

## Step 1

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### HEEDING THE CALL

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**E**very revelation requires that we be “lifted” out of our day-to-day focus on the challenges and events of human existence. We cannot hear a message from the realm of Spirit if we are unaware that such a dimension exists. For Paul and later Christian mystics, the lifting is described as an experience in consciousness. John of Patmos adopts the imagery of Isaiah, Ezekiel and other Jewish prophets who describe the overwhelming beauty and power of the throne room of God.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near.

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: ‘Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.’”

—Rev. 1:1-5

Who is Jesus Christ? In what way is this revelation his? It's important to note that he is not the instigator of the drama about to unfold—the vision does not come *from* Jesus. Nor is Jesus “him who is and who was and who is to come,” since he (Jesus) is mentioned separately in the same list. He is a “faithful witness” whose testimony joins and supports the testimony of John, the author of the Revelation. In describing him as “the firstborn of the dead,” the author suggests that Jesus is not unique in his relationship to God—or to the rest of humankind. He is rather the first to do what we all must do—move through the resistance of fear and the illusion of death to assume our spiritual role in the new consciousness that is “the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus is “the ruler of the kings of the earth,” not because he has armies or temporal power, but because his perfect demonstration of spiritual principle allows him to express the infinite Power of God. We are all called to achieve that same level of spiritual expression: “What I have done, you will do” (Jn. 14:12).

“To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.”

—Rev. 1:5-7

It is not merely Jesus of Nazareth who is “coming with the clouds;” it is the Christ Consciousness that Jesus achieved and perfectly expresses. Everyone contains that Christ Consciousness—even those who deny and resist it. We are all inseparably one with the infinite Power and Love of God, and one with each other as the Christ of God in expression. There

will be resistance—that’s what so much of the revelation is to be about—but there can be no doubt that Christ Consciousness will prevail, and its expression as the “kingdom of heaven” will be achieved, because “it is to be.”

“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

—Rev. 1:8

“The Lord God” is not the Allness of God as Source, but rather the Christ of God present in each of us—“the Lord of your being,” a term used frequently in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Christ is the Word of God (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... In him was life, and the life was the light of all people” [Jn. 1:1, 4].) The Christ—our own true identity—is as eternal as the Allness of God from which it flows. It is past, present and future. We must fully understand this about ourselves before we can proceed on our journey into higher consciousness.

“I, John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, ‘Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.’”

—Rev. 1:9-11

“The persecution” of fear-based resistance to spiritual principle, “the kingdom” of fully realized Christ Consciousness, and “the patient endurance” it takes to move *through* the resistance to achieve and express the kingdom—these three elements are

the essence of the Revelation. Jesus clearly and lovingly demonstrated that we are to do that by remembering and expressing our spiritual powers as we work with the challenges of this human experience.

This new awareness must be activated in every aspect of our mortal identity. Every part of us—body, mind and spirit—must receive the news, which is the metaphysical purpose underlying the symbolic seven letters. From John’s perspective, the Christian communities in these seven prominent cities were committing a grievous sin in their willingness to coexist and compromise with the Roman society that surrounded them. They needed to be forcefully awakened to the absolute priority of their spiritual purpose. The same is true for us; distracted by this human experience, we lose sight of the spiritual work we are here to do. We must awaken the seven chakras—the points of powerful contact between the human and divine within us—in order to fully embrace our Hero’s Journey.

“Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.”

—Rev. 1:12-16

The number seven will be our constant companion as we move through this revelation. We’ll discuss its significance a bit later, at the end of this chapter.

“Son of Man” is a term Jesus used frequently—not simply to refer to himself, but to describe each of us. It’s a translation of the Aramaic *barnasha* or “human being.” It is the true spiritual identity of each of us—not limited, finite and weak, but strong, clear and radiant. Our Christ nature is pure, bright and deeply centered. It contains the seven stages (stars) of spiritual completion, and the sharp discernment (sword) necessary to cut through illusion and embrace the truth.

This vision of the Christ is, I think, the true touchstone of the entire Revelation. The long robe and sash denote temporal authority; the hair and eyes are radiant with divine Light. The feet are not airy and ethereal, but formed of earthly minerals, burnished and refined to reflect the Light of Spirit, and to anchor it firmly in this human dimension. It is not simply a spiritualized expression of Jesus Christ, but of each one of us—the Christ that is the true reality of every person.

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.’”

—Rev. 1:17-18

Our innate Christ nature is *dead* as long as we remain ignorant of its presence. Once we recognize and embrace the Christ—the eternal Spirit that is our true identity—then we have control over the illusions of suffering and death. They will not necessarily leave us immediately—many adventures and challenges lie before us yet—but we will no longer see ourselves as their helpless victims.

In the popular and engaging saga of *Harry Potter* written by J.K. Rowling, Harry learns the truth of who he is very early on. “You’re a wizard, Harry Potter,” the giant Hagrid informs him

on his 10th birthday, in the first book. Exciting news—but it’s just the beginning of the story. He will have to learn to believe in his power, to express it effectively, and to move past the resistance to it that will arise in the world around him. It’s the same for us; this vision of the Christ is exciting and reassuring, but it’s not a “happily ever after” moment. Now that we see the full Christ potential in all its power and radiance, we must learn how to claim it, express it and fully become the creative spiritual beings we truly are.

“Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this. 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.”

—Rev. 1:19-20

The Revelation now turns to seven letters to seven early churches, located on the coast of Asia Minor in present-day Turkey. This is a good time to turn our attention to the number seven—which obviously holds great importance to the author.

Indeed, seven is a number of universal spiritual significance. It represents the cycle of spiritual awareness that we—spiritual beings in human forms—move through again and again as we proceed to fulfill our inherent purpose: creating “the kingdom of heaven” by using human challenges as opportunities to make creative spiritual choices.

In Christianity these seven stages are symbolized in the seven sacraments that mark the beginning (baptism) and ending (extreme unction) of a human experience, along with five essential stages of spiritual growth in between. In Hinduism they become the seven chakras—locations within our physical density that represent our closest links to the divine. The

mystical Jewish tradition of kabala describes a Tree of Life containing 10 elements, grouped on seven distinct levels. In the first version of Creation described in the biblical Book of Genesis, we have the seven days of creation. In each case, the reference is to a process according to which divine ideas—the Christ essence eternally emanating from Divine Mind—move through us into expression in the world around us.

Once we are awakened to the Christ Presence that is our true nature, we must allow that Presence to awaken every part of our bodies and minds—all seven stages of our human expression—so that we can successfully undertake the journey that lies ahead. The seven letters that follow serve as a kind of meditation guide, helping us to recognize and awaken the strength of each stage, and begin to dissolve the problems that have accrued because we’ve forgotten these spiritual powers within us.

It is often helpful to visualize this essential process as a movement *upward* through the seven chakras, from a sense of being limited to this human experience to a full expression of the spiritual power that we truly embody.

## Thoughts on Step 1: Heeding the Call

This “calling” that John describes may seem extraordinary, but it really isn’t. Every one of us is called to experience our own personal revelations. In fact, we are called many times in the course of a human lifetime.

We may not recognize it at first as a call. Or we may do our very best to ignore it. It feels totally out of sync with the normal rhythms and concerns of life; it’s not realistic. What would other people think? How could we justify to others something so strange we can barely believe it ourselves?

We can’t justify it to others, of course. A divine revelation does not obey logical rules, and its purpose has nothing to do

with the opinions of other people. It's an unexpected interruption in the normal flow of life, lifting us to a higher perspective so we can fully appreciate the entire creative process that is our spiritual purpose as we move through mortal challenges.

Such a revelation moment may occur when we are feeling particularly lost and alone, trapped in human addictions and fear-based dramas from which there seems to be no escape. The revelation won't solve our problems; when it's over, we'll find ourselves back in the same situation. But somehow the sense of total despair that had been weighing so heavily upon us is dissolved, and a way forward seems, if not easy, at least possible.

The first revelation I recognized as such (albeit somewhat foggily) in my own life occurred when my physical body was in an intensive care unit, desperately ill—dying, in fact, from all the physical damage we can do to ourselves when we allow addictions to completely rule our lives. In my case, they were alcohol and drugs. While I was ostensibly in a coma for more than a week, my consciousness was far from asleep. I was experiencing a revelation as dramatic as John's (but without all the gory stuff).

In my revelation, I could recognize the pain in the body beneath me, but I was free of it. I knew I was near death, and I was fine with that. I was eager to leave my human form behind and move on. I had an awareness that I had somehow failed to accomplish something, but I didn't care. The pain and despair were gone at last; I felt safe and blissfully happy. That was enough.

But no; I was told I had to go back. There was work I had committed to do, and it had to be done. I was very reluctant, but my spirit guides were equally as insistent. Like John's, my revelation included a solemn assurance: If you go back, I was promised, things will never again be as unbearable as they had been.

That was in 1974. Since then I have been through as many challenges, dramas, conflicts, fears, shadows and sheer pain as—I imagine—you have been. There have certainly been times when I've wanted to cry foul and remind Someone of that promise. Yet I have not surrendered to my addictions from that day to this. Somehow, the total despair I felt at that time has never returned. I have often felt lost and in pain; but I have never felt abandoned and hopeless.

So revelations can come—as John's apparently did—from a time of darkness and confusion, offering a vision of hope and reassurance. Often it's only when we have painted ourselves into a spiritual corner—with no way out apparent to our mortal minds—that we become reluctantly willing to hear the quiet, revelatory voice of Spirit within us. That's why, faced with the inevitable challenges, fears and resistance of my human journey, my constant prayer has become simply, *Show me the good!* That willingness is all that's necessary for the Christ perspective to transform the challenge into a creative opportunity.

Revelations can also arise from times of seductive comfort and apparent normalcy, when our physical and emotional needs are being met and we are feeling more than a little pleased with ourselves—complacent about having a firm handle on things. Their purpose then is to jolt us awake from our self-imposed stupor of comfort, and to remind us that we aren't here in human form to be comfortable. We're here to be creative—to make the challenging choices that will bring the new dimension of spiritual consciousness—the kingdom of heaven—into expression.

My life was going quite well some eight years after that first revelation. My theater work had taken me from New York City to Chicago, and I was having success as actor, director and playwright. I was happy, for sure, but there was a shadow of dissatisfaction beneath the happiness. I found my way to Unity

about this time, and began taking classes and being of service and—in the eyes of everyone but me—moving clearly toward ministerial school. I knew such an idea was absurd, but I played along to a certain extent. I took a few classes at Unity Village in Missouri, sent in an application when the time came, went through the interview process and, to my utter astonishment, was accepted!

Well, I certainly wasn't going to go! I had a very nice life—a lovely apartment, a fun social life, and directing assignments lined up for months to come. This is what I had always wanted! I was not letting it go.

But the strangest things began to happen. The theater that had booked me to direct three productions suddenly went bankrupt. No work. My apartment building was sold and going condo. No home. People in my social life seemed to forget I was still around. It felt as though I had already taken leave of my own former life—and I was the only one who didn't know it! Finally, one night, I was awakened out of a sound sleep by a voice as loud and clear as John's was to him. Scared me half to death! It said—and I quote—"Beloved, will you leave all this and follow me?"

Somehow trying to argue or bargain did not feel appropriate. So I squeaked out a tentative "Yes?" and that's all it took. Within a month I had moved to Unity Village and found a job in the Silent Unity prayer ministry, from which I was able to sit for hours with an elevated perspective and wonder, What on earth had happened to my best-laid plans?

The point is that these revelation experiences, whether they lift us from pain or jolt us from complacent comfort, have a single purpose. They remind us of our spiritual truth, our spiritual identity, and they seek to restore the awareness of, and enthusiasm for, our spiritual work to do that we once had when we signed on for this human adventure.

**MEDITATION**

I AM open and receptive to the guidance of Spirit in every area of my human experience. I ask without doubt or fear for the revelation of spiritual Truth that will show me my next steps. I AM deeply grateful for the love and trust in which every true revelation is shared. Thank you, God!

### Questions for Discussion

1. Can you remember a time when you may have chosen to ignore a call to revelation—an invitation to rise above human pain or comfort and learn more about your spiritual purpose? As you look back on it, what was the result?
2. Have you ever accepted a call to revelation? How did the call express? What was its implied promise? How did the experience affect your life afterwards?
3. Simply choosing to explore this Revelation to John suggests that you are open and willing for further revelations in your own consciousness. The infinite energy of the Divine will respond to that willingness. What do you hope to receive out of future revelations as they occur?

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