

# “A Vision of the Glorified Christ”

(Revelation 1:9-20)

## Introduction

- When it comes to preaching a sermon between Christmas and New Year's, there is no greater passage to consider than Revelation chapter one. In this chapter, we find a very unique and detailed glimpse (into the throne room of heaven) at the risen and glorified Jesus Christ. To be sure, throughout the Gospels we see various “pictures” of Jesus and reactions of those who saw Him.

### As a newborn:

**Luke 2:7, 16** ~ “And [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ... <sup>16</sup>And [the shepherds] went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.”

### At 40 days old (Lk.2:22):

**Luke 2:27-32** ~ “And [Simeon] came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, <sup>28</sup>he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, <sup>29</sup> ‘Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup>that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.’”

### At twelve years old (Lk.2:42):

**Luke 2:46-47** ~ “After three days [Mary and Joseph] found [Jesus] in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup>And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.”

### Just prior to His crucifixion:

**John 19:1-5** ~ “Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. <sup>2</sup>And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. <sup>3</sup>They came up to him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and struck him with their hands. ... <sup>5</sup>So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Behold the man!’”

### At His death:

**Mark 15:39** ~ “And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’” (see Matt.27:54; Lk.23:47)

- While all these depictions of Christ are important, they are not current. Peter James and John, when they saw Jesus transfigured before them, came the closest to seeing a vision of the glorified Christ:

**Matt 17:1-2** ~ “And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup>And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.” (Mk.9:2-3; Lk.9:29)

- As spectacular it was to see Christ transfigured (see 2Pet.1:16-18), it pales in comparison to seeing Jesus risen and glorified in heaven. Someday, every true Christian will see Jesus Christ (God) “*face to face*” (1Cor.13:12).

**1 John 3:2-3** ~ “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup>And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

- For now, this side of heaven, we are blessed to be able read of the vision of Jesus Christ that the apostle John saw. This passage gives us a unique glimpse into heaven, and a divinely inspired portrait of the risen and glorified Christ.

**Rev 1:9-20** ~ “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. <sup>10</sup>I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup>saying, ‘Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.’ <sup>12</sup>Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup>The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, <sup>15</sup>his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup>and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. <sup>19</sup>Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. <sup>20</sup>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.’”

- Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle John recorded what he encountered a vision of the risen and glorified Christ. In a sense, as we read and study this awesome passage of Scripture, we vicariously come face to face with Christ through John’s experience: *“I heard”* (vs.10) *“I turned”* (vs.12) *“I saw”* (vs.12) *“I saw”* (vs.17) *“I fell”* (vs.17). To a comparatively small degree, through these inspired words of Scripture, we are able to see what John saw, to hear what John heard, and to experience what John experienced. This passage can be broken into three major sections.

#### A. The Recipient(s) (vs.9-11)

- By way of personal introduction, in verses 9-11, the apostle John provides us with enough detailed information to answer five important questions.

1. **Who wrote the book of Revelation?** *“I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus”* (vs.9). The first thing you notice about the book of Revelation is the humility with which the author introduces himself. He simply addresses himself as *“John”* (vs.4, 9). Some commentators say that this “omission” is evidence that the Apostle John did *not* write this book. That is, if the Apostle John wrote this book he would have opened with his apostolic credentials. However, I believe the opposite is quite true. The apostle John, in all of his writings maintained an incredible sense of humility (see Jn.13:23; 20:2-9; 21:7, 20).

I believe what we see in John’s description of himself is an absolute humility that stems from an awe that he just cannot get over. John finds it impossible to boast in himself, when he has been in the presence of the one and only Son of God. For John had seen Christ in the flesh (during Jesus’ earthly ministry). He had walked and talked with Christ. He had heard Christ preach and perform great miracles. He has seen Christ murdered. He has seen Christ buried. He has seen Christ risen from the dead. And he had seen Christ ascend into heaven. Now, he has seen a vision of the risen and glorified Christ and is commanded to write down what he sees and hears (Rev.1:11, 19)! Therefore, in light of all that he has seen and been through, to himself he is just John (oh, that we too live in awe-inspired humility!).

With great humility, the apostle John described himself in terms of being a *“brother and partner”* with every other true believer in Christ.

**“Brother”** ~ This Greek word (*adelphos*) is more than just a sentimental word. It is used to describe the eternal and irrevocable bond that one has to another within a family. As the old saying goes, “Blood is thicker than water.” The ties that bind believers together are those that bind believers to Christ. Together, in Christ we are one. Regardless of our social status, worldly prominence, or spiritual prowess we are all equally one in Christ. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We all are united as a part of the family of God! At the moment of our salvation, we were born-again into the loving and gracious arms of our Heavenly Father, God Almighty!

**“partner”** ~ With the same attitude of humility, John identifies himself as a companion to other believers. John sees himself as a partner with the believers in the seven churches of Asia. Far from being “above them” John knows that he is together with them. Literally, the word **“partner”** (*sugkoinos*) describes a co-participant, fellow partaker, or companion. It is a great reminder to us as believers that we are partners in ministry together. We have many things – the best things – in common and are called to work together for the glory and pleasure of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Together we share the experiences of life. Like those in a military troop, or a sports team, or even that of a family when one person suffers we all suffer, and when one person rejoices we all rejoice.

Specifically, however, John highlighted four areas in which believers are partners with one another:

In suffering ~ **“in the tribulation”** (vs.9); The Greek word, translated here **“tribulation”** (or “suffering”; *thlipsis*), can be described as pressure. Like the pressure created between the two ends of a vice, the word illustrates how the Christian life can be filled with affliction, trouble, and distress. To put it mildly, the Christian life is not easy!

**John 15:18-21** ~ “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup>If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. <sup>21</sup>But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

**John 16:1-3, 33** ~ “I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. <sup>2</sup>They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. <sup>3</sup>And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ... <sup>33</sup>I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation [*thlipsis*]. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

**Acts 14:22** ~ “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations [*thlipsis*] we must enter the kingdom of God.”

**1 Peter 4:12-13** ~ “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup>But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” (cf. Phil.1:29-30; 2Tim.3:12-15)

In the kingdom ~ **“and kingdom”** (vs.9); Not only does John see himself as a companion in suffering, but also in the kingdom. Simply defined, the kingdom describes the supreme realm of God’s sovereign rule over all things. Specifically, however, the kingdom refers to the dominion of God over all believers. It describes the inheritance that those who are redeemed have received through God’s gracious and loving salvation. Together, believers are companions of the kingdom. We all serve and worship the same King!

In patient endurance ~ “*and the patient endurance*” (vs.9); John is not only their companion in suffering and in the kingdom, but also in patient endurance. In other words, he is persevering with them for the sake of the Gospel, and the glory of Jesus Christ. The words “patient endurance” is one word in the Greek (*hupomone*) and literally means “to stay or remain under.” John reminds them that together, as companions, they must persevere under the trials of this world. Christ calls us to be a people of resolve. Christians should not be quitters. They should never give up, surrender, or become lazy. They should not have tough hearts and weak skin. Rather, Christians should be known by the softness of their hearts and the hardness of their skin. Too often, Christians are weak instead of meek and cowardly instead of courageous. (Josh 1:6-9; Matt.11:12; Eph.6:10-13; 1Cor.16:13).

In Jesus Christ ~ “*that are in Jesus*” (vs.9); It is because believers are “in Jesus” that they are brothers and companions in suffering, in the kingdom, and in patient endurance. Being in Christ is opposite of being in sin. When we are in sin we are sinners. When we are in Jesus we are Christians. When we are in sin we get what sin can give us (eternal death). When we are in Jesus we get what Jesus can give us (eternal life). Our standing in Jesus represents our relationship to Him. To be in Jesus means that we are His and He is ours.

With a beautiful blend of humility and strength, John displays for us the characteristics of a true believer. One who is humble before Almighty God, and powerful in His might. One who is soft-hearted and tough-skinned. One who is not only willing to suffer for Christ, but finds joy and endurance when he does. From our vantage point, it is no wonder God chose a man like John to be the recipient of this great vision. John’s undying faith, unfailing love, and abiding humility makes him the perfect candidate to record and reveal the glorious vision of the resurrected Christ.

2. Where was it written? “*was on the island called Patmos*” (vs.9). What did John know about suffering and patient endurance? Plenty. John was on exiled to “*the island called Patmos*” (vs.9). Patmos was a small, bleak, and rocky island about ten miles long and six miles wide. It was located some forty miles offshore from Miletus (a city in Asia Minor about thirty miles south of Ephesus). It was a place where prisoners and undesirables were banished and forced (by whip) to work in the mines (kind of a 1<sup>st</sup> century Alcatraz). According to early church fathers like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius, John was sent here and forced to work in the mines though way up in years (perhaps 90 years old). This points to the source of his affliction and endurance as a partaker of Christ’s rule and reign in his life. John was banished to Patmos like a brutal criminal even though he did nothing – nothing but proclaim the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

“*on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus*” (vs.9). He was faithfully, and courageously, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While some professing believers would have abandoned their faith (Matt.13:21), having suffered because of the Gospel, the apostle John remained faithful. He proved that there was nothing the world could do to him to cause him to reject or forsake his Lord and Savior. He was not a Christian because of the “health and wealth” he hoped to receive. He was a Christian because he was convinced, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Jesus Christ was the Son of the Living God and his personal Lord and Savior! (cf. Eph.6:19-20; Phil.1:12-14; 2Tim.2:8-9).

3. When was it written? “*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day*” (vs.10). Some interpreters see the phrase “*on the Lord’s Day*” as a reference to judgment day that will come at the end times (often called the Day of the Lord). However, since John was not in the day of judgment it seems more likely to understand this phrase as a reference to Sunday. It was on a particular Sunday that John was caught up “*in the Spirit*” of God. In other words, John received this vision through a supernatural experience that transcended the bounds of normal human apprehension. Through the

supernatural work of the H.S., John was “transported to a plane of experience and perception beyond that of the human senses” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation*; 1:9-11), and into a state of prophetic inspiration. Literally, this phrase could be rendered “I came to be in the Spirit.” This is similar to what happened to Ezekiel (Ezek.2:2; 3:12,14), Peter (Acts 10:9ff), and Paul (Acts 22:17-21; 2Cor.12:1ff).

4. **What was written?** ~ “*and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup>saying, ‘write what you see in a book’*” (vs.10-11). During this supernatural experience, John heard the thundering voice of the risen Savior Jesus Christ. John describes the voice as “*loud ... like a trumpet*” (vs.10). The word “*loud*” (*megas*) could be translated “great.” The point is clear, the voice John heard was a tremendously booming, or piercing, voice. To John, it sounded like a trumpet which was used to announce a special occasion or to assemble God’s people for battle (see Ex.19:16).
5. **To whom was it initially written?** ~ “*and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea*” (vs.11). These cities were located in the Roman province of Asia (modern Turkey). They were chosen because they were strategically located throughout Asia along the seven postal districts. Therefore, they were central points for distributing copies of the book of Revelation. In addition, the number seven represents the divine number of completion or fullness representing here a message to all the churches.

## **B. The Revelation (vs.12-16)**

➤ Obviously, as an apostle, John had already seen Jesus – and even seen Him transfigured and resurrected. Thus, John knew something of Jesus’ glorified state and, by this time, knew for certain that He was the One and Only Son of God. John had seen the resurrected, glorified Christ before, but nothing could prepare him for what he would see in the glorious vision of the resurrected Christ. This was the Jesus who lived, died, was resurrected, and ascended into heaven to be at the right hand of God Almighty.

In his description of the vision he saw (and heard), the apostle John sketched for us an awesome and amazing portrait of our resurrected and glorified Christ. Like never before, we catch a symbolic glimpse of the reigning Son of God. Apart from this vision, the biblical details of Christ’s appearance relatively few and vague (i.e., Is.53:2-3,14; Mk.9:3; Lk.2:12; Jn.19:5).

The vision revealed in Revelation one is magnificently filled with precious details concerning the majesty and glory of our risen and reigning Messiah – Jesus Christ! These verses present us with a rich and revealing look at the resurrected Christ. Although John describes that which he literally saw, we can see great symbolic truths manifested in his vision [the word “*like*” (*homois* / *hōs*) is translated seven times in vs.13-16; ].

The detailed descriptions that John gives, unveils nine different attributes of the glorified Son of God. Each of these attributes not only symbolically describe the character of Christ, but also reveal His present work on behalf of the church and in the world.

1. **The Omnipresence of Christ** ~ “*Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man*” (vs.12-13a). This attribute is perhaps the easiest to comprehend, because Jesus Himself reveals the meaning behind the “*seven golden lampstands*” (vs.12): “*the seven lampstands are the seven churches*” (vs.20; cf. vs.11).

These lampstands were common portable oil lamps that were placed on lampstands and used to light rooms at night. Each church is called to be a light of Christ to the world (cf. Matt.5:14-16; Phil.2:15). Since gold was the most precious metal, the fact that they are golden is descriptive of the church’s precious value (cf. Acts 20:28). The number of churches is also symbolic. Biblically, the



number seven represents completeness or perfection (cf. Ex.25:31-40; Zech.4:2). Therefore, we can see that although each of these seven churches were real places and churches this vision represents all churches throughout history.

Most importantly, however, is the understanding of who is *“in the midst of the lampstands”* (vs.13). The *“voice”* that John *“sees”* is none other than the Son of man – Jesus Christ. While the title “The Son of God” can signify Jesus’ deity, and the title *“son of man”* can specifically refer to His humanity, it is important to understand that *“son of man”* can also refer to Jesus’ deity (see Dan.7:13-14). This was the title that Jesus used most often in reference to Himself (eighty-one times in the Gospels).

The picture that John saw is of the risen and glorified Christ moving among His churches. This is the very presence that He promised would always be with those who believe in Him (Matt.28:20; Heb.13:5). Jesus Christ is not disengaged with or disinterested in His church. Not every church that calls themselves “a church” is necessarily part of the true church of Jesus Christ. But make no mistake, Christ is building His church, protecting His church, empowering His church, disciplining His church, sanctifying His church, and leading His church (see Matt.16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph.5:25). The omnipresence of God is His continual presence everywhere at all times. Jesus is with His church – the true church – always.

2. The Intercession of Christ ~ *“clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest”* (vs.13b). In the Old Testament, robes were often worn by royalty. However, the Greek word translated *“a long robe”* (vs.13; *podērēs*) was used most frequently in the Septuagint (six of its seven occurrences) to describe the robe worn by the high priest. The picture here is of Jesus as the Great High Priest for His people. This is further understood with the reference to *“a golden sash around his chest”* (cf. Ex.28:4; Lev.16:4).

Christ is the high priest of all believers. According to the book of Hebrews, Jesus is the *“high priest of our confession”* (Heb.3:1); the *“great high priest who has passed through the heavens”* (Heb.4:14); the *“high priest who is [not] unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb.4:15); the high priest who *“is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them”* (Heb.7:25); and the *“high priest ... <sup>12</sup>[who] entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption”* (Heb.9:11-12).

At His crucifixion, God torn the temple veil *“in two, from top to bottom”* enabling all believers to have access to God through Jesus Christ; and Christ alone (see Matt.27:51; Mk.15:38; Lk.23:45; 1Tim.2:5; Heb.10:20).

3. The Eternality of Christ ~ *“The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow”* (vs.14a). This is an obvious reference (again) to Daniel’s vision of the *“the son of man”* who is *“the Ancient of Days”* (Dan.7:9, 13, 22). In Revelation, Christ is seen in the same divine characteristics. This not only affirms Christ’s deity, but also His perfect oneness with God the Father. Here, the Greek word *“white”* (*leukos*) does not refer merely to being old but that which is pure, brilliant, and even glowing. The splendorous brilliance of Christ’s image is seen in His eternal glory. *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”* (Heb.13:8).
4. The Omniscience of Christ ~ *“His eyes were like a flame of fire”* (vs.14b). John also describes Christ’s eyes as being *“like a flame of fire”* (or *“a fiery flame”*, NET). This is a definite reference to Christ’s omniscience (His knowing all things at all times). There is nothing in the church, or in the world for that matter, that is hidden from the blazing fiery vision of Christ (see Matt.10:26; Heb.4:13; Rev.2:18). He can recognize both the sinner and the saint. He knows when believers are suffering, and when they are acting according to His holy righteousness. Nothing is hidden from

His sight. Nothing escapes His attention. Nothing ever goes unnoticed (a dreadful thought for unbelievers, and a humbling and comforting thought for believers). “The intense light of Christ’s eyes penetrates the greatest darkness that exists in the church ... Christ knows all – that which He commends and that which He condemns” (Richard Mayheue; “What Would Jesus Say About Your Church; p.32).

5. The Holiness of Christ ~ *“his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace”* (vs.15a). Kings in ancient times sat on elevated thrones, so those being judged would always be beneath the king’s feet. The feet of a king thus came to symbolize his authority. The red-hot, glowing feet of the Lord Jesus Christ picture Him moving through His church to exercise His chastening authority ...” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation*; 1:14-15a). The Greek word translated *“burnished bronze”* (*chalkolibanon*) could also be translated *“polished bronze”* (NET), *“fine bronze”* (HCSB), or *“fine brass”* (KJV). His feet are like shining or glowing metal. In His perfect holiness He is able to administer justice and judgment to everyone. Christ disciplines and purifies believers, and punishes and condemns unbelievers. He is the holy judge who will administer the judgments of Almighty God (see Jn.5:22; Rev.2:18).
6. The Authority of Christ ~ *“his voice was like the roar of many waters”* (vs.15b). Jesus’ voice no longer sounded to John like a trumpet (vs.10). Instead, it now sounds like the *“roar”* (*phōnē*) of *“many waters”* (e.g., being at the foot of the Niagara Falls; see Ezek.1:24; 43:2; Rev.14:2). This is the thunderous sound of divine and majestic authority. Christ’s authority to judge is displayed through the power of His voice (see Gen.1; Col.1:15-17; Heb.1:3). The *“voice”* (*phōnē*) that commanded creation into existence, the waves to be still, the dead to rise from the grave, is also the voice that will one day command all the dead to arise from their graves and be resurrected to their eternal dwelling places (the righteous to eternal life, and the unrighteous to eternal death; Jn.5:29). *“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’”* (Matt.28:18).
7. The Sovereignty of Christ ~ *“In his right hand he held seven stars”* (vs.16a). The sovereignty of Christ describes His almighty power – i.e., His omnipotence. *“Our God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases Him”* (Ps.115:3; 135:6). The right hand was a symbol of ultimate power and honor (see Ps.110:1; Matt.26:64; Rom.8:34; Col.3:1). Not only was the right hand the king’s favorite (favored) hand, but it came to symbolize his strongest hand. Verse 20 explains for us the mystery behind the *“seven stars”* (vs.16): *“the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches”* (vs.20). These angels (or messengers) are in the place of honor but are also under God’s sovereign authority and omnipotent control.
8. The Justice of Christ ~ *“from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword”* (vs.16b). The English word “sword” is used ten times in Revelation (ESV). Here, the Greek word translated *“sword”* (*rhomphaia*; used six times in Revelation) tells us exactly what kind of sword was coming out of the mouth of Jesus. It was a long, heavy, and broad sword that was used as an instrument of war in God’s battles. Here, it is used to reveal the unfailing and final judgment of Christ’s words. *“From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty”* (Rev.19:15; see Rev.2:12, 16; 19:21; cf. Heb.4:12). The word He speaks is true, and it will prevail against all attacks. This is the infallible and invincible Word of God’s judgment.
9. The Glory of Christ ~ *“his face was like the sun shining in full strength”* (vs.16c). The glory of Christ is the splendor of His character. The glory of Christ is seen here as *“his face was like the sun shining in full strength”* [*“like the sun shining in its power”* (LSB) or *“shining like the sun at midday”* (HCSB)]. The bright light of Christ’s glory describes the sum of all that He is. It portrays Him in all of His holiness, glory and divinity (Heb.1:1-3). Only the extreme intensity of the blazing

sun can come close to adequately depicting the blazing glory of the one and only Son of the living God. This is similar to the His glory that was manifested at His transfiguration (Matt.17:2), and to the glory that blinded the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13). This is the same glory that shines in heaven causing there to be *“no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp in the Lamb”* (Rev.21:23; 22:5; see Matt.13:43; 1Jn.1:5).

### C. The Response (vs.17-20)

➤How great was this vision? Read how the apostle John described his response to it: “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead” (vs.17). This is truly the proper response of a believer to their God and Lord. When John saw Christ, revealed in His glory, he collapsed as though he had suddenly died of a heart attack. John records all that happened in response to this vision.

1. A reverent fear ~ *“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead”* (vs.17a). Being in the presence of God is certainly not a flippant or casual experience; in fact, it’s the exact opposite. John responded to the vision is a dramatic display of holy fear (see vs.18). This is the proper response to being in the presence of God. When **Isaiah** saw the Lord enthroned in His temple (Is.6:1 [possibly the incarnate Christ; Jn.12:37-41]), and heard the angels say, *“Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts ...”* (Is.6:3), he cried out *“Woe is me, for I am ruined!”* (Is.6:5; NAS). When **Ezekiel** saw his vision of God (*“the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD”*; Ezek.1:28), he testified: *“when I saw it, I fell on my face”* (Ezek.1:28; see 3:23, 9:8, 43:3, 44:4). When **Job** heard God speak to him *“out of the whirlwind”* (Job 38:1; 40:6), he declared: *“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; <sup>6</sup>therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes”* (Job 42:5-6). When **Peter, James, and John** saw Jesus transfigured before them, and heard God speak from heaven, we read that *“they fell on their faces and were terrified”* (Matt.17:6; see Mk.9:6).

God is a holy and awesome God, and a reverent fear overcomes all who truly behold Him in His resurrected glory (see Heb.10:31). Jesus is *not* your “home-boy” or your “co-pilot” (as popular slogans seek to portray Him). He is King of kings, Lord and lords, the Son of the Living God, and the Savior to all who put their faith in Him. It’s been said that “no one goes to the Grand Canyon to raise their self-esteem.” The very notion that someone could behold the supernatural beauty of the Grand Canyon and become overcome with anything but humility and awe is absurd. To an infinitely greater degree, to see a vision of the resurrected and glorified Christ is to be undone and overwhelmed with fear and reverence.

2. A calm assurance ~ *“But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup>and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades”* (vs.17b-18); The only one who can soothe John’s holy terror is Christ Himself, who touches him and tells him to (literally) stop being afraid. John’s calm assurance comes only in the description Jesus gives of who He is and the authority He possesses. In each of these divine titles, Jesus reveals Himself to be God.

Again we read that Jesus is the beginning and the end (vs.8): *“I am the first and the last”* (vs.17). He alone is eternal – never created but always Creator – and He alone is from everlasting to everlasting. Jesus also reassured John by describing Himself as *“the living one”* (vs.18). This title further reflects the eternal nature of Christ. That is, that He will never die. Although he was put to death in the flesh, He was made alive by God in the Spirit (cf. 1Pet.3:18) in which He remains forevermore. Lastly, Jesus refers to Himself as the one who holds *“the keys of Death and Hades”* (vs.18). This speaks to Christ’s authority and control over both death itself (“death”) and the place of the dead (“Hades”). Jesus Christ has the power to judge the living and the dead, and God alone is able to determine those who die and those who live. Therefore, believers have nothing to fear because Christ has promised them eternal life and He has the sovereign ability to ensure that what He has promised will happen.



C. A holy calling ~ “*Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this*” (vs.19; see 1:11). Once Christ has reassured John of His character and authority, He calls John to be obedient. He commands John to write down the things he has and will see (from John’s perspective past, present, and future).

- In fact, John’s reverent response to the vision of the risen Christ reveals the three-fold response that all believers should have as they live in the presence of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Every day we should respond to Him with a *reverent fear* (knowing that He is Sovereign/Holy), and a *calm assurance* (knowing that He is *our* Savior), and respond faithfully to our *holy calling* (that comes from God).

## Conclusion

- Jesus is no longer a baby in a manger. He is no longer suffering the weakness, trials, and temptations of humanity. He is no longer being tried by, or suffering at the hands of, sinful men. He is no longer hanging on a cross. He is no longer lying dead in a tomb. He is in heaven reigning as the risen and glorified Son of God!
- Through this passage in the book of Revelation, we see a glimpse of the risen and glorified Christ. This revelation should radically change our lives. This revelation should cause us to be in awe of Christ. To worship Him with our praises and our very lives. He is mighty and majestic. He is awesome and glorious. He is the one and only Son of God and the one and only Savior from God.

John’s response to seeing Jesus was to fall at His feet and worship Him. This is the only true and proper response. May our lives truly reflect that we believe that Jesus is the risen and glorified Christ!