

Revelation of Jesus Christ Study 8

Rev 1:17-19

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

THE EFFECTS OF THE VISION

The overwhelming vision John witnessed dramatically altered him.

Initially, his response was devastating fear, which the Lord removed by assurance and then by giving John a sense of duty.

FEAR

"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man" (1:17a)

In a manner similar to his experience with the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration more than six decades earlier:

Matt 17:1-6

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.

John was again overwhelmed with terror at the manifestation of Christ's glory and fell at His feet like a dead man.

Such fear was standard for those few who experienced such unusual heavenly visions.

When an angel appeared to Daniel, he reported that:

Dan 10:7-9

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor

was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength.

Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Overcome by the vision of God that he saw in the temple, Isaiah cried out:

Isaiah 6:1-5

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"

And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

Ezekiel saw several visions of the Lord's glory and his response was always the same:

Ezekiel 1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 43:3; 44:4

Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

So I arose and went out into the plain, and behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face.

So it was, that while they were killing them, I was left alone; and I fell on my face and cried out, and said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?"

It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw--like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face.

Also He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; so I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD; and I fell on my face.

After the Angel of the Lord appeared to them and announced the birth of Samson,:

Judges 13:22

it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar--the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.

When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the LORD.

And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!"

Job had a similar reaction after God spoke to him:

Job 42:1-6

Then Job answered the LORD and said:

"I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

On his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, Saul of Tarsus:

Acts 26:12-14

"While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

After witnessing the terrifying calamities that follow the opening of the sixth seal, unbelievers during the Tribulation will cry out in terror:

Rev 6:16-17

and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

In stark contrast to the silly, frivolous, false, and boastful claims of many in our own day who claim to have seen God, the reaction of those who genuinely saw God was inevitably one of fear.

Those brought face to face with the blazing holy glory of the Lord Jesus Christ are terrified, realizing their sinful unworthiness to be in His holy presence.

Summarizing the proper response to God's holiness and majesty, the writer of Hebrews exhorts believers to:

Heb 12:28-29

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

ASSURANCE

But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. (Rev 1:17b-18)

As He had done so long ago at the Transfiguration (*Matt 17:7*) Jesus placed His right hand on John and comforted him.

This is a touch of comfort and reassurance.

There is comfort for Christians overwhelmed by the glory and majesty of Christ in the assurance of His gracious love and merciful forgiveness, Jesus comforting words:

“do not be afraid” (literally, stop being afraid), reveals His compassionated assurance of the terrified apostle.

Similar words of comfort are God’s response throughout Scripture to those overwhelmed by His majestic presence.

The comfort Jesus offered was based on who He is and the authority He possesses.

1st First He identified Himself, “I am”(ego eimi) the covenant name of God (Exe 3:14)

Exodus 3:13-14

Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

It was the name with which He had comforted the terrified disciples who saw Him walking on the Sea of Galilee:

Matt 14:27

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

Jesus took that name for Himself:

John 8:58a

Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

And this direct claim to deity was not lost on His opponents

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Then they took up stones to throw at Him;

They felt He had spoken blasphemy and deserved to die.

2nd Jesus next identified Himself as “the First and the Last” Look at chapter 2:8 Read

This is a title used of God in the Old Testament:

Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12

Who has performed and done it, Calling the generations from the beginning? ' I, the LORD, am the first; And with the last I am He.' "

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.

"Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last.

When all false gods have come and gone, only He remains.

He existed before them and will continue to exist eternally, long after they have been forgotten.

Jesus application of that title to Himself is another powerful proof of His deity.

3rd The next title here used of Jesus is that of the living one

John 1:4

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

That is also a title used throughout Scripture to describe God:

Josh 3:10

And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites:

1 Sam 7:26

Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

(Psa 84:2; Hos 1:10; Matt 16:16; Matt 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom 9:26; 2Cor 3:3; 6:16;etc)

God is the eternal, uncaused, self-existent One.

Jesus said to His Jewish opponents, and it is recorded in *John 5:26*

For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,

Thus Jesus here claims full equality with God the Father.

The One whose presence struck fear into John's heart, the I am, the first and the last, the living One, the one whose death freed him from his sins (*Rev 1:5*) is the very one who comforted and reassured John.

In the words of the Apostle Paul:

Rom 8:31

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Christ's seemingly paradoxical declaration, "*I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore,*" provides further grounds for assurance.

The Greek text literally reads, "*I became dead.*"

The living One, the eternal, self-existent God who could never die, became man and died.

As Peter explains:

1 Pet 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

(Christ was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit”

In his humanness He died without ceasing to live as God.

“Behold” introduces a statement of amazement and wonder: *“I am alive forevermore.”*

Christ lives forever in a union of glorified humanity and deity, “according to the power of an indestructible life”

Heb 7:16

who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

Paul wrote:

Rom 6:9

knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

That truth provides comfort and assurance, because Jesus:

Heb 7:25

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

In spite of his sinfulness in the presence of the glorious Lord of heaven, John had nothing to fear because that same Lord had paid by His death the penalty for John’s sins (and all of those who believe in Him) and risen to be his eternal advocate.

As the eternal I am, the first and the last, the living One, *“Jesus holds the keys of death and of Hades.”*

The terms death and Hades are essentially synonymous, with death being the condition, and Hades the place.

Hades is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament term **Sheol** and refers to the place of the dead.

Keys denote access and authority.

Jesus Christ has the authority to decide who dies and who lives; He controls life and death.

And John, like all of the redeemed, had nothing to fear, since Christ had already delivered him from death and Hades by His own death.

Knowing that Christ has authority over death provides assurance, since believers need no longer fear it.

Jesus declared:

John 11:25

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

John 14:19

A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.

"To die", Paul noted, "is to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (2Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23)

Jesus conquered Satan and took the keys of death away from him:

Heb 2:14-15

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage

The knowledge that Christ *"loves us and released us from our sins by His blood" (Rev 1:5)* provides the assurance that is the balance to the reverential fear that His glory and majesty evoke.

DUTY

Rev 1:19

"therefore write the things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things"

The astounding vision John saw inspired in him a healthy tension between fear and assurance.

But to that was added a reminder of his duty.

Christ's earlier command to write is not expanded, as John is told to record three features.

1. The things which you have seen

The vision, John had just seen and recorded in verses 10-16

2. The things which are

A reference to the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 which describes the present state of the church.

3. The things which will take place after these things

The prophetic revelations of future events unfolded in chapters 4-22.

This threefold command provides an outline for the book of Revelation, encompassing (from John's perspective) the past, present, and future.

Like John all Christians have a duty to pass on the truths they learn from the visions recorded in this book.

Those visions may at first be startling, disturbing, or fascinating.

But they like all scripture, *“are inspired by God and are profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good Work.”(2Tim 3:16-17)*

As believers study the glory of Christ reflected in the book of Revelation, *“we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, [will be] transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2Cor 3:18)*

We must approach it this way.