

Jesus Unveiled

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 August 2019

Preacher: Chris Thornton

[0 : 00] Let me just pray for us together. It's part of what we call a pastoral prayer. The idea isn't that I just pray and you just check out, but actually that we pray together for our church, for the city, and for what God is doing.

So if you just pray with me now. Loving, sovereign, gracious Father, we want to thank you that your perfect love casts out all fear.

Lord, we come before you and sometimes we're confused. Sometimes we doubt. Sometimes we wonder where you are in the midst of such perplexing times.

Sometimes we don't know how to respond. And yet you tell us that you are the everlasting God who does not grow tired or weary, who watches over us, who knows every hair on the head or on our heads.

You know everything. And you are the one who sees through the moments in our lives with the wide-angle lens of eternity. Lord, our worries and fears are so temporary, and yet you are eternal.

[1 : 17] Help us to see you like that. Thank you that you hold us in your loving arms. Help us not to just kind of know the right doctrines in our heads, but in our lives, whatever's going on in our city, in our families.

Lord, I pray that you'd help the truth of who you are to go deep into our hearts and our souls, Lord. That we'd have this deep, unshakable confidence in you. And Father, forgive us where we look at the circumstances of our lives through the lens of our own human understanding.

Forgive us where we fear because we've forgotten who you are. Forgive us where we try to control our own little worlds so that we don't have to completely depend on you, Lord. I pray.

Open our eyes to see you this morning. And Lord, we just want to keep praying for our city at this time. And we pray, Lord, particularly for the church in this city. We pray, Lord, unite your church.

Bring peace to this city. Don't let the enemy bring division and bitterness and hatred into our hearts. Let us have the courage and wisdom to know how to listen well to others.

[2 : 24] How not to get sucked into anger, but to forgive and to bless and to love and to seek opportunities to share you and be light across this city. We need you to do that, Father, in us.

Because it's so hard to respond the way you want us to respond. Please, we need you. We need you. Give us your grace, I pray. Father, we also want to keep praying for our kids and our youth as they're going back to school in this season.

Father, we know these are challenging times to be young. And we pray, Lord, that we would not just see our kids and our youth as the next generation, but actually see them as this generation that you can use for your kingdom, that you want to draw to yourself and want to use, Lord, mightily in their schools and with the people around them, Lord.

Father, we pray, bring them to yourself. Bring them to yourself so that they would have this sense of identity, not in their grades, not in how great their GPA is, but their sense of value and significance only in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, would you give them courage to not be ashamed in their schools to stand up for you?

Would you use them, we pray. And, Lord, we want to pray, Father, for the parents in Watermark.

[3 : 43] Lord, it is one of the hardest jobs. It is an impossible job unless you are the one who gives us the grace. And so I pray, teach the parents here to know how to disciple their kids well.

Give them grace in the challenges. Help them not to live under the guilt of feeling like they've failed in so many ways, but let them rest in your unshakable kindness. And out of that, would they parent kids not just for outward behavior change or just to get great grades, but would you help us to know how to shepherd their hearts, to know you, to love you, to live for you in all of their lives.

And, Father, we pray for us even as we start on this Revelation series. We pray for our hearts, Lord. We pray that you would speak to us. We pray against the enemy trying to distract us or trying to cause us to turn away from you or to get fearful.

But, Lord, I pray, open our eyes to see you afresh. And we pray this in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. The scripture reading today comes from Revelation chapter 1.

Please follow along in your bulletins or on the screen. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.

[5 : 02] He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

John to the seven churches that are in Asia. Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, a priest to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him. Even those who pierced him and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.

Even so, amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

[6 : 23] I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Theatrea, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands was one like the son of man, clothed with a long robe, with a golden sash around his chest.

The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow, and his eyes were like the flame of a fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

In his right hand he held seven stars. From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead, but he laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not, for I am the first and the last, and the living one.

I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades. Write, therefore, these things that you have seen, those that are, and those that are to take place after this.

[7 : 48] As for the mystery of the seven stars that 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 are the seven churches.

This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Jesse and Frankie. Welcome again to Watermark.

If you don't know me, my name's Chris. I'm one of the leaders here. And we're starting on our series in Revelation. And I'm really excited about this series. In fact, I'm really, we would say in England, gutted, which means very disappointed that I'm not going to be around for a lot of the series, because this is one of my favorite books.

And I think God is going to do something really significant in us through this series. And I think this is something which I think many of us, if you're honest, and I say the word revelation, you have a whole load of stuff that comes into your mind.

Because quite frankly, revelation is weird, right? I mean, it's weird and it's scary, because you've got kind of dragons and you've got like locusts and you've got monsters.

[9 : 07] It feels a bit like Harry Potter meets Lord of the Rings. A whole load of stuff. And to me, actually, as a Westerner, it's a little bit like Chinese opera. Because, you know, I look at it, bits of it look familiar, but I just don't get what on earth's going on.

And I need someone to help and guide me in what it is. And this is the kind of book that's just got so many different interpretations. I mean, Revelation is the book for people who are conspiracy

theorists.

Okay? So, I just heard recently, someone said to me that Donald Trump is the beast. And the reason their logic went like this, they said, well, Donald Trump, they own a property which is at 666 Fifth Avenue, and he came to power in 2016.

Which, if you put 666 plus 666 plus 6 plus 6 plus 6, together it makes 2016.

I did the calculations. And over time, it's not just Donald Trump.

[10:18] I have heard, like, almost every U.S. president there's been. Stalin, Mao, King John II, the European Union, and I have even heard, this is my favorite for the beast, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

But we're not going to be talking about Donatello very much in this series. And so what I want to do this morning is to actually spend some time introducing the book to you, because this book isn't a book written for crazy conspiracy theories.

This book is about life and death. It's got a message that God wants to speak to us. You see, it's a bit like this.

When Fiona and I took a wedding in Kosomui a few years ago, and we went out sea kayaking. And halfway through, our boat just capsized and overturned in the water.

And we found ourselves being pulled out to the sea by the current of the waves. And it was a scary moment. And we looked over, and we could see the shore.

[11:27] And at that moment, I could see my flip-flops going, my sun creaking. Everything was floating out to the sea. And we grabbed onto the boat, and we just started swimming. We saw the shore, and we just started swimming as hard as we could to get to the shore.

And we made it, because that's why I'm here today. Otherwise, I'd be out somewhere in the Indian Ocean. But I don't know if you've ever been swimming in the sea.

And after a while, you suddenly kind of look up, and you realize that you've just got dragged out far further away from the shore than you realized. Isn't that a scary moment?

And this is a little bit of what the book of Revelation is about. Because the book of Revelation is trying to give you a wake-up call to say, it's trying to show you, that's where the shoreline is.

That's where the kingdom of God, that's where Jesus is. But actually, we're in a culture which has a tide of idolatry, which wants to pull you and drag you further and further away from God.

[12:33] And you've got to see both the danger that there is in being dragged out, but also the beauty that there is towards the shore. So it encourages you to keep swimming towards that shore.

That is what Revelation is about. Because it says, no matter how difficult it is to swim against the tide, Jesus is with you and he's overcome. That's some of the message of Revelation.

And so the book starts with this. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the things that must soon take place.

And so here's a few things about what this book is. First of all, Revelation is a revelation. Now the word revelation in Greek means apocalypse.

That's what the word is. But apocalypse doesn't mean like end of the world. Apocalypse means like an unveiling, a revealing. It's a bit like when you pull back the curtain and you see like on the stage, you see like what's behind the stage, what's behind the scenes.

[13:42] Or it's like if you kind of walk, you just walk into your home and someone's been cooking and you smell something and you're not sure what it is. So you go to the saucepan and you lift the lid and you're like, oh, now I see what it is.

That is what Revelation is about. It's an unveiling. But what is it unveiling? What is it revealing? It's revealing behind the current events that are going on in the first century, there's a spiritual reality behind them.

You see, this book is written to churches in Asia Minor, which is western Turkey. Some of us were there just a few months ago. And what you know at that time is the Roman Empire looks all powerful.

In fact, peace, wealth, job security, career advancement, public approval, all of it is determined by how in favor you are with the Roman authorities around you and the religious system that goes along with it.

So the Roman emperor at the time was a guy called Domitian. And there should be a little picture of him. Here we go. Handsome looking guy. But somebody said this, Domitian was a profoundly insecure man.

[14:57] To compensate for his insecurity, he ordered all citizens as subjects of the Roman Empire to worship him as Lord and God. All citizens were to go to a temple built in his honor, take a pinch of incense, throw it on the fire, and say, Caesar, kurios, Caesar is Lord.

This is the background. And Asia Minor, where Revelation is written to, is the center of emperor worship in the whole of the Roman Empire.

And it's filled with both worship of the emperor and all kinds of pagan gods. And everybody worships them except Christians and Jews. You see, the pull of the current was very strong to just go along with what everyone else was doing.

And do you know in Revelation, there's a number of commands which are repeated. The most common commands are this. Behold. That means see.

Look. And then don't fear. Behold. Stop looking in the natural, just the power of Domitian and the emperor around you.

[16:10] He thinks he's in control. But you've got to see with spiritual eyes who's really in control. Stop seeing human circumstances with your eyes. See them with my eyes.

That's what Revelation is about. Behold. Do you see what's going on behind the scenes? Do you see? So, this is what apocalypse is.

Revelation is. But how does an apocalypse work? And this is called kind of apocalyptic literature. So, Revelation is written in this style. We don't use it any longer.

But it's really common in between 200 BC and 200 AD. And it has tons of kind of imagery in it. And why is it written with all this kind of imagery and things?

Well, John, who we think was probably the last apostle alive, he wrote this book. And he could have gone, hey, Jesus wins.

[17:10] Just hold on tight. The end's coming. Don't worry. The end. See you, John. But he doesn't. Why doesn't he?

Well, because advertisers know. If you're trying to sell a Tesla, you don't, your advert doesn't just have a little talking head of someone going, it's a good car.

You should buy it. It's nice for the environment. No, a Tesla, what they do, they show you this dramatic kind of inspirational music. They show you these scenes of these cars gliding on impossible terrain.

And the power. And you get this kind of visual feast. And at the end of it, then they bring you just to the Tesla logo. And by that point, you want to buy one. Because the idea is what Revelation is doing, it's bringing you full cinematic special effects.

Because it wants to get to your emotions. It wants to feed your imagination. It wants to show you the beauty of the shore, but also the horror of getting pulled out to sea.

[18:21] It's trying to shake you up. That's what it's trying to do. Because do you know that your choices and my choices are not driven out of what I think, I just kind of believe in my head.

They're also driven about what has captured your heart, your imagination, and your soul. And so John is trying to capture you. And so how does he do this? Okay. Well, one of the things he does in this is he uses lots of symbols.

So I'm going to show you a picture. This picture was, oh, no, this should be another one. Yes, this one. This was produced this year.

Can anyone tell me what's going on? Who? The guy on the left? Versus? Okay. Now, obviously there's little flags on there, but you know instantly what's going on, right?

If you were to come to me and go, I didn't know that dragon's arm wrestled. You'd look at me and you'd go, you've missed the point, right?

[19:26] Because you know what the image means. Now, that's what Revelation is doing. There's all these images in it. And most of them are taken from Old Testament imagery.

And the problem for many of us is actually our Old Testament is, you know, we're a little rusty on the Old Testament. But actually, you know, there's 404 verses in Revelation. About 280 or more of them have allusions to the Old Testament.

So it's using all these images. So that's why if you get to things like plagues, it should remind you of Egypt and the Exodus.

Or you get to beasts and kingdoms and it should remind you of Daniel. And all these kind of things in the first century context, John is applying the Old Testament into his context.

With these images, which everyone would get. It's just we have to work a little bit harder because we're in a different context. But this is how apocalyptic literature works.

[20 : 27] We take the context and then we apply the image even into our context. So that's symbols. Another thing that apocalyptic literature does is numbers.

You know, I heard one guy arguing with a scientist that the earth can't be round because in Revelation 7, it says the seven angels were standing at the four corners of the earth. Do you see, he's missed the point. It's meant to be talking about the whole earth. But, you know, we use numbers, right, to mean things. If I use number four in China, why has the lift not got the number four?

Because it stands for death, right? Eight. What does eight mean? Prosperity. Fortune. Okay. If my wife says to me, I've told you a thousand times, don't put the sponge in the sink.

Has she literally told me a thousand times? Probably. You get the point, right?

[21 : 37] So this is what apocalypitics is doing. And so the number seven you will see come up everywhere in this passage. Seven is the number of completeness or wholeness because of the number of days in creation.

We've got complete creation. So there are seven churches here. Now they are seven real churches which met in houses, often before sunrise on Sundays.

And they're all on the postal route. If you can show the picture. They're all on the Roman postal route. They go around. So the messenger would have just carried them around. One church to the next. But he uses the number seven though deliberately, not just to say it's written to them, but also this is a message for all of the church.

And so that means when John wrote this, he didn't write it to us. He didn't say, dear watermark. But he did write it for us because the message is for our context as well.

So revelation is a revelation, an apocalypse. It uses all this imagery. Okay? A couple more small things before we get on to it.

[22 : 45] It's also a prophecy. He says, Blessed is the one who reads aloud the word of the prophecy. Now when you hear prophecy, many of us think prediction into the future.

Well, that's a small part of prophecy, but most prophecy in the Bible is actually God just speaking into the context, saying things like repent, don't fear.

Okay? There's hope. Be encouraged. Okay? Judgment is coming, so just turn to him. That's what most prophecy is about. And so if you're kind of seeing revelation just as like the Left Behind series or anything like if any of you have ever watched any of those things, you might have missed what John is actually trying to say here.

He's trying to speak to them and saying, God wants to speak to you now. Thus says the Lord. So it's a revelation. It's a prophecy. But it's also a letter.

Someone would have come with a little scroll. Revelation would have been on a scroll, by the way. And they'd have opened it up. And he would have said, John, to the seven churches in Asia.

[24 : 00] And then the book ends with, The grace of Jesus be with you all. It was a normal letter. The whole book is a letter. Written to real people in a real context in the first century who were expected to understand it.

Okay? So that's why he says, Blessed are the ones who reads it aloud, who hears it, people listening, but especially who keep what is written in it. They couldn't keep it if they didn't understand it.

Okay? So if you think the beast is Barack Obama, Donald Trump, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, then clearly that's not what John has in mind because none of them knew about the turtles in the first century.

Okay? Okay? It's not God's secret code. It's meant to be understood by all of us. Now, this is just introduction.

Finally, I do have to say, there are some things in this book, and I've read this book quite a few times, I still don't get, and Kevin still won't get, and that's okay. There will be some bits in this book that probably you may disagree with.

[25 : 12] with the way that we share. That's okay. But don't lose sight of what John's message is. If you, and you're going to, in your CGs, you're going to be spending some time in this book, if you spend all your time in debates about whether the locusts are really U.S. Apache helicopters or not, you'll have missed the whole point of what John is trying to say to you.

The idea is to get you swimming, keep swimming to Jesus, keep trusting Him, keep obeying Him, keep loving Him, keep repenting and relying on Him. The book's message is actually the same as the gospel message throughout the whole of the rest of Scripture.

It's just written with special effects to wake you up so you don't fall asleep in the sermon. Okay? So, do you get that? It's a revelation, it's a prophecy, it's a letter.

Shall we get into the book? Great. Let's get going. Okay. Verse 4. Grace to you, and peace from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

Who is this letter from? It's from the Trinitarian God. He says, He who is and was and is to come, that's a reference to Exodus, where the Egyptian Pharaoh seemed all-powerful.

[26 : 46] Moses is to go to Him, and Moses says, Who do I say has sent you? He says, I am who I am. God's saying, I'm the eternal one. Don't define me by any ruler because I have existed before anybody else.

And it says, It's from Him. And if I walk into Watermark this morning with a letter saying, Hey guys, the eternal Father, the Spirit of God, which is what the seven spirits are, and Jesus Christ, who is the supreme one, who is the one who testified to His Father even unto death, the firstborn one, the supreme over death, the one who is the head over every chief executive, every president, every ruler, He's got a message for you this morning.

Would you sit up and listen? If He said, I want to reveal to you and show you behind the scenes what's going on in your life right now, would you sit up and listen? Because God does have a message for us this morning through the book of Revelation.

And what He's going to say, He's going to say some incredible things, but He starts off, John, with this fact that God Himself wants to speak to us.

That's mind-blowing. He then goes into praise and He goes, Do you know what He's saying?

[28 : 28] He's saying, this God wants you little small churches, before anything else, He wants you to know that He loves you. Watermark, that He loves us.

Did you get that? That He loves us. I mean, that's just insane. And His love is not conditioned by anything that's happening in this city right now.

His love is not conditioned by the circumstances in your family right now. It's not conditioned by your health or your job situation. Do you want to know how you know the Trinitarian God loves you? Because of the cross. He says, He freed us from our sins by His blood. You know, I was speaking to a lady just last week and she came to me and she said, you know, we've been trying to have a baby for a year now and we haven't been able to conceive and I'm not sure whether God really loves me.

And I think John would go to her, I know it's hard. But don't look with human wisdom in your circumstances here. Behold, see, don't fear.

[29 : 48] See the cross. See, my love is grounded in the fact that I've given everything for you. I shed my blood to set you free, to make you my people, to make you a kingdom, which means you make you mine, to make you my priest, which means you have access into my presence.

I've done everything to bring you to myself, to set you free from shame and sin and fear. Don't you know that I love you? And then he goes, behold, he's coming on the clouds.

Jesus is coming. And he doesn't just say, Jesus will come. He says, no, no, no, you've got to see Jesus coming as imminent, as close, as present, because he wants to shape the way you view your present circumstances in the light of him.

And he says, one day, everyone who mocks your faith, who think it's just wishful thinking, this Jesus stuff, one day they will see him and the tribes on the earth will wail on account of him because they will be, they will see him on the shore and they'll see how far away they were swept out to see.

But can you see him? Can you see his coming? Why do they need to hear this? Let's go to verse 9.

[31 : 17] I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and kingdom and patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the isle of Patmos.

Well, Patmos is just about a few hours away from the Turkish coastline. But John is exiled there because he's been preaching the gospel.

Because he, he's realized this is not a popular message at their time. To say Jesus as Lord and God is to say Emperor Domitian is not.

And that doesn't go down very well. They say, your gods are actually false gods. And the churches are either facing compromise or persecution.

Either hide your faith, blend in, try and kind of go with the flow of the current or stand up and be prepared that actually it may cost you. Just imagine if you're a parent, someone putting a knife to the throat of your child and telling you, all you have to do is deny Jesus and just say Caesar is Lord and we'll let them go.

[32 : 32] Can you feel the pain? This is where the Christianity gets real. Where, when Jesus says, if you acknowledge me before men, I will acknowledge you.

If you deny me before men, I will deny you. And suddenly, it feels so much more real. And it hasn't happened to all the churches yet, but just down the road in Pergamum, it has.

One of the guys was just killed not long ago for their faith. And John's saying there's a cost to following Jesus. Is it worth it? You know, in Iraq, in Syria, in India, in Somalia, even in parts of China, our brothers and sisters are facing the same kind of thing.

And we may not be under death threat, daily. I think most of us, that feels a little distant for us in Hong Kong. But John would still say we are a partner in God's kingdom, the shoreline, in the hope, but also a partner in the tribulation, in the suffering.

There is a cost. This is kind of the hard part. You know, for us, maybe it's losing a business deal. Maybe it's losing a guy that you really like.

[33 : 46] Maybe it's losing a job or losing a friendship. Maybe it's been called intolerant or bigoted or homophobic or something like that. Following Jesus' costs, and the current can seem strong, but he wants to say, Jesus is coming.

Can you see him? Can you see him? And so then, John, in the light of this kind of hard place, what he does, we're going to now see John has actually four visions.

The book is structured, there's four visions there. We're just going to look at the first one. So, the first one is a vision of Jesus himself. How are we doing?

Good. you see, John has this vision and he hears this voice behind him. You see, it's all kind of cinematic. I can't even say the word.

So, he hears this voice behind him and he turns around and he sees seven golden lampstands, which we know later on are the churches that he's writing to.

[35 : 00] That's what they stand for. And why are they lampstands? Because the lampstands were in the temple of God in his presence and they would burn. So, when you walked in, it would have been dark and you walk in and you see these lampstands burning with candles on them.

They are light in the darkness. That is what the churches are supposed to be. Light in the darkness of the world around them. And then what he sees, he's saying, these little tiny churches, they're only 20, 30 people, something like that, like a big community group.

You are the light in the midst of all this powerful empire. You are my light. Watermark, you are my light. And in the midst of the lampstands, who does he see?

And this is beautiful. I love this. He sees Jesus. He sees his vision. And Jesus hasn't gone on holiday in the midst of the pressure that they're facing and the uncertainty.

He's not missing in action. Jesus is right at the center of the churches. This is, I just think this is beautiful. Liverpool. You know, I'm a Liverpool fan.

[36 : 11] And do you know what, does anyone know, what is Liverpool's theme song? Here we're going to test whether you're really true human beings or not. Pat?

Yes, Pat, would you like to sing it? No, it's okay. You'll never walk alone. I'm not even going to sing. You'll never walk alone. That is their song. And you'll hear it all the time when they're playing.

And that is actually the song that Jesus wants to sing to them. Do you know that you'll never walk alone? Do you know it doesn't matter in the midst of the fear, in the midst of the uncertainty, in the midst of everything that's going on, you'll never walk alone.

You may feel small, insignificant, powerless, but do you see him? Do you behold him? He's with you. And if you know who it is who's with you, it changes everything.

Because here now he begins to unpack what he sees. And he sees one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and a golden sash around his chest.

[37 : 26] And the picture is from the book of Daniel, where the Ancient of Days, God himself, takes his seat to rule. And then this God-man figure comes up to him and he is given a kingdom.

And Jesus is this son of man given a kingdom and he's dressed in the robes of the high priest with a golden sash around his waist.

Sorry, around his chest. I don't know if you know, normally, if you're about to get to work, you put a sash around, it's like a kind of belt, around your waist. But if you put it around here, that shows that you've already done your work.

The work's finished. Jesus' work of saving us, he's dealt with sin, he's dealt with pain, he's dealt with death, he's our great high priest, brings us into access into his presence.

And then the hairs of his head are white like wool, like white wool, like snow. Now, I don't know about you, that kind of, that seems a bit weird. But in our culture, you know, we tend to value kind of youth and like, if you get grey hairs, my wife cuts mine out and I'm sure, like, you probably dye yours because we don't get the idea that actually, white grey hair is a sign of wisdom and also the whiteness is purity.

[38 : 41] So here is the man, here is the God man who has all wisdom, who knows exactly what he's doing and he does it right. And do you know in Daniel's vision who had white hair, it was God himself.

What he's saying is Jesus is divine. He is God himself. And he's saying, and then he looks at him and he sees his eyes are like a flame of burning fire.

They're like lasers. And you know, fire burns, it penetrates, it purifies. What he's saying is, if his eyes are like fire, they can see right through every facade you ever put up.

They can see right beyond every fake smile you put on right into your heart. You see, Jesus doesn't deal with pretenses and excuses.

He knows what's going on right in your heart right now. And if you are right now feeling a million miles away from God and we come into church and we all put up our nice mask, Jesus sees right through it.

[39 : 56] He knows exactly where you are. There's nothing that's hidden. You're naked before him. That feels scary, doesn't it?

Except if you know that he's the one who loves you and has freed you from your sins and you can run to him. So what that means is we don't come pretending before Jesus any longer.

Do you know, in Watermark, there is no room for fake Christianity. Do you know that? If you're in pain today and you think you've just got to put on a brave face and pretend that you're fine, Jesus sees through that and he wants to draw you to himself.

Don't be fake within. He sees and he wants to free you from your shame. Do you see him? And then his feet are like burnished bronze and they're on fire, which is the idea of strength and purity. He's unshakable. You know, bronze is heavy. No political circumstance or persecution can move him off balance. And then his voice is like mighty waters.

[41 : 12] His voice drowns out every other voice. He is glorious. And the last two things in this list, he says, in his right hand he has seven stars, which are the seven angels.

And the word angel means messenger. And some people have thought that actually the seven angels were kind of like the pastors of the churches. Which I think is an amazing thought if you think about it because I know like Ed and Oscar and Kevin and Simon, they look beautiful.

But I don't know if I've ever called them angels before. I mean, angel Kevin just led us before. Right. No, the angel, you know, angel in the book of Revelation has a very specific meaning.

It means angel. And so, what he's saying though is that every church that he's writing to, this is extraordinary, has in the heavenly realms, in the spiritual realms, has before God a representative who looks over us.

There's something behind the scenes, even with watermark. Which is, I think that's incredible because you think, we worry, will we have enough finances? Will we have more people like on a Sunday or not?

[42 : 32] But he's saying, the angels, he holds them in his hands. And so, if Jesus holds the very spiritual representatives in his hands, then why are we worrying?

Why do we worry about all our finances and all the other things? He's already got us. Do you see him? Stop seeing in the natural. See behind.

Last thing of this list. He's got a sharp, two-edged sword coming out of his mouth. This is how you know that you're not supposed to take this literally.

Because it would be very awkward to have a conversation with someone like a meter-long piece of metal in their mouth, right? Just turn around. Oops, sorry. Right?

It's not meant to be taken literally there. It actually comes from Isaiah 42 where God brings his servant to bring justice and he said, you made my mouth like a sharp sword.

[43 : 38] What he's talking about is talking about Jesus' word. That just with a word, Jesus has power. I don't know, like, authorities and rulers have to use military force to enforce their own authority and power, right?

They have to bring in troops to kind of gain control of something. Jesus doesn't. He just needs a word. You know, in creation, what does God need?

He needs just a word to speak things into life. You see, in Hong Kong, in our present circumstances, all it needs is just one word from Jesus and everything would change.

Just one word. Do you see him? He's got the power to condemn and the power to equip. His word hasn't got a blunt edge to it. That's why it's two-edged.

It cuts. As the rain comes out, isn't it sometimes hard to believe, though?

[44 : 44] When you look around and the world sometimes seems so messed up and you go, is Jesus really that authoritative?

I mean, really? Does he really have that power? And John in the book of Revelation is going to go, behold, see with the eyes of faith, I want to show you, I want this to go from here down to here.

And you know, he keeps going, do you see him? Because how do you respond when you see Jesus? How do you respond when you see Jesus?

You know, I have friends who go, when I see Jesus, I'm going to ask him why I didn't get that job.

Or I'm going to ask him why he didn't let me date that person.

I don't think you will. Because when John sees Jesus, he falls down at his feet as though dead. He's not giving Jesus a quiz.

[45 : 52] He's just stunned. He just falls down. He's on the floor. He's laid out. He's trembling. He's going, man, I'm dead. I wonder, do we ever see Jesus like that?

Or do we just have what I call cuddly Jesus? You know, he's got a nice little lamb in his shoulder. Right? That's often our picture of Jesus. And this picture is actually, it's a little bit scary.

Right? But what I love is the next part. Because we must have that vision of Jesus. But then he goes, Jesus puts his strong right hand in John and says, fear not.

I'm the first and the last and the living one. I've overcome. Because if you know that I am the awesome, fearful one, then just a word from me will drive out all the other things that you're afraid of.

You know, I knew someone who had a guard dog called Al. Al. And Al was one of those kind of dogs that you were like, don't mess with me kind of dogs, you know?

[47 : 07] And so, but with his family, he was like the most loyal dog. He would die for them. He was like, he was so tender and gentle. He would lick them. They'd just be, like just so, like the three year old kid could go up to him and just kind of stroke him and be beautiful.

But when a stranger came up, suddenly he'd get on all fours and would start growling. And if that person started backing away, then he would start moving closer towards him.

Because Al was a guard dog. And though he was tender and gentle, he was also fierce.

But if you walk down the road with Al into like a rough neighborhood where you would never normally go, you know that you'd be fine.

Because you're with Al. And his presence with you is your confidence. Because you knew that he was a guard dog. But he was also a tender guard dog.

[48 : 18] This is John's picture of Jesus. he loves us. He's given everything for us. But are we close to him or are we running from him?

Because right now in Hong Kong there's a lot of fear. Let me ask you, what are you afraid of? Is it the economy? Is it your investments failing?

Is it your health? Is it loneliness? Maybe never getting a boyfriend or a girlfriend? Is it barrenness?

Is it your boss or your family?

Never able to draw good boundaries? Is it sharing your faith with others? We don't need,

Watermark, a cuddly Jesus. We need to behold him for who he is.

We don't come lightly before him. We don't treat him lightly in our office when we're tempted to just go and hide our faith and just go along with the flow of everything else.

[49 : 23] We don't treat him lightly in our fears. But the Trinitarian eternal God has a message for us this morning. Just think of the things you're afraid of.

What's the worst thing that could happen to you? What's the worst that could happen to you? Isn't it ultimately that we could die or your family could die or your dreams could die?

Jesus says, I have the keys of death and Hades. You know, someone said Jesus went into the prison of death and he came out with the keys.

You see, he holds the keys. So if you lose the most precious thing to you, even if you die, he's got the keys just to open the door to life.

You know, he's just not, I've just got the keys to the economy on my key ring. It's not just I've got the keys to your personal security on my key ring. I've got the keys to death and your entire future for eternity.

[50 : 40] Behold, see, do not fear, but come to me. My dad last week had a stroke.

He's making good progress now. But in one second he went from normality to ICU. Everything just stripped away.

It's scary. my brother, 26 years old, 76 years old, died from brain cancer. Scary.

But if Jesus holds the keys to resurrection life, then I don't need to live in fear. We don't need to live in fear.

Because no chief executive, no president, no ruler, demission, nobody else has that kind of power. Only Jesus does.

[51 : 47] Only Jesus does. He loves us. He died for us to free us from our sins. And he's calling every one of us to run to him today, wherever you are.

Bring all of your fear to him. if the government came in and shut down this church, Jesus wouldn't move a muscle.

He's got the keys. His presence, in his presence, there is freedom. Do you see him? There's no fear.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, I just I realize how small my view of you is.

Father, I pray for us show us Jesus. We don't want our little view of Jesus. We want who you really are.

[53 : 14] The one who loves us so much that you'd die for us. For the one who is awesome that we don't want to tread lightly with you. Father, I pray for those of us who right now, we know that we're running away from you.

Our hearts are distracted. Father, I pray for a wake up call this morning. Show us yourself. I pray for those of us who are struggling.

Things around us seem overwhelming. We wonder how we can really hold on to you. show us that you have overcome.

We just need to hold on to you because you are the one who holds our lives. Maybe some of you just need to do business with Jesus right now.

Allow his spirit to convict you. Allow him to speak to you. He's got a message for you this morning. Do you see him?

[54 : 29] Do you want to see him? Open our eyes, Jesus, to fall more in love with you. If you need prayer afterwards, I encourage you to come up now.

There's going to be some prayer guys who's going to be here ready to pray for you. Don't put up pretenses. Jesus sees right through, but he wants to heal you. to restore you.

So be courageous and come up and have people pray for you. We love you, Jesus. Amen.