

Revelation 1:1,9-20 Fear not - Behold

1. What are the present fears and anxieties that are central to our culture? Our world? And you personally?

This is a question that could take up the entire time. A good rule of thumb would be to hear from everyone and get a few examples from each of the categories mentioned in the question so that your responses to question 5 can be equally specific and wide ranging.

Read Revelation 1:1,9-20

2. What do we learn about the circumstances of John and the churches he writes to from this opening chapter? If you were personally in these circumstances how would you feel, think, respond?

John is a partner with this church in the tribulation. This was the beginning of a fairly significant persecution of Jesus followers. When the early church refused to worship Caesar as God not only did it impact their ability to participate fully in the cultural, economic, and relational elements of their communities they were responded to as enemies of the state.

John has been personally caught up in this persecution. He is in his 80s now and because of his Christian conviction he has been exiled to the island of patmos where political agitators were sent to work the rock quarries.

The voice is the central image that John wants us to focus upon. Not only does he mention it three times (vs. 10, 12, 15); it is also at the center of the chiasm, the v shaped structure of 7 characteristics from vs. 14-16.

3. (12) John turns to see the voice. Martin Luther expressed that the Christian faith is an acoustical affair, the most important discipline for the follower of Jesus is to listen. He went on to say that we need to stick our eyes in our ears, for the only way we will see is if we listen. How does listening to his voice enable us to see?

We place incredible trust in what our eyes see and our hearts feel, they define for us what is real. But as Lord of all Jesus has an eternal perspective and can allow us to see our present in light of his glorious future. Can allow us to see our present in light of his plan of salvation. Can give us a sense of his being present with us even in the midst of what is animating our fears and anxieties.

4. (15) His voice is like the sound of many waters. The sound of thundering waters is all encompassing, it is inescapable, it drowns out every other voice. The voice commands in vs. 17-18 that we fear not and behold. It turns out that we obey the first by obeying the second. We are led to find freedom from our fears as we are beholding him, as we are hearing his

voice above every other voice. What are some of the practical ways we can hear his voice? Behold his glory?

Certainly you will want to explore the disciplines of scripture reading and proclamation. There is also the great fruit of meeting together to apply scripture to one another as followers of Jesus, to remind one another of the glorious truths of the gospel.

We also hear in the Psalms that the Lord is known in the praise of his people. The place of our corporate worship in beholding the glory of Jesus would be a good discipline to explore.

5. Look at all the qualities of Jesus that are pictured in this vision. How would seeing this reality of who Jesus is address the fears and anxieties you explored in question 1?

I will give here a brief explanation of each of the images and leave it to your discussion to apply these truths to the fears and anxieties you explored as a group.

- *In the midst of the lampstands – he is not distant and aloof but present with us knowing what we are facing and walking alongside us*
- *Clothed in a long robe – the robe of a priest who constantly is interceding before God, bringing our needs before him.*
- *With a golden sash – the mark of a King who is over all and has a kingdom that is coming (other images display the nature of the kingdom)*
- *Hairs of head are white – age speaks of wisdom – he has the wisdom that we do not to understand the present in light of eternity.*
- *Eyes are like flames of fire – he is able to see right through us – right to the bottom removing the masks and veils we were – he sees right to the bottom of us and is able to purify us as fire purifies metal*
- *Feet as burnished bronze – other kingdoms will fail but his kingdom of justice and love and righteousness will last forever.*
- *Roar of many waters – inescapable – all encompassing – above every other voice*
- *Holds the stars – ancient peoples believe that the movement of stars and planets dictated the course of human history – the emperor would have images of stars and planets around his throne to communicate that he controlled the stars – no – Jesus holds the stars – Jesus directs the course of human history.*
- *Two-edged sword – cuts both ways – there is the cut that brings discipline and the cut that removes what is cancerous in order to heal*
- *Face shining like the sun – this image like many of the others are used in the old testament to speak of the glory of the living God – it communicates that this Jesus is God in the flesh.*
- *Keys to death and hades – in me you can pass through death to life*

6. Have you had an experience where beholding him has addressed your fears and anxieties? Share this with others.