

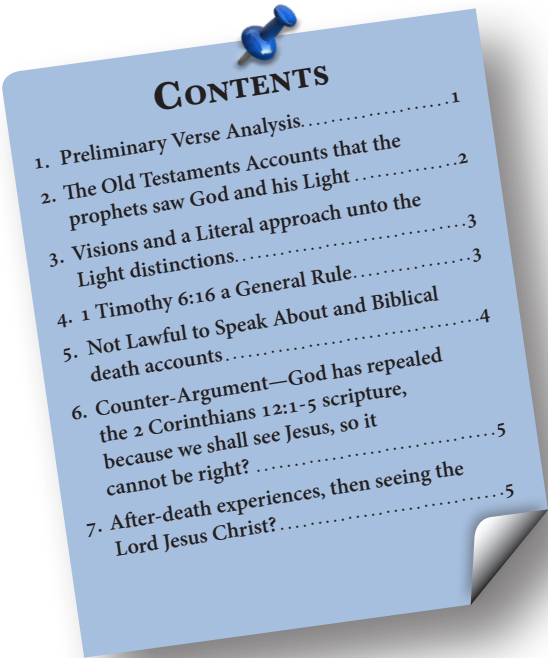
AFTER DEATH EXPERIENCES, GOING TO HEAVEN AND SEEING JESUS CHRIST: DOES THIS VIOLATE 1 TIMOTHY 6:16?

Written by David Horsfall, revised (2022)
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Abstract

Upon reading **1 Timothy 6:16**, the common interpretation is that it is God that no man has seen, or can see. This interpretation opens Pandora's box to justify many spurious spiritual encounters in the form of visions or after-death experiences. This includes testimonials that they saw Jesus and He dialogued with such. This may agree or not agree with visions/dreams from false religions. Since one cannot see God, this confers a license to articulate that one has seen Jesus. Could it be that the identity is Jesus that no man has seen or can see? By analysis of the verse, we shall try to establish that it is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Keywords: Visions, After-Life, Biblical Records of Death, False Prophets, Spirit of Truth/Spirit of Error



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1 Timothy 6:15-16 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; [16] Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen

1. Preliminary Verse Analysis

By comparing Scripture with Scripture, by “... *rightly dividing the word of truth* . . .” (**2 Timothy 2:15**), that these descriptions and titles provided in the study verse, are they referring to the Lord Jesus, or God the father? This we seek to find out.

The term Potentate within the verse refers to Him as a ruling monarch and king. The Lord Jesus discharges this office. Further, the title, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, is also a designation that belongs to the Lord Jesus. There are only two Scripture listings of this title, and they are both in the New Testament. In **1 Timothy 1:16-17** the same title and the same descriptors are attributed, with verse 17 added for context—

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The chapter provides context by referencing Paul's background as a former persecutor of the church, how the Lord Jesus transformed him into a minister, entrusted him with the gospel, and extended mercy to him. The discussion culminates with the reflection in verse 16, which describes God as the “*King eternal, immortal,*

invisible.” I argue this refers to the Lord Jesus, rather than God the Father, as is often assumed. Furthermore, it is well-established doctrine that Jesus is God and, therefore, it is no stretch to affirm the verse reading “*the only wise God*,” is a reference to Jesus. The argument is though, is that this title is a reference to God the Father. If that is the case, The Most High did NOT attribute to Himself anywhere in writing, in either the Old or New Testaments’ this specific or similar worded title. Upon cross-reference of **Revelation 17:14** and **Revelation 19:16**, we recognise clearly that it is none other than the Lord Jesus—

“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Are we to understand that, despite the cross-references’ continuity, we can derogate from their clear meaning to conclude that it is not Jesus? We can (i) identify that Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and (ii) that he is God. He is one with the Father, and therefore, as God, he dwells in the light.

The second part, addresses the light aspect. The latter part of **Revelation 1:16** describes the Lord Jesus that—

“... his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”

This is a similitude that God had set-up within the verse to help us grasp the greatness and glory of the sun that we can see; to portray to the reader the inferior picture, that the Lord Jesus is clothed with such a brilliance of light. When the sun is shining at full strength, generally speaking, it is midday. No person can look into it’s brightness under normal conditions, given its brightness, let alone looking at the sun in it’s full strength. Further, no person or even astronauts can approach near unto the light of the sun, without being burnt to a crisp. This is the Lord Jesus.

We cannot either approach unto the Lord Jesus since

the strength of the light within which the Lord dwells, is so bright, making the Lord Jesus unapproachable. In **Habakkuk 3:4**, it describes the countenance of the Lord Jesus in the Second Coming, that “... *his brightness was as the light*” Evidently, this is the same brilliance of sunshine spoken of in **1 Timothy 6:16**. That being the case, how can a person see the Lord Jesus, as the physical sun, he cannot be approached?

2. The Old Testaments Accounts that the prophets saw God and his Light

If it is Jesus, then the argument is that Ezekiel 1, Daniel 10, Revelation 1, and Revelation 10, are contradictory cross-references. In other words, if no man has seen God or can see God, who then did those individuals see? Like Peter said, “... *some things hard to be understood*” (**2 Peter 3:16**). What are we to make of **Ezekiel 1:26-28**, when he saw the Lord and the brilliance of his glory? Everything that he saw and experienced is prefaced by what is written in the first verse, **Ezekiel 1:1**. He said that the heavens were opened and he saw “*visions of God*.” What follows, are these visions; these included what he saw in verses 26-28. **Ezekiel 8:4** confirms that it was the glory of the Lord, and he saw it in the vision. The Ezekiel 8 chapter, he saw the person of the Lord and he prescribes a vivid description of his appearance. Once more, in verse 4, is another vision, which in turn references the vision he received in chapter 1—

“And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.”

In Ezekiel 10, he does not say it was a vision he received. Further, he did not see the Lord either, but he did see the glory of the Lord depart from the Temple. This chapter is consistent with the previous visions, and follows the same pattern of descriptions from the earlier chapters, to establish that Ezekiel 10 was also a vision.

Daniel and, John in Revelation, both say they saw the Lord, arrayed in all of His glory—His loins fine gold, His body beryl, His face lightening, his eyes lamps of fire, his feet polished brass and “... *the voice of his words like the*

voice of a multitude.” (Daniel 10:6, Revelation 1:15 and Revelation 2:18). The “great quaking” that Daniel had heard in verse 7 indicates that it was the voice of God, and this is identical with voice of the Lord Jesus, as the “sound of many waters” (Revelation 1:15).

3. Visions and a Literal approach unto the Light distinctions

The significance here with 1 Timothy 6 is that it was not a literal visual observance of the Lord, it was a vision that Daniel said he had (Daniel 10:7-8). His location was on the earth: “. . . in deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.” In other words, he was not in heaven when he was receiving the revelation (Daniel 10:9). Thus, he did not actually and literally see the Lord in heaven to approach and see his “light” (1 Tim 6:16). In accordance with Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17, they read that the young shall see “visions”--

Joel 2:28 “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:”

This coincides with what Daniel received. The parameters of 1 Timothy 6:16 only allow for (i) a literal approach unto the Lord (ii) and seeing his light. In Revelation 1, John said that he was in the spirit on the Lord’s day. Did John enter into heaven to see God? The Scripture doesn’t say it was a vision, but Revelation 9:17 indicates that it was vision, since John saw the 6th trumpet horses within a vision--

Revelation 1:1,10 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants

things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: ... [10] I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

Revelation 9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

It is plausible that John was on the earth at the time when he received the visions--he did not literally enter into heaven. Peter had a vision about Cornelius in Acts 10. God showed him in a “trance” on his housetop, and upon seeing heaven opened, he saw unclean beasts. God was using the unclean beasts as a metaphor to Peter, a Jewish man, that he should not consider Cornelius to be unclean, a gentile, but, rather to go to him to preach the gospel--

Acts 10:10-12 “And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, [11] And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: [12] Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.”

4. 1 Timothy 6:16 a General Rule

Could it be that 1 Timothy is the general rule? Men, of their ‘own’ will cannot violate the scripture, but God can intervene, to either overrule, change, repeal or derogate from the general rule, if He so chooses. Consider what the Lord Jesus said of Himself, when he said is the “Lord of the Sabbath.” This is the same governing principle at play here. In other words, He made the Sabbath, and He made the rules with which the Jewish people had to follow concerning the Sabbath. In other words, you cannot bind the Lord with the scripture-rules that He made. Therefore,

the general principle is, as God, He can derogate from the general rule.

Think of it as a Law Court. The courts at the lower levels, when they have unusual or difficult cases before them, they are bound by the laws that were made by the higher courts. The significance being, the lower courts must rule just like any other case, not matter how unique the circumstances before the court maybe. This applies to all cases, irrespective of how unfair the result would be. They possess no power to depart from the laws or rules laid down by the higher courts. The lower courts must refer such cases to the higher courts. The highest courts make the laws, and therefore, only they have the authority to derogate from it, overrule the general rule, or repeal it. Thus, this emphasises the Sovereignty of God. In fact, it is well understood that the courts were framed on the principles laid down in the Bible. The **2 Timothy 2:9** scripture, the word of God cannot be bound. This does not mean or imply that God can break a covenant so that he can overrule or derogate from a covenant keeping God. We know from the Bible (vows between husband and wife), the old covenant (binding, and the only way God could lawfully void it, was if God were to bear the iniquity of the person), Jesus Christ did—

“But if her husband altogether hold his peace from day to day; then he establisheth himself, or all her bonds, which are upon her: he will loose them, because he held his peace at her iniquity; he heard them. [15] But if he shall any ways make them void after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity.”

Consider the scripture in **Hebrews 9:27** that says, “. . . *it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*” We know that some men, like Lazarus, have died twice; others like Enoch and Elijah, and those caught up to heaven at the rapture will not experience physical death. Therefore, obviously, there is a clear contradiction here of the general rule in **Hebrews 9:27**—“*it is appointed unto men once to die.*” This scripture is the ‘general’ rule—outlining the fact that men will definitely die unless God

intervenes. **1 Timothy 6:16** is another form of general rule—‘unless’ God overrules by a literal revealing of himself. Surely, the argument is, having died, they are in heaven seeing the Lord Jesus. Yes. But, this is not the meaning of the verse, and this is not the point.

5. Not Lawful to Speak About and Biblical death accounts

There is NOT one example in scripture of anyone who died, then brought back to life and, subsequently, they then told others what they experienced! Lazarus for example, was not given a platform to recount his experience. Again, in **2 Corinthians 12:1-5**, Paul says of the person who had an experience of the third heaven,

Paul did not know whether he was in his body or out of it. Furthermore, he said that he saw and heard things that it is not ‘lawful’ for men to speak about (my paraphrase). So any person’s experience is justified that he/she saw God/Jesus because it is different/better to Paul’s experience, because such a person claims he left his body and he is speaking about what he saw and heard. On this point alone such a person is in violation of scripture—specifically **2 Corinthians 12**—contradicting the Lazarus account.

The two records of firstly, Jarius’s daughter being raised from the dead in **Matthew 9:18-26**, and secondly, when Paul was preaching the gospel, a man called Eutychus fall out the window, and was declared dead (**Acts 20:9-12**). These are two cases in point that illustrate that there is nothing inscribed in Scripture about any ‘after-death’ experience testimonial about what they had seen or experienced. Had they done so, this in turn, the principle in **2 Corinthians 12:1-5** that it is not “*lawful to speak about*” takes effect when recounting testimonials of this nature. If there were written records inscribed in Scripture, then we would have precedents and guidelines on how to handle ‘after-death’ testimonials, and what the boundaries are, where they lie.



6. Counter-Argument—God has repealed the 2 Corinthians 12:1-5 scripture, because we shall see Jesus, so it cannot be right?

The first part of this discussion is concerned with the question: has God repealed the 2 Corinthians 12 scripture? The second is, when a believer dies, he/she is now with the Lord Jesus. Therefore, the rebuttal is, this interpretation of 1 Timothy 6:16 cannot be correct. The first point then. How could God have done a u-turn when the doctrine is still there in scripture? If God did repeal it, why has he not announced it in similar fashion to when He brought in the new covenant? This would have instigated confusion. It says in 1 Corinthians 14:33 that God is not the author of confusion, but we know that Satan is.

Consequently, there would no barometer for believers to discern between what is true and false. The plumbline or standard provided in Scripture will have been removed—anything goes! How would we, as believers, admonish any person to ‘flee some after-death experience error’—Scripture would be an out-of-date Final Authority source—the only official point of reference. It is so ridiculous to consider it. We have the standard, the word of God, whereby we can definitely say something is wrong, in accordance with the existing written record. Once that plumbline is removed—a person’s spiritual experience becomes the acceptable,

ever variable standard—mysticism. Once this unstable standard becomes the norm, then any one Christian is on a downward spiral to accept any experience as valid on the basis it is “*spiritual*.”

The second part is partly correct. On the first level, the believer enters into heaven and sees the Lord Jesus, when a person has permanently left this present world. Furthermore, the only event to come is the Rapture, and when He will appear, we

shall see Him, and we will ever be with the Lord in Heaven, seeing His glory. We observe this in 1 John 3:2, speaking of the Lord Jesus returning—

“ . . . when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is . . . ”

The bearing on 1 Timothy 6:16 is that God, by implication of His action—His return, He is announcing to us, by reason of 1 John 3:2, that He is, unequivocally, going to repeal it. Simply put, by virtue of the Lord’s conduct—Christians seeing the Lord in His glory—the Lord Jesus has repealed the 1 Timothy 6:16 scripture.

7. After-death experiences, then seeing the Lord Jesus Christ?

This is where it becomes extremely difficult. How can any person deny a person’s sincerely held bona fide experience? It becomes increasingly difficult to discern, when the testimony is from an unbeliever and, as a result of that experience, that person repented, and became Born Again. This writer has heard many amazing testimonials, which have purportedly turned many to belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many Muslims have had dreams and visions; the Lord revealed Himself to them and, as a result,

they have forsaken Islam, and have become Born Again Christians. For some, it cost them their lives because they renounced Islam and found the truth.

However, how are we think about the experience of the false prophet Mohammed, who alleged he was visited

by the archangel Gabriel; Joseph Smith (1805—1844), founder of the cult religion—the Mormon church. Smith recounts that he saw Jesus Christ, although it was not



an after-death experience? Ellen G. White (1827—1915), founder of the cult religion—the Seventh-Day Adventists. White claims that she was in the ‘presence of Jesus and the angels.’ Yet, we cannot but think, how analogous all of this is with the present ‘after-death’ experiences. We can absolutely say that the above experiences were false, and we did so, by referencing the foundational rock, the word of God, to make that conclusive determination. **Deuteronomy 13:1-2** says—

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, [2] And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;”

Even if a prophet speaks an accurate prophecy, but causes or leads people to follow after other gods, or to follow a representation of God that does not exactly accord with Scripture (part truth/part lie), then that prophet is false.

Referring back to the **Acts 20:9-12** scripture, this accords with testimonials whereby the person is pronounced clinically dead and, within that short time frame, that person has a ‘near death’ experience. What is the common theme for most of them? We understand, within minutes before or after death, that they see a tunnel of light. In some cases, they have a testimony that they went into heaven, literally, (not a vision) and saw the glorious light, and Jesus Christ Himself. From such testimonials, we gather the Lord asks the individual either, “*do you want to go back*”, or “*I [Jesus] have work for you to do on earth.*” Does this go beyond the boundary set by **1 Timothy 6:16**? What makes this tunnel of light so vivid, according **2 Corinthians 11:14**, is that Satan also himself can masquerade as a tunnel of light—

“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

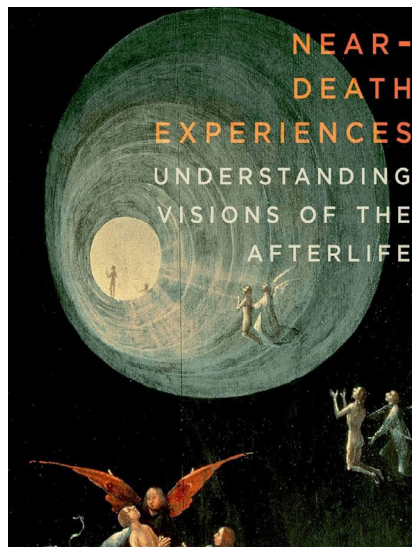
Moreover, upon consideration of the Lord Jesus dialoguing with these people who have died, was it really the Lord Jesus? It could have been Satan in his transformed state? After all, this same “*angel of light*” appeared to Mohammed, Smith and White. In this regard, the whole matter is fundamentally framed on (i) whether the person was a Born Again Believer?; and (ii) did the person follow truth and wholeheartedly love the Jesus Christ in truth?

The scripture tells us clearly to discern between the spirit of truth against the spirit of error (**1 John 4:6**). As believers, we are called to walk in, and follow after truth (**2 John 1:4**). Obviously then, as believers, if we do not follow the Jesus of the Bible, who is the Truth, then we are following another spirit (**2 Corinthians 11:4**). The

Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible is truth and God the Most High is the God of Truth. That being the case, if the individual is wilfully walking after error, and refuses to be admonished for it (on a number occasions) is such a person born again by the Spirit of God, given that he [the spirit of God] is the Spirit of truth? (**John 14:17**; **John 15:26** and **John 16:13**). One clear Biblical guideline to enable one to make such a determination, is when the truth has been explained to an individual, does that person seek God in prayer, pleading for truth, or does one maintain, “... *trust in vanity, and speak lies. . .*” (**Isaiah 59:4**)? **Revelation 21:8** says—

“... all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Obviously then, being in the spirit of error instead of the Spirit of truth, will produce false testimonies such as ‘they approached unto the light and saw Jesus.’ The Spirit of



truth does not guide believers into error (**John 16:13**), since he is holy. Conversely, the spirit of error will invariably always lead to error, not truth. The work of the Holy Spirit is to direct those in error “. . . unto the knowledge of the truth.” (**1 Timothy 2:4**)

8. Conclusion

Since the ascension of the Lord Jesus into heaven, no person living has seen His glory, nor can approach unto glorious light. This is the meaning of **1 Timothy 1:16**. If a person has had a literal encounter, the general rule and the caveat is, that they do not tell the account of what was literally seen in heaven. It would be unlawful to speak about it. There are no actual biblical records of written down after-death experiences recounting that they saw Jesus and approached unto His light. The biblical accounts where they did, they were visions. When they had the vision, they were either asleep or in a trance, but they were still yet alive located on the earth, not in heaven.

A believer that is dead and permanently left the earth would see the Lord Jesus in heaven. The Lord has not repealed 2 Corinthians 12, as it clearly leads to error, and

lead to potentially unstable mystical standards. However, when the Lord Jesus returns He will repeal **1 Timothy 6:16** and believers shall see the Lord literally in His glorious light and be like him.

Some provide compelling testimony how they became a Born Again Christian. We do not deny that. But it will require a closer examination to establish whether it was a true conversion or not. By their fruit you will know them. Common place visions or after-death testimonials are very similar in nature to those of false prophets--Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. This, in turn, they have founded cult religions. To determine whether they are a cult, we must research the solid rock of Holy Scripture, to ascertain if it was the Spirit of truth or the spirit of error being manifested.

In sum, it is the Lord Jesus Christ that no man has seen or can see. A literal experience of seeing the Lord Jesus/God contradicts what Scriptures says in **1 Timothy 6:16**, **1 Corinthians 12:1-5** and other Biblical records about what transpired when they died, and were subsequently revived. God does not contradict what He said in His own word.

What do readers think? We acknowledge the truth that no man has seen the Father, except the Lord Jesus. Therefore, perhaps **1 Timothy 6:16** does refer to God, the Father. Equally, since the Lord's ascension to the Father, no man has seen the light and glory of the Lord Jesus either. Do you have any Biblical thoughts to contribute that adds to this discussion so we can establish the truth of this verse?

Email me your thoughts on my website below, or email me direct at nkjavapostateinfo@gmail.com