

DEPICTING JESUS

Since Jesus walked around ancient Israel over 2,000 years ago, artists have been depicting him in countless ways. When you picture Jesus, what do you see? Maybe you think of Jim Caviezel from *The Passion of the Christ*, or Jonathan Roumie from *The Chosen*. Perhaps your mind goes to the many paintings of Jesus, such as the Last Supper or the ones with Jesus holding lambs. Maybe you think of Snoop Dogg’s face deep-faked on classic Christian artwork—yes, it’s a thing.

Through the centuries, art has often reflected Jesus in the culture of the artist. Some depictions take an historical approach to depict Christ accurately in the place and time from the Gospels. However, no depiction can accurately reflect Jesus as we see him in *Revelation*. If you have only seen the "portrait" of Christ in the Gospels, you’re about to see a whole new Jesus as we open up today’s passage.

REVELATION 1:3, 12–20

³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. ¹⁹ Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. ²⁰ 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.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

What did Jesus really look like? The Bible describes Jesus as being pretty ordinary for his place and time. So, it's unlikely the blond-headed, blue-eyed Jesus paintings are accurate. Check out the QR code Jesus paintings that you may not have seen before.

Those of us who have a relationship with Jesus see him as being like me. That's good in the sense that he is personal. However, Jesus is unlike me in that he is God. We must balance that Jesus is our Friend, but also King.



DISCUSSION

What Christmas gift have you've used the most?

1. In what 3 ways can people receive a blessing? (3)

2. How did John first respond to seeing Christ? How did Christ respond to John? (17)

3. What did Christ say about himself? (17b-18)

4. What overall impression do you have from Christ's appearance? (12-16)

5. Of all the things Christ could say about himself, why do you think he chose these? (17b-18)

6. How might an *incorrect* view of Jesus impact people's daily decisions?

7. How might an *accurate* view of Jesus energize you to live for him?

ICEBREAKER
OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

As we begin a new semester learning about Jesus, maybe there are some friends you would like to come with you to this study. If you need help or are nervous, talk to your coach today.

STUDY NOTES REGARDLESS

Scan the QR code for this 3-minute clip.



Notice the sequence of events, the hit was short and the ball slowly rolled, starting foul heading back toward the baseline. The pitcher tried to keep the ball foul, however, the ball had crossed the line back into fair territory before he threw it away. The Pirates scored a three runs off a 15-foot, third-baseline grounder.

The issue was that the umpire called the ball "fair," but the Mets didn't agree with the call. The umpire followed the rulebook and had the authority to make the call. Instead of responding to the ump's authority, the Mets justified themselves and argued. Their self-justification foolishly cost them.

A recent study showed that seventy-seven percent of professing Christians said that right and wrong is determined by factors other than the Bible and that the vast majority do not believe that Jesus is the only way for salvation. This foolishness bears an incredibly high cost. Even more than an umpire, Jesus has authority, he provided a "rulebook," and he never blows a call.

Last Week, we saw that the Apostle John had been exiled to the island of Patmos. While in exile, John was commissioned to write what was revealed to him (that's why we call it *Revelation*). Revelation 1:3 says, "**Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.**"

As we study the letters to the churches in *Revelation*, we are going to see a picture of Christ. This picture, like the call of the umpire, will challenge us to respond. We cannot see Christ and remain unchanged—that's especially true with the portrait of Jesus in *Revelation*.

CHRIST'S GLORY IS REVEALED BY HIS APPEARANCE

John had seen Christ's ministry. John traveled with Jesus for three years, seeing miracles and hearing his teaching. He was there at the transfiguration (Matthew 17) as well as the crucifixion (John 19:26–27). He had seen Jesus after the resurrection (John 20:19–25, 26–29; John 21:1–13; Acts 1:2–3, 6–12). But, John had never seen Jesus like this. **Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 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. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 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.

At Easter, we often read Isaiah 53 describing the Messiah's brutal sacrifice—"we esteemed him stricken...pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities." We celebrate what Jesus accomplished on the cross, but that's just the beginning.

John's description of Jesus teaches us many things, but I'll focus on two. First, we see Jesus' deity. Philippians 2:7 describes Jesus in the gospels—"[Jesus] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." In *Revelation*, Jesus reclaims his former glory. He is God.

Second, we see Jesus' authority. If you keep reading in Philippians 2, we know that every knee will bow to Jesus. John's description of Jesus' hands holding the stars, as well as his mouth and face, point to Jesus' right to rule. Jesus, declaring his authority, said, "**Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.**"

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE BRINGS HIS AUTHORITY

Not only must we recognize Jesus as *God*, we must submit to him as *Lord*. John **fell at his feet as though dead**. How should we respond?

This study will walk through the letters to the **seven churches** found in *Revelation*. My prayer is that your vision of Jesus Christ expands. He does not fit into any mold we can make for him. Some of us have grown up in church and we know Jesus as gentle and friendly—because he crushed sin on the cross, that can be our experience. However, if we don't accept Jesus' gift for ourselves, then we have to pay for our own sin. If we meet Jesus in our own sin, we will find him neither gentle nor friendly. We will meet him as King and Judge and we'll be found guilty.

We don't get to tell him our plans, we must surrender to his. It's his call what is *fair* and what is *foul*. We can argue all we want, but we'll end up just as ejected, rejected, and dejected as Rojas from the Mets arguing with the umpire. Perhaps as we get started studying the letters to the seven churches, you will realize that God has written to you too. The only question is, "How will you respond?"