A Pastor's View

Revelation 1:12-17 "The Glorious Vision"

By Shawn Thomas
Angleton, Texas

George Washington was one of the greatest men in American history, and he also LOOKED the part. Ron Chernow writes: "People were transfixed by Washington's lean, virile presence. … Benjamin Rush stated, 'He has so much martial dignity in his deportment that you would distinguish him to be a general and a soldier from among ten thousand people. There is not a king in Europe that would not look like a (chamber servant) by his side." (Washington: A Life, p. 183)

Few have had the impactful presence of George Washington. But Christians serve One far greater. In Revelation 1 God gives us a picture of Jesus that is unmatched by anyone in all of history.

First, it reveals His Majesty. Verse 13 describes Him "clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash"

In ancient times, the kind of garment described here signified a person of importance: a ruler or king.

Often you can tell from what someone wears, that this is "someone important." George Washington, at one of the first meetings of the Continental Congress, showed up in his military uniform. It wasn't hard to tell who the General was! God shows us here that Jesus is the King, and you can immediately tell it from what He is wearing!

Second, 14 reveals His Eternity and Purity: "*His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow.*" The first Christian commentary on Revelation was written by Victorinus of Petovium, who writes that the whiteness of His hair signifies his "antiquity and immortality." He is "the Ancient of Days" as Daniel says; "*From everlasting, to everlasting (He is) God*"! (Psalm 90:2)

Whiteness in scripture often also represents purity. Mark 9:2-3 says that in the Transfiguration, "He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them." Jesus' disciples saw that He was ultimately holy. No other righteousness or holiness compares to His. We may think that we, or someone we know, is righteous, but not in comparison to Jesus' perfect holiness.

When Cheryl & I served in our first church, it snowed that winter. Birds were looking for food so Cheryl made some popcorn to put out in the yard for them. Watching from the big picture window in the living room, I asked Cheryl: "You didn't BUTTER that popcorn for the birds did you?" She said, "Of course not!" The reason I asked, was that in the bowl the popcorn had looked white. But compared to the pure, new-fallen snow, it appeared very yellow.

In the same way, Isaiah 64:6 says "*All our righteousness is filthy rags*" compared to Jesus, God's perfect standard. But the good news is, Jesus' perfect, snow-white righteousness is the righteousness He GIVES US when we ask Him to save us. II Corinthians 5:21 says "*He who knew no sin, became sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" Jesus takes our sins on Himself, and He gives us His righteousness. As Isaiah 1:18 says, though our sins are red as scarlet, they will be as white as snow! But only HE has that righteousness, pure and white as snow.

Verse 14 indicates "*His eyes were like a flame of fire.*"

Have you ever known anyone with "fiery eyes"? Author Jonathan Alter writes how President Jimmy Carter was known for his trademark smile. But those who worked with Carter revealed that there was another side to him: if you said something foolish, or suggested he do something for politics and not for the merit of the case — Carter had a look in his eye that would almost cut you in half!

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Evergreen Church

The Necessity Of The Cross

By John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law and that he must be killed and after three days rise again." Mark 8:31 Christianity without the cross is not Christianity at all, but a shabby, slimy substitute. The word of the cross is what makes it Christian. What does it mean? Three elements will come out as we continue our study in Mark. First, it means the end of the natural, the end of what we call self-sufficiency. That is the philosophy of the day, and how the world despises this message that it must be done away with! Not only does the world not understand it, it literally despises it! Anyone who preaches it is regarded as preaching nonsense. As Christians, we are called upon either to believe our Lord or the voices that whisper in our ears--one or the other. Which is right? The word of the cross means the end of all our reliance upon ourselves, and we do not like that. It means wiping out a natural life. Nothing that we have by virtue of being born is ever worthwhile or acceptable in the sight of God. A cross wipes people out. It does not improve them, does not better them in any way; it wipes them out. Furthermore, the second element involves pain and hurt. It always does, because we do not like being cut off. Which of us, if allowed to choose the program by which we serve God, would ever include in it defeat, disaster, despair, disappointment, and death? Yet these are the very elements that God finds absolutely essential to working out His plan for us. Difficulty and danger? Yes, we include them. They challenge the flesh and make it appear to be something when it overcomes these. But defeat? Never! Dishonor? Never! Disaster? Disappointment? No! Death? Inconceivable! But they are what God chooses. The third element of the way of the cross is that it leads to a resurrection. Is it not strange that the disciples never seemed to hear Jesus when, every time He spoke of the cross, He said that after three days He would rise again? They seemed arrested by the cross and could never get beyond it. They rejected it, refused to listen to it, and so they never came to an understanding of what the glorious event of the resurrection would mean until it actually happened. But the way of the cross always leads to a resurrection, to a new beginning, on different terms. It leads to freedom, to being set free from natural catastrophe and disaster, to having your spirit peaceful and at rest, despite what is happening to your body or your person. This is what people really want. How we long for and dream of being free, whole, adequate, able to handle life, able to cope with whatever comes, undisturbed at heart. Father, I ask that You will help me understand that Jesus is in the hurts, in the disappointments, in the disasters. He is leading me on, setting me free from that which is shackling me; all my self-sufficiency and self-reliance, all my desire to be exalted, and my desire to be made much of. Since the Cross and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus are the foundational pillars of Christianity, do we seek to grasp and value their profound effect upon our daily lives?

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