flame of fire - the eyes here picture the Divine love in Divine wisdom. Imagine seeing the eyes of God, and seeing Divine love there. The feet picture the lowest things, the Divine Natural. The Lord's love reaches to the natural place of life. His voice of man waters. Imagine what it would be like to actually hear the the voice of God. In His hand were seven stars - the stars are all the knowledge of good and truth with the people of the church. Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword - like the surgeon's scalpel He can heal us from evil. And finally His face was said to be like the sun shining in it's strength. Imagine seeing the face of God - all love and wisdom proceeding from the infinite life itself.

When we first meet a person, we focus on their physical appearance - the shape of their face, the color of their eyes, their height and physical stature. But as we get to know that person, our mind's eye no longer focuses on their physical characteristics but we begin to know, love and behold their inner qualities - their loves, their ideals, the things they do, the thoughts they express. We begin to focus on the very spirit of the person wha dwells inside. It is interesting, when we picture the face of a loved one, the face we picture is more their spiritual countenance rather than their physical features.

The same is true of our relationship with the Lord. As our relationship with the Lord grows, we will come to that point, as did John, where we behold the Lord as to His very essence. We no longer think of the Lord materially, as He was in the world, but we see Him spiritually in our lives.

Swedenborg relates the story of a teacher in heaven who was telling his young students about the difference between thinking materially and thinking spiritually. The teacher told the young angel boys that this people in the next life who think only materially appear like dead horses in the light of heaven. The teacher angel said, "He who thinks of the neighbor only from form, and not from quality, thinks materially." "He who thinks of heaven only from place and not from love and wisdom, he also thinks materially." "And he who thinks of the Lord only from person and not from Essence, thinks materially."

The angel boys were concerned when they heard this. They said to the teacher, "We have thoughts of God from person, of the neighbor from form, and heaven as a place...did we appear as dead horses?" And listen to the gentle answer the angel teacher gave his students: "You are boys, and could not think otherwise, but I have perceived in you an affection of knowing and understanding, which because it is spiritual, you have also thought spiritually. And then the angel teacher went on to gently advise the boys: "But think of God from His essence, and from that of His Person - this is to think spiritually."

This is an important message here for each one of us. There may be times in our lives when we feel distant from the Lord, when we think of Him only from person. There may be times when we think only materially. And like the gentle angel teacher, the Lord allows this picture of Himself, as a stepping stone, as a mediate state in our growing relationship with Him. But then, like that angel teacher, the Lord urges us to think spiritually - to open up our interiors and think from an affection of spiritual truth. To think of the Lord from essence - this is to interiorly see the Divine qualities of love and wisdom. We open up our lives and we hear His voice, there we behold His eyes of fire, we behold His head and hair white as wool, His feet of brass, and the two-edged sword proceeding from His mouth. And we see and behold the Lord as He now reveals Himself to us personally, in His Second Coming. And this vision, our interior relationship with the Lord will touch everything we do in life.

Let us go to the place of Patmos, a place ready for enlightenment, and willingly turn and behold the Lord in our lives. He He will not leave you

comfortless, He will come again, and He will transfigure Himself before you as your Father and your God.