

**I Fell at His Feet as Though Dead**  
**The Intimidating Jesus of Revelation 1**  
**Sunday, September 18, 2022**

The wild and intimidating picture of Jesus that we see in Revelation chapter 1 is consistent with how God is portrayed throughout the Bible. God will appear to a person, be they a prophet or priest or simple shepherd, and will do so in a manner that terrifies the person seeing the image of God. John's reaction to this intimidating Jesus in Revelation 1 ("I fell at His feet as though dead.") is like other reactions found earlier in the Bible.

In Exodus, God appears to Moses in a burning bush. A bush in the desert was on fire but was not consumed by the fire. As Moses comes to see what is going on, God calls from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" ***"At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God." (Exodus 3:6)*** An intimidating encounter with God, followed by a terrified response.

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah sees an image of the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted. The train of the Lord's robe filled the temple. 6 angels were above the Lord with 6 wings, covering their faces with two wings, covering their feet with two wings, and flying with two wings. The angels called out to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." The sound of their voices shook the doorposts and thresholds and the temple filled with smoke. Isaiah says, ***"Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." (Isaiah 6:5)*** An intimidating encounter with God followed by a terrified response.

Elijah, another prophet of God, was on the run from the authorities when God revealed God-self to him. While on the run, Elijah declares, "I have had enough, Lord, take my life!" God sends Elijah out on the mountain so he can reveal himself to Elijah. A great and powerful wind tore the mountain apart and shattered the rocks. An earthquake rumbled through, followed by a fire. God was not in the wind, earthquake, or fire. But then God speaks to Elijah in a still small voice. ***"When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave." (1 Kings 19:13)*** An intimidating encounter with God followed by a terrified response.

This pattern that starts in the Hebrew Scriptures continues into the book of Revelation, when Jesus appears to John to give John a message for the churches.

I don't want us to rush through the image that John records of Jesus in Revelation 1. I'm going to read through the details given about Jesus slowly. If you have something you want to draw with try doodling this image as I read it. If you want to follow the words with me, go ahead. If you want to close your eyes and visualize what John is describing, be my guest. You can event return to this passage later and draw drawing what you read. Let's listen to this portrayal of Jesus together and try to imagine what he is describing here.

- *I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,*
- *and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet*
- *and with a golden sash around his chest.*
- *The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow,*
- *and his eyes were like blazing fire.*
- *His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace,*
- *and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.*
- *In his right hand he held seven stars,*
- *and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword.*
- *His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.*

What stands out the most to you from this description? What catches your attention? How would you respond to seeing this Jesus if you encountered him in the mall?

John's response: ***"I fell at Jesus' feet as though dead."*** Jesus appears, intimidating and imposing, and John can't even process what he is envisioning. The Jesus of Nazareth that lived among the people, cared for the people, taught, was crucified, and resurrected, appears to John like something out of a horror movie.

I want you to listen very closely to the next words that I am going to tell you. They could one day save your life.

How do you scare away a cougar? Let's say you are in Waterton National Park this fall, and you have a close encounter with a cougar! What do you do?

Based upon information that I have found at national and provincial parks, here is how you defend yourself in a cougar encounter.

- **You face the cougar and back away slowly.**
- **You get really large, and you make a lot of noise.**
- **You keep children close, picking them up without bending.**
- **If you are attacked, you fight back.**

This is only instructions for confronting a cougar. I can cover bear attacks in another sermon if you wish, but this is life-saving info in a cougar encounter.

When you make yourself big to confront a cougar, you are trying to intimidate the cougar to create space and fear. You are creating intimidation and distance.

When God shows up to people throughout the Bible, God shows up as massive! Intimidating! Terrifying! But when the Lord shows up in these intimidating ways, God is not creating distance or pushing away. God in all of these instances is drawing near.

God shows up to Moses in a burning bush and gives Moses a job specific to him alone.

God reveals God seated on a throne in the temple with unfathomable angels and thunderous voices, and asks Isaiah "Who will speak for us?"

God makes mountains crumbles around Elijah yet appears fully in a still small voice.

Jesus, eyes blazing like fire, stars in his hands, TWO-EDGED-SWORD COMING OUT OF HIS MOUTH, appears to John, who fell at Jesus' feet as though dead, places his right hand on John and comforts, "**Do not be afraid.**"

Jesus shows up as this imposing, menacing presence and declares, "Do not be afraid." But in showing up looking like this and offering comfort, Jesus is communicating to John and the churches:

- **"There's nothing bigger than me."**
- **"I am with you."**
- **"I got this."**

Consider the first audience of these messages. The first audience of the book of Revelation is the early church. The early church is new, inexperienced, and vulnerable. The early church is beat up, suspected, and disqualified by many around them. Each early church in its town has needs, problems and pressures. Jesus has messages for 7 of these early churches, but his first message is: "There's nothing bigger than me. I am with you. I got this."

The early church, through John, sees an image of Jesus that is terrifying. But this image of Jesus is bigger and more terrifying than any enemy, problem or circumstance that could ever come their way. This Jesus is bigger and deadlier than conquering Rome, and yet he is on their side.

The early church, like the poorest, most-persecuted, and harmed Christians today, have an image and understanding of Jesus that is bigger than prison, torture, poverty, famine, loss, illness or murder. They live in hard realities, and yet they know that Jesus is greater than all those things. They have this large understanding of a conquering Jesus, and that know that Jesus is for them, and that the Spirit of Jesus indwells them. They find genuine comfort and peace in this image.

None of the awful things that the early church has faced, that the persecuted church faces, that we have faced and will face, have the final word over us. Jesus of Revelation 1 declares, "**Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and hades.**" (Revelation 1:18) Jesus is above all things, bigger than all things, and the final word on all things.

We are a room full of people with past, current, and future problems. Some problems are small. Some are massive. Some problems that we thought were massive seem small after we encounter even bigger problems down the road. We all end up in circumstances that are impossible. We all end up in places where there are hard decisions that we need to make, and no one decision seems right.

But I believe that the Jesus that terrifies John, that makes John fall at his feet as though dead is available to us today. The Jesus that is above all things, bigger than all things and the final word on all things is available to us today.

Whatever it is you are going through or will be going through, there's no magic faith formula to make those things go away and give easy answers. But the history or God's work in the world, the history of the church, the history of those who have nothing but their trust in God through Jesus reveals a God present with us and available to us in all situations.

According to Revelation 1, there is nothing in this world bigger, or more intimidating, or more imposing, or more terrifying than Jesus.

He is with you.

He is for you.