

“You can’t judge a book by its cover”

- What does it mean?
 - Things can be very different from how they appear
- When does it apply?
 - “You can’t judge life by its appearance”
 - “You can’t understand life without the eyes of faith”
- Looking beyond appearances in life, what is the deeper, enduring reality?

Needing a vision of Jesus Christ in Heaven

Are you tired, lonely, discouraged, or afraid?

Are you excited about what life has to offer you?

Are you just “okay,” persevering because you should?

Today, you and I need to see what is really real...

Let us ask God to open our hearts,
and to reveal Jesus Christ to us personally today

“Blessed is the one **who reads aloud** the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those **who hear it** and **take to heart** what is written in it, because the time is near.” *Rev. 1:3*

Unmatched Greatness and Grace

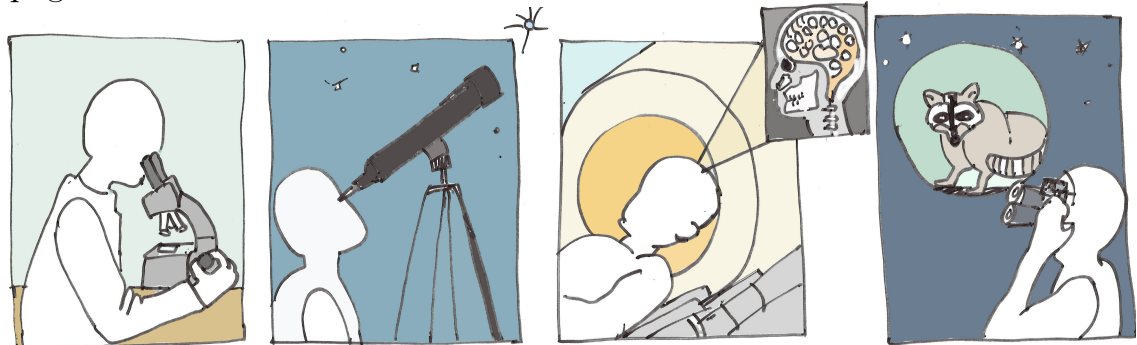
Revelation 1:9-20

Chinese: page 1988

Spanish: page 1565

Brown: page 1236

Green: page 837



When what you see is not all there is...

Stephen's vision of Jesus

Stephen was the first Christian who was killed for his faith
He died a horrible death → stoned by those who hated him
Yet He had such peace and kindness and hope!

As Stephen was dying, “full of the Holy Spirit, he looked up to heaven and **saw the glory of God**, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, **‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’”**

Acts 7:55-56

What did He see? I want to see it too!

Daniel's famous Apocalypse Vision

What makes **poetry** different from **prose**?

- Symbolism, imagery, beauty of expression
- Generally more work to experience and understand
- Often leads to a richer experience of the message

prose =
ordinary writing

Apocalypse (from the Greek word for “to reveal”)

- Highly symbolic and visual (using words)
- Revealing the unseen reality
 - Invisible things
 - Past and present and future

What Stephen saw probably looked like Daniel's description

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.

A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

Daniel 10:4-10

Tigris = river in ancient Babylon	*	Uphaz = unknown location
topaz = very pale precious stone	*	burnished = highly polished

What Stephen saw probably looked like Daniel's description

“As I looked,

“thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat.

His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.

A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him.

Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.

The court was seated, and the books were opened.

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was **one like a son of man**, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

What Stephen saw probably looked like Daniel's description

What Stephen saw in heaven was this vision of Heaven and the Son of Man

The Apostle John saw this vision too, and he described it in the book of Revelation

Let's look through the eyes of John

Introduction to Revelation

- Rich combination of genres (styles of writing)
 - Apocalypse, prophecy, letter, worship
- Reveal a deeper reality than eyes can see
- Whether...
 - life is very challenging
 - life seems very good
 - life is somewhere in between

Revelation 1:9-20

9-11: Command from God: Write what you see to churches

12-13a:

13b-16:

17-18:

19:

20:

Revelation 1:9-20

9-11: Command from God: Write what you see to churches

12-13a: Christ (Son of Man) in the midst of the churches

13b-16:

17-18:

19:

20:

Revelation 1:9-20

9-11: Command from God: Write what you see to churches

12-13a: Christ (Son of Man) in the midst of the churches

13b-16: • God, priest, victor, judge, final authority over all

17-18:

19:

20:

Revelation 1:9-20

9-11: Command from God: Write what you see to churches

12-13a: Christ (Son of Man) in the midst of the churches

13b-16: • God, victor, judge, authority over all

17-18: •

19: • Crisis because of Jesus' greatness!

20: • "This is what the Lord says—
Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty:
I am the first and I am the last;
apart from me there is no God." *Isaiah 44:6*

Reactions to God's Presence

• "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined!" *Isaiah 6:5*

• "When I saw the glory of God, I fell facedown."

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

• When Simon Peter saw Jesus do a miracle that showed He was God, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" *Luke 5:8*

• An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. *Luke 2:9*

• When the disciples heard God speak, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. *Matthew 17:6*

Revelation 1:9-20

9-11: Command from God: Write what you see to churches

12-13a: Christ (Son of Man) in the midst of the churches

13b-16: • God, victor, judge, authority over all

17-18: • Sovereign Lord **and** Gracious Savior

19: • Crisis because of Jesus' greatness!

20: • "This is what the Lord says—

Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty:

I am the first and I am the last;

apart from me there is no God." *Isaiah 44:6*

• Resolved because of Jesus' grace!

grace = His kindness
and forgiveness

• "It is grace that has taught my heart to fear.

And grace, my fears relieved."

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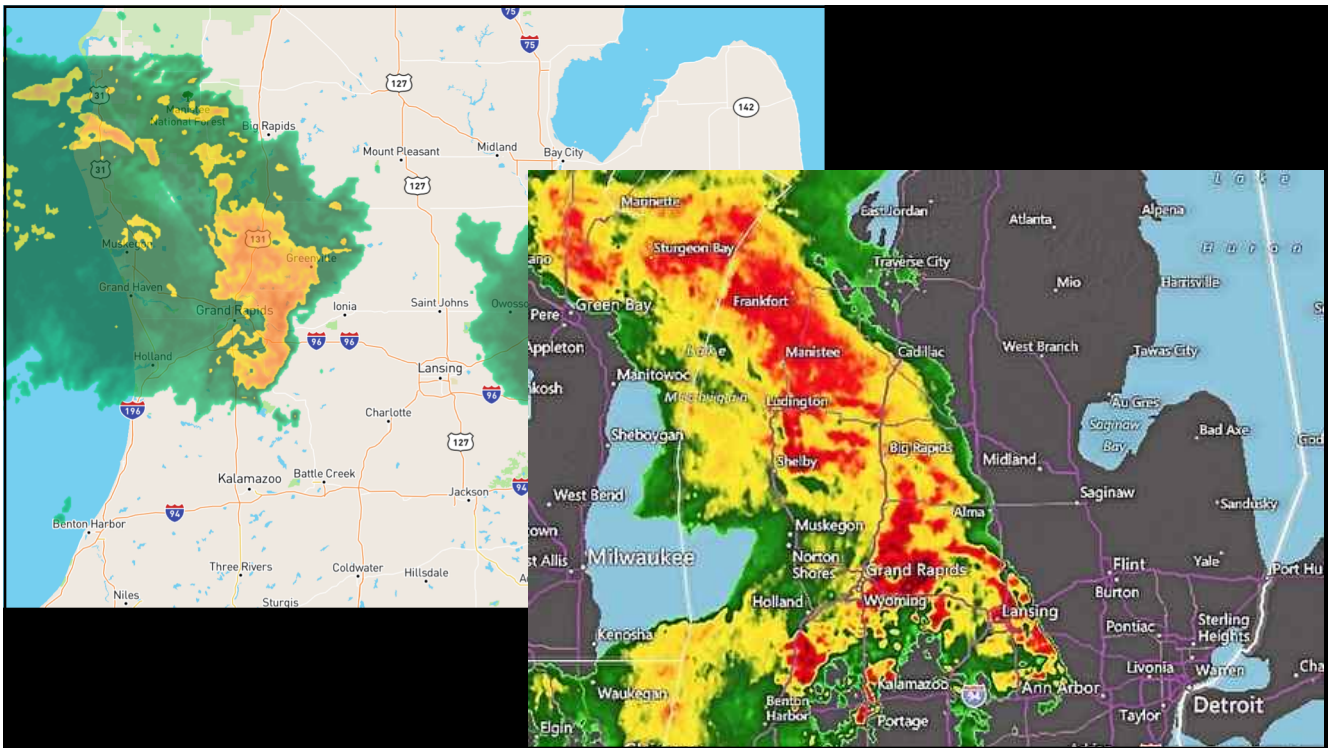
20: Explanation of stars and lampstands

- Stars = angels/messengers of churches
- Lampstands = churches

The Big Idea

Jesus Christ

**is greater and more powerful and more holy
than we could ever imagine** *BY FAR*



Tornado
Williamston, October 18, 2007



The Big Idea

Jesus Christ

**is greater and more powerful and more holy
than we could ever imagine *BY FAR***

- The holy presence of Jesus is just as true and real, here and now, as when John saw it
- Jesus sees everything that is in your heart, and everything you have done
- By faith, can your heart sense it?

The Big Idea

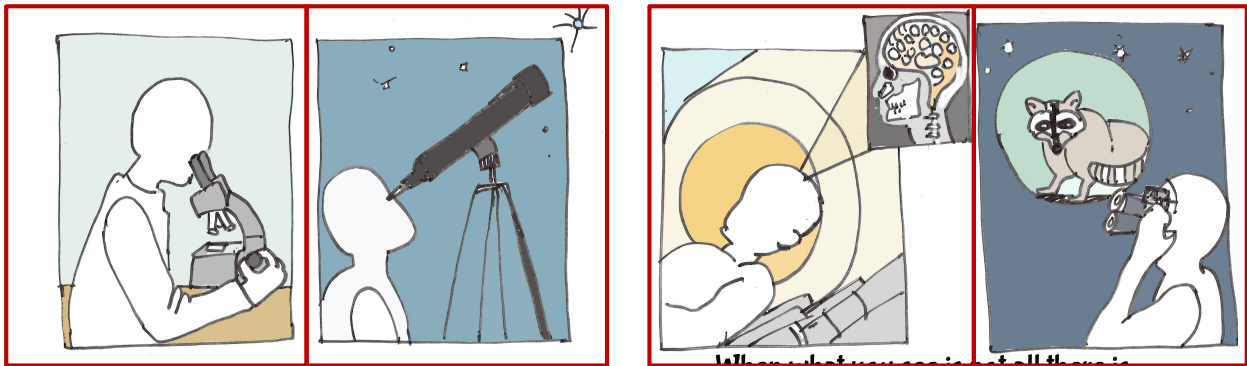
Jesus Christ

**is greater and more powerful and more holy
than we could ever imagine *BY FAR***

**and His grace is more than enough
to protect us and love us**

in Him

***COMPLETELY
AND FOREVER***



Faith enables us to...

See the
work of God
when it seems
so small

See the
glory of God
that is far
bigger than my
own world

See soul
sickness when
the trouble is
hidden or
denied

See hope
when darkness
hides God and
His love

Application

- See with your heart through faith...
 - The greatness of Jesus Christ
 - What problems seem too big to handle?
 - What troubles seem unsolvable?
 - What other things tempt you away from Jesus?
 - What sin is hidden in your heart, or out in the open?
 - Do you think you know better than Jesus about your life?
 - Would you like to ignore Jesus?

**Jesus Christ is far greater and far more powerful
than we could ever imagine!**

Application

- See with your heart through faith...

- The greatness of Jesus Christ

- The grace of Jesus Christ

- What sin or shame weighs you down?
- Do you feel unworthy of His attention or love?
- Do you feel too far away from God to know Him?
- Do you feel like giving up?

grace = His kindness
and forgiveness.
Jesus' death on the cross
for us

**His grace is more than enough to protect us
and love us completely and forever in Christ**

Application

- See with your heart through faith...

- The greatness of Jesus Christ

- The grace of Jesus Christ

- A voice says to you and me, “Turn and look by faith”

- “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” *Hebrews 11:1*
- Will you see the deeper reality that one day will be visible?

Application

- See with your heart through faith...
 - The greatness of Jesus Christ
 - The grace of Jesus Christ
- Tell people about both Jesus' greatness and His grace

Greatness ●—————● Grace

I'm tempted to believe in a "less great" Jesus:

He demands less of me

I'm tempted to tell people about a "less great" Jesus:

He demands less of others

For them and for me:

Sin and shame would be less of a problem

Jesus is far greater and far more holy than I can imagine!

We don't get to choose

Yet His grace is more than enough to rescue me in Him forever!

←—————→
Greatness Grace

Application

- See with your heart...
 - The greatness of Jesus Christ
 - The grace of Jesus Christ
- Tell people about both Jesus' greatness and His grace
 - Jesus' greatness is worthy of giving Him everything we have and are
 - Jesus' greatness cannot tolerate our sin and shame
 - Jesus' grace is more than enough to love us completely forever

The Big Idea

Jesus Christ

**is greater and more powerful and more holy
 than we could ever imagine *BY FAR*
 and His grace is more than enough
 to protect us and love us
 in Him *COMPLETELY
 AND FOREVER***