

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 1 THE HEAVENLY STAGE

STUDY THREE

The Curtain Rises, the Drama Begins

Revelation 1:9–20

If Revelation teaches us nothing else, it teaches us to place in highest regard and respect the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the risen, glorious, magnificent, matchless, sovereign Savior of the world. When He speaks, we have nothing to say. And when we see Him, we will fall at His feet and cast our crowns before Him. What a moment that will be!

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

Do you ever think about the day you when you will finally stand face-to-face with Jesus? Imagining this meeting with the risen Lord stirs up a wide array of emotions in the hearts of believers.

For some, the thought of standing in the physical presence of the Savior fills them with excitement. They wait with eager anticipation, like the child who buzzes with delight on the day Mom or Dad is to return from a weeklong business trip.

Yet others might be a little more apprehensive. They feel intimidated by the idea of witnessing our Lord's greatness, like the avid fan who timidly stands in line for an autograph from his or her all-time favorite athlete, artist, or actor.

We can't know for certain what we will see or how we will feel on that future day when we behold Jesus in all His glory, but we can *imagine* that hour because of John's testimony. He stood before Jesus' glorious presence and recorded for us what He encountered so that we can anticipate meeting Him with excitement as we faithfully live the rest of our days on earth.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Even though we do not yet rest in the physical presence of Jesus, we can commune with Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. *What a gift!* Say this prayer to prepare your heart to engage with God's Word today:

Father, I don't know what to expect on that day when I finally arrive before the throne of King Jesus. I do know, however, that I want to lead a life that glorifies You as I wait. Equip me to do so as I study Scripture today. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

God didn't simply hand down the book of Revelation directly to earth from heaven. Rather, He used a mediator. According to [Revelation 1:9](#), who was the author of Revelation? From where did he write?

This context is essential for understanding the broader message of Revelation. Most likely, John was exiled on an island called Patmos as a prisoner because he was faithfully “preaching the word of God” even during the empire-wide persecution of Christians under the reign of Roman emperor Domitian. John wrote to his readers as their “brother” and “partner in suffering.”

John knew enduring this suffering while awaiting a glorious future with Jesus would be no easy task. So he shared a message of comfort and hope. At the heart of this message sits enthroned the glorious, risen Christ.



Observation: A Vision of the Risen Christ

The day started out just like any other day for John. He was alone, perhaps saying a prayer or singing a song of praise. Suddenly, he heard a loud noise right behind his head. At first, it sounded to him like a crisp, clear trumpet blast. *Who is playing a trumpet?* As he listened more closely, he realized the noise didn't come from a horn. It was a voice.

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According to [Revelation 1:11](#), what did this voice say?

Using a Bible atlas (or the map “[Paul’s Missionary Journeys](#)” available for free at [insight.org](#)), find the location of the seven cities listed in [1:11](#). These cities were situated in a region on the east side of the Mediterranean Sea called “Asia Minor.” Then, identify the island of Patmos. What observations do you make as you look at the map?

John turned his head to see where the voice originated, and as he moved, he was transported to a new, otherworldly realm, and his eyes beheld a scene unlike anything he had ever seen.

According to [1:12–16](#), what specifically did John see and hear? Remember, observation requires *careful* reading, so pay special attention to John’s use of metaphors and similes.¹ John, in his humanity, couldn’t totally comprehend everything he witnessed, so relied on earthly comparisons to describe heavenly realities.

According to [1:17a](#), how did John react to this vision of the risen Christ?

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According to [Revelation 1:17b–18](#), how did Jesus respond to John? How did Jesus comfort John both through His actions and His words?

John fell because he had witnessed unveiled deity. He had seen the living Christ face to face. He had walked with Him, but he had never seen Him like this—not even at His transfiguration. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Understanding the Glory of Christ

Interpreting Revelation's imagery can feel like an impossible task. Some of John's visions feel too outlandish to accurately understand. Some details in Revelation are more important than others, and thankfully, when John composed this book, he made sure his readers wouldn't miss what matters *most*.

In this passage, John doesn't leave us scratching our heads. He offers an interpretation of some of the previous images! According to [Revelation 1:20](#), what do the seven stars represent? What do the seven lampstands represent? How does knowing these representations help us make sense of the meaning of the preceding verses?

What characteristics or attributes do John's descriptions reveal about Jesus? (Pay special attention to [1:17–18](#).) Why do these attributes make Jesus worthy of total submission and praise?

There's a contrast here between this magnificent presence and this tender touch. I love that about Christ. Though he deserves our highest praise and greatest respect, in our deepest need, He touches us and understands us. The most wonderful response is falling at His feet in humility. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Another Divine Encounter

John's record of his meeting with Jesus Christ in *Revelation 1:9–20* looks familiar to a central event from the Old Testament. In fact, these verses closely parallel the prophet Isaiah's encounter with Yahweh in *Isaiah 6:1–8*.

How is the description of God in His throne room in *Isaiah 6:1–4* similar to John's vision of the risen Christ in *Revelation 1:12–16*?

How was Isaiah's reaction to God's presence in *Isaiah 6:5* similar to John's reaction to Christ's presence in *Revelation 1:17*?

According to *Isaiah 6:8*, how did Isaiah respond when God directly addressed him?

When John walked with Jesus, he beheld the glory of Christ every day. At one point, he had an epiphany, and he realized that what he experienced wasn't new. In fact, hundreds of years ago, Isaiah "saw the future and spoke of the Messiah's glory" (*John 12:41*). Isaiah anticipated the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, who would restore creation to God's ideal design.

When John and Isaiah each encountered the divine glory of Christ, they had one simple response: *worship*. Yet their song of praise moved from their hearts to their hands as they carried out their worship through humble obedience. Today, we can respond to our Lord in the same way.

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Application: Responding to Christ's Glory

Though we will not see the risen Christ the way John did until another point in the future, this account from Revelation offers practical guidance on how we can live as we await that glorious day. Pastor Chuck Swindoll identifies two points of application.

First, *the better we understand who Christ really is, the quicker we'll respond in submission and obedience.* Even though you can't talk with Jesus face-to-face, you still can maintain a healthy, vibrant relationship with him. What practical steps can you take to understand Him better and to deepen your relationship with Him?

When John beheld the risen Christ in all His glory, he fell to the floor like a dead man. In this instance, John demonstrated the fear of the Lord—to see Him as He truly is and to respond in awe, submission, and worship. In what ways does having a healthy understanding of Jesus' glory, holiness, and righteousness lead to a disposition of joyful obedience and trust?

Second, *the greater our willingness to submit to Christ, the deeper the truths He reveals to us.* Though we might not see dreamlike visions as John did, God still teaches us as we follow Jesus. Think back on your life. What did God teach you in your most faithful moments of obedience? What might He want to teach you today?

What a day it will be to stand face-to-face with Jesus in all His glorious splendor! Casting our eyes to this magnificent future gives us a vision for the present. Submit your will to His. Obey His commands. Lean on Him when you feel weak. Embrace the love, joy, peace, and hope only He offers, knowing that He will one day look into your eyes and say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant" (*Matthew 25:23*).

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for preserving this image of Your Son. When I finally see Him, I too will fall on my face in worship of the one who paid the ultimate price: dying so that I could live. He deserves no other response. Give me the strength to live a life of submission and obedience to Christ as an act of gratitude for Your love for me. I pray in Jesus' glorious name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2003, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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