

# John Has a Vision of Jesus

## Summary and Goal

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus revealed Himself in a vision to His beloved disciple John. He revealed Himself in the glory of the most holy God, affirming that He is the Son of God. He revealed His power over time, death, and hell, each of which factor significantly in the Book of Revelation. This vision also revealed Jesus with His church—with us—giving us hope and confidence as we strive to remain faithful to the mission He has given us while waiting for His return.

### ***Main Passage***

Revelation 1:9-20

### ***Session Outline***

1. Jesus reveals Himself in glory (Rev. 1:9-16).
2. Jesus reveals His power over time, death, and hell (Rev. 1:17-18).
3. Jesus reveals His presence among His churches (Rev. 1:19-20).

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### ***Theological Theme***

The reality of Jesus' glorious presence gives hope to Christians today.

### ***Christ Connection***

When Jesus revealed Himself to John, He pointed to His identity as the First and the Last, the Living One. He also pointed to the work He accomplished while on earth—defeating death and hell through His crucifixion and resurrection. The same Jesus who was once crucified in shame is the Jesus who is now exalted in glory.

### ***Missional Application***

God calls us to believe John's testimony about Jesus and to trust that Jesus is present with His people as they fulfill His mission.

## Session Plan

# John Has a Vision of Jesus

## Session 10

### Pack Item 2: Hearing the Old Testament in the New

### Pack Item 3: Handout

As part of point 1, ask group members to fill in the blank on their handout for this session: “*One Like a Son of Man...*” (answer: “*Jesus: The Son of Man...*”). Using the leader-only content (leader pp. 120-121), emphasize the way Jesus is portrayed as *both* the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days from Daniel’s account.

### Pack Item 10: The Glory of Christ Handout

Pass out copies of this handout to group members. Ask groups of 3-4 to discuss the quote from John Owen and the questions. After a couple of minutes, call for some responses for the benefit of the whole group.

## Introduction

Begin by addressing the difficulties that come with reading and understanding the Book of Revelation (leader p. 118; PSG p. 92).

- What is your experience with reading Revelation? What is most challenging about it?

In spite how confusing and frightening Revelation can be, tell why we can and should read and appreciate it (leader p. 118). Then summarize this session on Jesus’ revealing Himself to John in a vision (leader p. 118; PSG p. 92).

## 1. Jesus reveals Himself in glory (Rev. 1:9-16).

Read Revelation 1:9-16. Establish a pair of major New Testament themes picked up in this passage: 1) Jesus is the appointed One who delivers the Father’s message of salvation in unity with the Father, and 2) Jesus, fully God and fully human, sacrifices His life to usher in the new covenant (leader pp. 119-120; PSG pp. 93-94).

- Why is it important we understand that Jesus is God before we try to understand the Book of Revelation?

Show how John describes the glory of Jesus by drawing from several Old Testament images of God. Discuss how the description of Jesus in Revelation 1:13-16 is rooted in Daniel 7 and 10, and Jesus is portrayed as *both* the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days from Daniel’s account. Therefore, He is worthy of worship (leader pp. 120-121; PSG pp. 94-95).

- Why was it important for John to connect Jesus to the Old Testament in his descriptions of Him?
- Which description of Jesus is most meaningful to you? Why?

## 2. Jesus reveals His power over time, death, and hell (Rev. 1:17-18).

Ask a volunteer to read Revelation 1:17-18. Present the following three key points about Jesus’ power (leader p. 121; PSG p. 95):

• **Jesus has power over time.** Elaborate that because He has power over time, Jesus is not bound by history but rather stands over it (leader pp. 121-122; PSG p. 95).

❓ How might Jesus' power over time give you comfort and hope today?

• **Jesus has power over death.** Articulate that because of Jesus, one day death will not be inevitable and it will be thrown into a lake of fire with its father, Satan (leader p. 122; PSG p. 96).

❓ How does Jesus' power over death shape the way you view death and talk about it with others?

• **Jesus has power over hell.** Make clear that hell is real and that Jesus' power over hell means that through Him reconciliation to God is possible (leader p. 123; PSG pp. 96-97).

❓ Why is it important to talk about hell even if it is an uncomfortable and unpopular subject?

### 3. Jesus reveals His presence among His churches (Rev. 1:19-20).

Read Revelation 1:19-20. State the first truth derived from these verses: **Jesus is always with us.** Comment that how we react to life's circumstances reveals how much we trust God is with us (leader pp. 123-124; PSG pp. 97-98).

❓ What are some reasons we may feel distant from God?

❓ How should Christ's presence affect your worship and the way you point others to worship?

Put forth the second truth: **Jesus' presence empowers our mission.**

Emphasize that Jesus' authority is the foundation of our mission (leader pp. 124-125; PSG pp. 98-99).

❓ How has Christ's presence, power, and glory motivated you to be on mission?

### Conclusion

Reiterate that there is nothing for us to fear in Revelation because King Jesus reigns over all things and we are His (leader p. 125; PSG p. 99). *Apply the truths of this session with "His Mission, Your Mission"* (PSG p. 100).

### Point 2 Option

Prior to the group meeting, enlist three volunteers to each lead the discussion points in this section: **Jesus has power over time; Jesus has power over death; Jesus has power over hell.** Provide the volunteers with the full leader-only content for each heading (leader pp. 121-123). (Available on the DVD in *The Gospel Project for Adults: Leader Pack*.)

### ❓ For Further Discussion

How have you seen circumstances in your life reveal how much you trust that God is with you?

**Christ Connection:** When Jesus revealed Himself to John, He pointed to His identity as the First and the Last, the Living One. He also pointed to the work He accomplished while on earth—defeating death and hell through His crucifixion and resurrection. The same Jesus who was once crucified in shame is the Jesus who is now exalted in glory.

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**Missional Application:** God calls us to believe John's testimony about Jesus and to trust that Jesus is present with His people as they fulfill His mission.

## Expanded Session Content

# John Has a Vision of Jesus

## Session 10

### Voices from the Church

“God is going to enjoy his new universe, and we’ll enter into his joy. Since we’ll draw from the reservoir of God’s being, which never runs dry, we’ll never run out of passion and joy.”<sup>1</sup>

—Randy Alcorn

### Introduction

Nearly every book and commentary on the Book of Revelation begins like this: “Revelation is one of the most difficult books of the Bible to understand.” And for good reason. It is filled with confusing language and images and seemingly endless symbols. Knowing how to *read* it is a mystery, let alone knowing how to *understand* it. And if we do reach the point of understanding Revelation, we discover how frightening it is. So either we don’t read Revelation at all, we struggle to read it and make sense of it, or we read it and understand it but wish we had not.



What is your experience with reading Revelation? What is most challenging about it?

Revelation *is* confusing. It *is* frightening. We cannot deny that. This is because Revelation fits partly into the genre known as “apocalypse,” which traditionally is full of vivid imagery and odd language and almost always deals with judgment and end-times themes. This is why some of the book’s scenes seem to belong more in a horror movie than in the Bible.

But as this session and those that follow will show, we *can* and *should* read and appreciate Revelation. You see, Revelation is not primarily about fear but hope. Not hellfire but glory. Not Satan but God. Not death and destruction but life and salvation. We should not overlook judgment, hell, and wrath in the book, but more than that, we can’t miss Jesus’ victory in the end. Because Jesus is victorious, those of us who have pledged allegiance to Him will be victorious as well. This victory is what Revelation is about.

### Session Summary

With this session, we begin a four-part study through Revelation that culminates with reading of the return of Christ. We begin with Jesus revealing Himself in a vision to His beloved disciple John. We will see that Jesus is revealed in the glory of the most holy God, affirming that He is the Son of God. Then we will see Jesus reveal His power over time, death, and hell, each of which factor significantly in the rest of Revelation. Finally, we will see Jesus with His church—with us—giving us hope and confidence as we strive to remain faithful to the mission He has given us while waiting for His return.

## 1. Jesus reveals Himself in glory (Rev. 1:9-16).

There is no better way to describe the new heavens and new earth than to describe the glory of God. We will be immersed in God's glory for eternity. It will be unavoidable, unmistakable, which is why it is a main focus of Revelation.



*<sup>9</sup> 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.*

These verses depict Jesus passing along a message to John who, in turn, is to send it to seven churches in Asia Minor, what is now modern-day Turkey. However, there is much more going on here. To see what is really at the core of these verses, we have to understand their context. When we think of context, we usually think of a passage's surrounding verses. That is an important part of it, but context also includes how a passage fits into the big story of the Bible. And that is the context that helps us understand what John describes here. First, we need to see how this passage fits into Revelation and the New Testament. Then we need to understand how this passage connects to Old Testament descriptions of God's glory.

### Further Commentary

"Tradition records that the emperor Domitian had tried to silence John by exiling him to the small island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea in AD 95 or 96 (1:9b). John was now an old man and before arriving in Patmos he had probably endured scourging, chains, a lack of food, sleeping on the bare ground and hard labour. Now he was in exile, far from those who would have cared for him. He was enduring all this because of his preaching of 'the word of God and the testimony of Jesus' (1:2). But exile does not stop the work of the Lord, as Ezekiel had found when he too received a vision of God's glory while in exile in Babylon (Ezek. 1:2)."<sup>2</sup>

—Ramesh Khattry

## 99 Essential Christian Doctrines

### 24. God's Glory

The glory of God is His manifest work, the way He represents His perfect character through His activity. It also refers to His excellent reputation and is given as one of the reasons we are to praise His name. Another sense of the word is the inherent beauty of God, the unbearable brightness and beauty of His being as He radiates His own attributes and characteristics for all to witness. The Scriptures speak of humanity as having "fallen short" of God's glory (Rom. 3:23) because we have rejected the purpose for which God created us—to glorify Him.

## Further Commentary

"The feet are 'like bronze glowing in a furnace.' The introduction to one of the great psalms about the coming Messiah announces, 'The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet' (Ps. 110:1). The picture is of a powerful king who has so subdued his enemies that they are nothing more than the king's footstool. Some ancient kings symbolized their victories by literally placing their feet on the necks of defeated enemies. These powerful feet of Jesus point to his ultimate triumph over all the forces of evil, natural and supernatural alike. If his hair symbolizes 'omniscience' and his eyes 'omnipresence,' then the feet may represent 'omnipotence.'"<sup>3</sup>

—Kendell H. Easley

## Further Commentary

"The transferal of attributes from the judicial figure of the Ancient of Days (cf. Dan. 7:9-12) to Christ also evokes his role as the latter-day, divine judge, which is also clear from [Rev.] 19:12 (where... 'and his eyes as a flame of fire' is a metaphor of judgment). Jesus' constant presence with churches means that he always knows their spiritual condition, which results in either blessing or judgment."<sup>4</sup>

—G. K. Beale

This passage and the following two chapters pick up a pair of major themes that course through the New Testament. The first is Jesus as the appointed One who delivers the Father's message of salvation in unity with the Father (see John 5:19; 6:38; 7:16-17; 14:9; 1 Cor. 1:3; 8:6; Jas. 1:1). This theme reverberates in the first verse of the book, where God gives Jesus the revelation to share with His servants and then again with Jesus giving the series of messages to the seven churches (see 1:11; 2-3).

But Jesus is no mere messenger carrying letters from His Father. Jesus doesn't just deliver the message; He *is* the message. He is the One who "is coming" (1:7), a description connected to God's name in 1:4b, "him who is and who was and who is to come." The implication is important—Jesus is God in the flesh. He is just as sovereign and glorious as His Father. We will see how John further expresses this through Old Testament imagery shortly.

The second major theme that runs through the rest of the New Testament into Revelation is Jesus sacrificing His life to usher in the new covenant (see Matt. 26:27-28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:25; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:12-14; 1 Pet. 1:2). Jesus' description as the One "who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (1:5) echoes this gospel foundation and reminds us that Jesus is the God-man, fully God and fully human at once. Only God can forgive sins, and only a man can live the perfect life we should have lived and die as a sacrifice in our place. Both of these are true of Jesus Christ. In His life, death, and resurrection, all things that are broken become unbroken.



Why is it important we understand that Jesus is God before we try to understand the Book of Revelation?

John describes the glory of Jesus by drawing from several Old Testament images of God. He begins by describing not what he saw but what he heard—the authoritative voice of Jesus "like a trumpet," which is also how God's voice is described in Exodus 19:16. This voice tells John to write down all he sees, reminiscent of the Lord's command to the Old Testament prophets (see Jer. 30:2; Dan. 12:4). Jesus radiates God's glory even before John sees Him. Even His voice demands attention and reverence, something we should remember as He speaks to us through Scripture today.

When John turns to look at the source of this brain-rattling voice, he sees "one like a son of man," wearing a robe and gold sash, with hair "white, like white wool," eyes "like a flame of fire," glowing feet, and "his voice was like the roar of many waters" (Rev. 1:13-15). This description is rooted in Daniel 7 and 10, and the parallels are striking. Most importantly, Jesus is portrayed as *both* the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days from Daniel's account. Jesus is called the Son of Man (1:13) and He holds the keys of death and Hades (1:18), just as the son of man was given dominion in Daniel 7:13-14.

At the same time, Jesus' white-as-wool hair is the same as the hair of God, the "Ancient of Days" in Daniel 7:9. John is also amazed at Jesus' face, which "was like the sun shining in full strength," and His blazing eyes, which is similar to how God is described in Daniel 10:6. Jesus is not just the exalted Son of Man; His identity is interwoven with God's, affirming the deity of Christ.

It should not be surprising, then, that John's reaction to seeing the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days was to fall like a dead man (Rev. 1:17). Daniel responded likewise (Dan. 10:9).<sup>5</sup> Imagine the absolute beauty, awesomeness, and majesty of what John saw! This glorious description of Jesus is unlike anything anyone has ever seen. And so John desperately grasps for words—mere words—to describe what cannot be described. But even if his words were inadequate, they are more than sufficient to give us a glimpse of Christ's glory and lead us into worship of Him!

- ❓ Why was it important for John to connect Jesus to the Old Testament in his descriptions of Him?
- ❓ Which description of Jesus is most meaningful to you? Why?

## 2. Jesus reveals His power over time, death, and hell (Rev. 1:17-18).

Because Jesus is God, He is the unmatched Ruler over all that has been created—and even all that threatens creation, another theological theme that runs through Revelation.

*<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.*

John fell down at Jesus' feet because he encountered Jesus' glory. Just like Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 34) or Isaiah when he was ushered to God's throne (Isa. 6), John is utterly undone in the presence of God's glory. Are we? That is a good question to ponder. But let's turn now to three key points about Jesus' power.

### Jesus has power over time.

When Jesus says He is "the first and the last," He declares He is the Ruler over time. Jesus is "the first" because He has existed eternally, before time even began. Jesus created time as part of His creation (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17). Jesus is "the last" because He will always exist, long after the end comes and time is no more. Because He has power over time, Jesus is not bound by history but rather stands over it.

### Voices from Church History

"It is impossible that he who never meditates with delight on the glory of Christ here in this world, who labours not to behold it by faith as it is revealed in the Scripture, should ever have any real *gracious desire* to behold it in heaven."<sup>6</sup>

—John Owen  
(circa 1616-1683)

### Further Commentary

"John's encounter with the glorified Christ is such a stupendous experience that he falls to the ground, as did Paul, Ezekiel and Daniel in similar circumstances (1:17a; Acts 9:3-4, 22:6-7; Ezek. 1:28, 3:23, 4:3, 44:4; Dan. 10:7-9). He hears Christ announce that he is 'the First and the Last' (1:17b). This statement of eternal power and existence belongs only to God (Isa. 44:6, 48:12), and so Christ is here presented as God, the Creator and the absolute Lord of history. The words are equivalent to the divine self-identification as 'the Alpha and the Omega' (1:8). If the fact that he 'was dead' seems to contradict this statement of eternal existence, we need to remember that the purpose of Christ's coming as man was to die the death that was due the entire sinful human race. Therefore he says not only, 'I was dead,' but also exclaims, 'behold, I am alive for ever and ever' (1:18a). Only Jesus who is truly the 'Living One' can reveal himself by deeds that verify his claim to be the Lord of life."<sup>7</sup>

—Onesimus Ngundu

## Further Commentary

“The vision is replete with Old Testament images that are reserved for Yahweh alone, and particularly the titles ‘Alpha and Omega’ and ‘the first and the last’ (Rev. 1:17; 22:13). These are allusions to Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12, passages that speak of Yahweh as Creator—an act that is reserved for him and him alone. Jesus’ self-designation as the Creator is a claim to divinity.”<sup>8</sup>

—Matthew Y. Emerson

## Voices from Church History

“They, then, who are destined to die, need not be careful to inquire what death they are to die, but into what place death will usher them.”<sup>9</sup>

—Augustine (354-430)

You and I have a beginning and end in this life. For us, when we think of eternity, we think of the future, not the present. But that is not true of Jesus. Even His thirty or so years on earth did not disrupt the fact that Jesus is God and ultimately exists outside and beyond those years. He is eternity right now. Our lives are held in the hands of a God who sees the beginning and end and everything in between, all together at once.

 How might Jesus’ power over time give you comfort and hope today?

### Jesus has power over death.

“Death is inevitable.” We often share this sentiment to comfort the loved ones of the deceased. “It’s just the way it is,” we say. “It’s a part of life,” we reassure them. It is sad, yes, but we expect it—that old Grim Reaper comes for all of us at some point.

Death *is* inevitable. That is true. But we were not created to die; we were created to live forever as God’s image-bearing, glory-unveiling agents on earth. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were separated from God and the tree of life, introducing both physical and spiritual death as a result (Gen. 3:22-24). Yes, death is inevitable, but it’s not natural. Along with sin, it’s the most unnatural thing for a human being to ever experience.

So we shouldn’t be casual about death. Even Jesus wept regarding the death of Lazarus (John 11:35). He didn’t tell Mary and Martha, “So sorry, but this is just what happens.” Instead, He mourned with those who mourn (Rom. 12:15). Death is so unnatural, so heinous and disgusting, that Jesus Himself died to eradicate it—in its physical and spiritual forms—once and for all. Yes, we grieve—it’s right and acceptable to do so—but we do not grieve like those without hope (1 Thess. 4:13). Death does not have the last word!

One day death will *not* be inevitable. It will be defeated once and for all and thrown not into a hole in the ground but into a lake of fire with its father, Satan. And through Christ, we will be in the new heavens and new earth with the tree of life, feasting on its life-giving fruit forever (Rev. 19–22). Jesus, the glorious Son of God, has been resurrected from the dead and will destroy death forever.

But for now, death is the great equalizer that no one can escape. This is why Jesus’ victory over death is a message of hope we should share at our dinner tables, with our next door neighbors, and with the nations.

 How does Jesus’ power over death shape the way you view death and talk about it with others?

### Jesus has power over hell.

Hell is not as it is often portrayed—where Satan lives and rules, sitting on a throne with a pitchfork. Nor is hell a place where people do whatever they want—a party where they are finally free of authority. No, hell is a miserable place. It is the place where those who do not trust in Jesus will be resurrected to spend eternity separated from God and all that is good (John 5:28-29).

Hell is real, and forever is a long time. We need to be clear about this. However, we should never use hell as a scare tactic to convince people to believe in Jesus. We are ministers of reconciliation, not of condemnation (2 Cor. 5:18). We preach a gospel of hope, victory, and life. Rather than “Repent or go to hell,” we should follow John the Baptist’s model: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2).

The kingdom of heaven, the sphere in which God rules, was brought near to us in the incarnation of Jesus. The separation between God and humankind was crossed over when God became a man. Jesus’ power over hell means that through Him reconciliation to God is possible, and therefore, hell is avoidable. But we don’t believe in Jesus just to avoid hell; we believe in Jesus to be joined to Him and all that comes with Him.



Why is it important to talk about hell even if it is an uncomfortable and unpopular subject?

### 3. Jesus reveals His presence among His churches (Rev. 1:19-20).

I have a tendency to take credit for the good things in my life. When the bottom falls out, I cry out to God for help, but when the top overflows, I pat myself on the back for being so smart, talented, and capable. Who needs God when things are going well, right? Whether we struggle to see God’s presence in suffering or in prosperity, we need to remember that He is always present. No feeling or circumstance can change that.

*<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.*

In these verses, we see that Jesus is always present, through every moment of life, and because He is present, we can go on the mission He has given us with confidence.

### Jesus is always with us.

How we react to life’s circumstances ultimately reveals how much we trust God is with us. Throughout Scripture, we see some examples of how people struggled because they failed to trust in God’s presence.



### Voices from Church History

“It is better to go bruised to heaven than sound to hell.”<sup>10</sup>

—Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)



### Further Commentary

“Long before anyone talked about ‘nature’ and ‘substance,’ ‘person,’ and ‘Trinity,’ the early Christians had quietly but definitely discovered that they could say what they felt obliged to say about Jesus (and the Spirit) by telling the Jewish story of God, Israel and the world, in the Jewish language of Spirit, Word, Torah, Presence/Glory, Wisdom, and now Messiah/Son.”<sup>11</sup>

—N. T. Wright



### Further Commentary

“‘Angels of the seven churches’ might be human messengers, human pastors, or literal angels sent as messengers, but they are probably personifications of each church’s identity. Jesus will address his encouragement and/or rebuke for each church to that church’s angel (cf. Dan. 10:13-14).”<sup>12</sup>

—Dennis E. Johnson



## Voices from Church History

"[Jesus] knew that he was going to be handed over to be crucified; and yet, he does not avoid the plots, nor does he flee out of terror."<sup>13</sup>

—Jerome (circa 345-420)



## Voices from Church History

"The disciples made no move to appoint a replacement for Jesus, tacit evidence that they were conscious of His abiding presence, their living Leader and Lord."<sup>14</sup>

—J. Oswald Sanders (1902-1992)

After years of captivity and harsh conditions in Egypt, the newly-freed Israelites were hungry and grumbled to God for not providing food. They even wished they were back in slavery, longing for the days when “we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full” (Ex. 16:3b). When times got tough, they doubted the Lord’s goodness and longed to be enslaved, well-fed, and apart from God rather than hungry and with God. They were willing to trade God for sandwiches!

Later, things were going pretty well for Israel and they were enjoying the promised land their ancestors had dreamed about. But the Israelites began to ask for an earthly king like the nations around them (1 Sam. 8). They did not trust God’s presence enough to be content with His kingship and instead wanted a human king they could see. God gave them what they wanted, and they learned firsthand that earthly kings are far from perfect rulers.

Fast forward to the Gospels. Peter spent nearly every day with Jesus for at least three years. And yet, as soon as Jesus was arrested and sentenced to death on a cross, Peter distanced himself from Jesus and eventually denied Him (Luke 22:54-62). Peter had promised to fight for Jesus and never deny Him, but in the end, hard times trumped those promises and zeal. Once Jesus’ presence was not as near or comforting, Peter’s faith wavered to the point of publicly denying his friendship with Jesus.

These examples from Scripture show how quickly we can overlook the presence of God. But Jesus came to earth and put on flesh so that we would never be without His presence. In fact, He sent the Holy Spirit to live within us to ensure we would never be alone (John 14:26). Jesus told His disciples that as He sent them on mission to make disciples, He would be with them (Matt. 28:18-20), and that is true of us.

Jesus holds His churches in His hand (Rev. 1:20). We are so intimately close to Him that He has us wrapped in a grip that cannot be broken by any circumstance, even our own doubt. His presence is so near that we are enveloped by it, and no one can pluck us from His hand (John 10:28).

-  What are some reasons we may feel distant from God?
-  How should Christ’s presence affect your worship and the way you point others to worship?

### **Jesus’ presence empowers our mission.**

We know that Jesus is always with us as we go out to make disciples, but His presence is different from how we think of presence at times. As a father, I might promise to be with my children to protect them or I might be there to hold my daughter’s hand as she walks across a balance beam. But Jesus’ presence is much more than mere comfort or limited control. Ultimately, I can only do so much to protect my children. But Jesus’ presence is the raw, unbridled, limitless power of God.

Jesus tells His newly commissioned disciple-makers in Matthew 28 that all authority in both heaven and earth has been given to Him. As we have traced Revelation 1 so far, we have seen His glory and power. We have seen He is God in the flesh, and He stands over time, death, and even hell itself. This authority is the foundation of our mission. Jesus tells us we can go into the world without fear because the supreme Ruler of the universe is with us. We can go into battle against sin, death, and Satan because it is a battle that was already won on the cross and in the resurrection of Jesus. It is not our job to “save” anyone; it is our job to *go, baptize, and teach.*

This is good news for weary, wandering pilgrims like us. We are not the saviors and do not have to be. God Himself stepped into human history on the greatest mission trip of all-time. God the Son, the long-awaited Messiah, willingly went to the cross to die for us and reconcile us to Himself. We have a glorious Savior who has promised to make all things new, and we get to join His mission and rest in His power to accomplish it. So, what are we waiting for?



How has Christ’s presence, power, and glory motivated you to be on mission?

## Conclusion

We began by talking about how frightening and confusing the Book of Revelation can be. God is not surprised by our nervous trepidation as we set out to read it though. That is why the book begins with such a beautiful and powerful picture of Jesus—the One who guides us through it. We have no reason to fear because Jesus has gone before us. Everything we read in the rest of Revelation is under His authority. Every creature bows to Him. Every tumultuous event is limited by His will. There is nothing for us to fear in Revelation—including Satan, death, destruction, and hell—because King Jesus reigns over it all and we are His.

But that is not just true for the Book of Revelation; it is true for our lives today, at this very moment. Jesus is reigning and we are under His care. His presence is with us. What have we to fear then? Let’s step out in faith and continue to share the message of salvation through Jesus to the world—a world that desperately needs to hear and respond to that message in light of what is coming one day.

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** When Jesus revealed Himself to John, He pointed to His identity as the First and the Last, the Living One. He also pointed to the work He accomplished while on earth—defeating death and hell through His crucifixion and resurrection. The same Jesus who was once crucified in shame is the Jesus who is now exalted in glory.

## Voices from the Church

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man... Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions.”<sup>15</sup>

—John Piper

## Additional Resources

# John Has a Vision of Jesus

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Grow with other group leaders at the Group Ministry blog at [LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry](http://LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry).

## Study Material

- "Reading Revelation Today"—Chapter 7 from *Between the Cross and the Throne: The Book of Revelation* by Matthew Y. Emerson
- "Basking in the Radiance of His Glory"—Article by Jared C. Wilson; find a link to this article at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)
- Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles, including "Lampstands in Revelation," can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator). Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

## Sermon

Matt Capps: "The Coming King"

Find a link to this at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)

## Tip of the Week

### The Leader/Group Member Relationship

The leader/group member relationship is very important to the learning environment. Here are some considerations for how to connect with your group:

- **Respect for Culture.** Be aware of and choose to learn from multiple cultural perspectives represented in your group.
- **Appropriate Vocabulary.** Speak on the level of the group God has given you.
- **Provide Educational Tools.** Don't be condescending, but empower group members to discover truth for themselves. Reject sarcasm and humiliation.
- **Trust and Love.** Without these, it becomes impossible to teach, much less learn. This requires humility to seek forgiveness when you've made a mistake and loving confrontation when you have been wronged.<sup>16</sup>

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