

Revelation of Jesus

If you ask your mates what Jesus looks like and who he was, then aside from the usual comments about not caring, not knowing, that they don't believe he existed or silly comments and abuse – you may get replies like:

- He had a beard
- He had a white cloak on
- He was a hippy
- He was a religious freak
- He was boring
- He was a good man like other religious people
- He cared for the poor

Apart from the fact that Jesus only wore the same kinds of clothes as everyone else in those days in Israel and that his life wasn't boring, the picture of Jesus that Revelation paints is radically different...

We'll look at Revelation and at Ezekiel in the Old Testament to see these pictures of the Lord, and think about what we can learn about Jesus, our lives and churches from this.

Old Testament – the description of the Lord in Ezekiel

There are some incredible and powerful pictures of God that we can find in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1 as well as Revelation 1. We need to know that God is super-creative, amazing and definitely not boring. He is full of light, colour, beauty, fire, passion, love, life and more.

If we were to look at the nature of God that Ezekiel 1 described, we'd find some amazing things! As part of the church, we need to start to show these amazing things to world!

The creatures surrounding the Lord:

- A windstorm, with lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The centre of the cloud was like shining metal.
- Inside this cloud were 4 creatures whose feet glowed like bronze, each with 4 faces – a human, a lion, an ox and an eagle. They each had 4 wings which touched the other wings.
- Wherever the Spirit went, these creatures would go. The creatures each had a wheel which was like the precious stone topaz, the rims of the wheels were full of eyes
- Spread out above their heads was a vault that sparkled like crystal.

The Lord himself:

Ezekiel 1.25-28: Then there came a voice from above the vault over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him.

Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

- Was on a throne that was made from a precious stone
- The Lord was 'high above' on this throne.
- He was like a man.
- From his waist up he looked like glowing metal as if full of fire.
- From his waist down he was like fire.
- Brilliant light surrounded him.
- He was like the appearance of a rainbow on a rainy day, such was his radiance.
- When Ezekiel saw this, he fell facedown.

So what does this mean for me?

Imagine a church modelled on this picture of Jesus! What would it look like? (What should it look like?!) Here's some ideas...

- The 4 faces of the creatures is something many people trace back to the encampment of the Israelites and the formations of their tribes and battles. We won't look into that here, but it does say something maybe about the kinds of people we need to be - we're human but need to show the courage of lions, the work of ox's and need to soar like eagles with God.
- There is a real need for connection with each other. The 4 creatures had their wings touching each other. They were inter-connected - that is what we need to be as individual Christians and as church.
- The creatures also only moved where the Spirit was leading them. This is what we need - to only do what God tells us to do, to follow God's guidance and not step outside of doing what he says!
- God is also high above us. The Bible tells us his ways and his thoughts are way higher than ours. We don't always understand what is going on in life, but faith lets us know that God does. He's in control!
- God is holy and is a consuming fire. Some people get this lame image of Jesus being some kind of soft hippy. But he is holy, he is a fire and not to be taken lightly. Yes, Jesus is our friend but he's also God, and one day will come back to earth to be a fearsome judge.
- There is also an incredible picture of beauty, colour, light. There are precious stones referred to, there is great creativity in the way the creatures move. There are pictures of fire, glowing metal, brilliant light, rainbows. You know what - God created art, beauty, the artistic and creative and he wants this to flourish in your life and in your church!

– God is so holy, that our response is worship – Ezekiel, Isaiah, Paul the apostle and John all fell down in his presence. When we meet with God and understand who he really is, we can only worship him. This great all-powerful God who willingly died to give us life and who loves us with a passion that words cannot describe.

The picture of Jesus in Revelation 1.12-18

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. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not 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.

So what can we learn from this picture of Jesus?

1. Jesus wants to speak to us. He spoke to John, he speaks through the Bible and speaks to us by his Holy Spirit today in loads of creative ways – Bible, people, books, prayer, visions, dreams and more!
2. The lampstands refer to the church – Revelation 2 and 3 go on to talk about seven different churches. The great thing about this is that Jesus is standing among the churches. Jesus passionately cares and is totally involved in what happens in your life and the life of the church. He's right at the centre and a wise church is a church that actively puts Jesus at the centre!!
3. Jesus is 'someone like a son of man' wearing clothes just as we do (OK so they're not exactly the same as our clothes but they would've been to people at the time the Bible was written and to many in the world today). Jesus relates to you, he wants you to relate to him. He's not distant or weird, he's someone who can and wants to connect with you.
4. Jesus has hair white like wool and white as snow. This doesn't mean he's an old man in his rocking chair, but the white is about purity and holiness. In Psalm 51.7 David prays, "wash me whiter than snow" when he is saying sorry to God. To be holy as God is holy, we do need to get right with God at times. Yes, his sacrifice on the cross has made us permanently right with God, but we do need to say sorry for wrong things.
5. His eyes were like blazing fire. The love that Jesus has for you is so powerful, it blazes in his eyes. It may sound a bit lame, but actually this love is so powerful it carried him to the cross, to be brutally tortured more than anyone in history, to be broken, bruised and beaten then be separated briefly from God because God cannot look on sin. The pain he went through was because of you. We get moved when we see parents do things for their kids, but this was so much more.

6. Again, the Bible is full of pictures, images, drama, creativity, sounds, colours and more. God has made us to be so much more as his church than just songs, a preach and coffee on a Sunday morning! I love this phrase: God is a creator God who created us to be creative. Be who God has made you to be, stay within his love and Biblical framework for your life, but don't be limited by others who can't see what God's shown you. God is full of this colour, art, music, drama, creativity, ideas. We like to put God in a box, but God isn't in a box, has never been in a box and will never be put in a box! At the 2010 Soul Survivor, one of the team told me that one of the things that happened was that young people who weren't Christians started speaking in tongues before they gave their life to Jesus! This is completely off the chart for many people – yet God did this! He lavished his love and creativity on us and wants us to use it for him!

7. One of the pictures we get from Revelation 1 is that of power. Jesus is powerful, all-powerful. His voice is like rushing waters (ever seen the waves crash against the shore – he's more than this!!) He's holding seven stars (the whole universe is in his hands and under his command!!) Coming out of his mouth is a sharp, double-edged sword. Sounds like a warrior to me. We often feel the need to defend Jesus because we love him. Believe me, Jesus can defend himself. He is a warrior, will return as King of all kings and every knee will bow. Even those people who don't believe God exists will bow!

8. This is a sharp sword coming out of his mouth – showing us that the Word of God is powerful. Hebrews 4.12 says, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Get to know God's word, to learn it, to understand it. The Bible is the best place to go to understand God, his will for your life and what he thinks about you.

9. Jesus was so full of light that John couldn't stand it and just like Isaiah in Isaiah 6, he fell to the floor as though he was dead. Yet check out the response of Jesus (same in Isaiah 6). Revelation tells us that "he placed his right hand on me..." and said, "Do not be afraid." (This phrase occurs 365 times in the Bible, one for every day!) God has put his right hand on you – to comfort, care, guide and lead you. He lifts you up, just like he did for John and Isaiah. He's got his hand on you right now and he'll never let go of you.

10. Finally, we learn that everything is in Jesus. He says, "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." He was there at the beginning and will be there at the end. He testifies that he did die and rise again. He will now be alive forever (if you know Jesus, so will you be one day!) He holds the keys of life and death.

If your life is in Jesus (if you have made Jesus the boss of your life), your life is in safe hands. So trust him today! If you don't know Jesus, today is the day to ask him to be in charge of your life and to take you on the most amazing, colourful, yes sometimes tough – but dynamic and fun life you could ask for!