

# ***The Book of Revelation Among the Lampstands***

Lesson #2 for January 12, 2019

Scriptures: Revelation 1:9-20; 2:1-7; Acts 7:54-60; Matthew 12:8; Exodus 20:11; Daniel 10:5-6.

1. In this lesson we will discuss Revelation 1:9-2:7. In vision, John saw his Friend Jesus Christ standing among the lampstands in the sanctuary. As we will see later, there are several mentions of the sanctuary or portions of the sanctuary in the book of Revelation. Why do you think that is? Much of Revelation focuses on events that were supposed to happen in the future from John's day. What does that have to do with the sanctuary?
2. It is possible that John was actually a cousin of Jesus in His earthly life. John was one of the first disciples to begin following Jesus, and he did so for most of the next three and one-half years. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the eleven remaining disciples, having experienced Pentecost, took up the challenge of spreading the gospel to the world. But, at first, they were convinced that *the world* involved those Jews who came to worship at Jerusalem. It took some time for them to get the idea that they were also supposed to spread the gospel to Gentiles as well. Looking back, what do you think were the highlights in John's life?
3. About 60 years later, John was arrested by the Roman government for preaching about Jesus Christ.

John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil; but the Lord preserved the life of His faithful servant, even as He preserved the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. As the words were spoken, Thus perish all who believe in that deceiver, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, John declared, My Master patiently submitted to all that Satan and his angels could devise to humiliate and torture Him. He gave His life to save the world. I am honored in being permitted to suffer for His sake. I am a weak, sinful man. Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled. He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

These words had their influence, and John was removed from the caldron by the very men who had cast him in. [What did those men say to John at that point?]

Again the hand of persecution fell heavily upon the apostle. By the emperor's decree John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, condemned "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 1:9. Here, his enemies thought, his influence would no longer be felt, and he must finally die of hardship and distress.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles\** 570.1-3. [Content in brackets is added.]

4. Because John could not be killed by throwing him into the pot of boiling oil, Domitian himself commanded that John be exiled to Patmos.

Patmos is a barren, rocky island in the Aegean Sea; it is ten miles long and six miles across its widest part. The Romans used it, together with other surrounding islands, as a penal colony for banished political offenders. Early Christian authors living relatively close to the time of the writing of the book of Revelation state unanimously that Roman authorities had banished John to Patmos because of his faithfulness to the gospel. On Patmos, the aged apostle surely endured all the hardships of Roman imprisonment. He probably was treated as a criminal, chained in fetters, given insufficient food, and forced to perform hard labor under the lash of the whip of merciless Roman guards.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Sunday, January 6.

**The events that would take place in the closing scenes of this earth's**

**history were outlined before him; and there he wrote out the visions he received from God.** When his voice could no longer testify to the One whom he loved and served, the messages given him on that barren coast were to go forth as a lamp that burneth, declaring the sure purpose of the Lord concerning every nation on the earth.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles\** 570.4-571.0. [Bold type is added.]

5. But, John was certainly not the first faithful servant of God to suffer. See Daniel 3:16-23 and Acts 7:54-60. Paul wrote to his young spiritual son, Timothy: “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Timothy 3:12, *GNB\**)
6. Are we being persecuted? If we run into difficulties and feel that we are suffering for some reason, how can we decide whether it is because of our own bad choices? Or, if it is because we are serving God? Can we learn to trust God faithfully no matter what happens to us?
7. Read Revelation 1:10. There has been an enormous amount of discussion about this verse down through the ages because of its reference to **the Lord’s day**. The exact Greek expression used for *the Lord’s day* is unique in the Bible. Those exact words are not used either elsewhere in the New Testament or in the *Septuagint* which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. However, there are many other similar expressions used: For example, Exodus 31:13; Isaiah 58:13; Matthew 12:8; and Mark 2:27-28 which clearly identify the seventh-day Sabbath as *the Lord’s day*. It must have been clearly understood in John’s day.

It was on the Sabbath that the Lord of glory appeared to the exiled apostle. The Sabbath was as sacredly observed by John on Patmos as when he was preaching to the people in the towns and cities of Judea. He claimed as his own the precious promises that had been given regarding that day.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles\** 581.4.

The Scriptures are clear that God’s day is the seventh-day Sabbath. (Exodus 20:10; Mark 2:27-28) But, the custom of calling Sunday *the Lord’s day* is so ancient that a number of Romance languages have included it even in the name for Sunday—in Spanish they say *Domingo* and in French *Dimanche*. The Latin is *Dominica*. The very first possible reference to Sunday—the day of the Lord’s resurrection—as *the Lord’s day* goes back to an eccentric bishop of Antioch by the nickname of Ignatius. For hundreds of years, Saturday was still known as the Sabbath, and Sunday was called *the Lord’s day* by most Christians. Curiously, around the year 1600, English Puritans began to call Sunday, the Sabbath. There is no evidence before the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. of anyone using the “Lord’s day” or “Sabbath” to refer to the first day of the week which we call Sunday. (See C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2, 82-86.)

8. The first unambiguous use of the term *Lord’s day* for the first day of the week—in this instance, the Resurrection Sunday—appears in the little book called *The Gospel According to Peter*, a pseudepigraphical—uninspired—book which was probably composed around A.D. 175.

9 and in the night in which **the Lord’s day** was drawing on, as the soldiers kept guard two by two in a watch, there was a great voice in the heaven; and they saw the heavens opened, and two men descend from thence with great light and approached the tomb. And that stone which was put at the door rolled of itself and made way in a part; and the tomb was opened, and both the young men entered in.... 12 and at dawn upon **the Lord’s day** Mary Magdalene, a disciple of the Lord, fearing because of the Jews, since they were burning with wrath, had not done at the Lord’s sepulcher that things which women are wont to do for those that die and for those that are beloved by them—she took her friends with her and came to the sepulcher where he was laid.—*The Gospel According to Peter\** 9, 12; *Ante-Nicene Fathers\** 10:8, 175 A.D. [Bold type is

added.]

9. The Sabbath, which God had instituted in Eden, was precious to John on the lonely isle.

What a Sabbath was that to the lonely exile, always precious in the sight of Christ, but now more than ever exalted! Never had he learned so much of Jesus. Never had he heard such exalted truth.—Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*,\* April 5, 1900, par. 6; Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*,\* vol. 7, 955.9.

10. Read Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. What can we learn from these two sections? Clearly, the Exodus 20 passage tells us that we should worship God on the Sabbath because it was the day on which God rested, celebrating creation.

11. On the other hand, Deuteronomy 5 was God's direction to the children of Israel that they should celebrate the Sabbath because He had redeemed them from slavery. Thus, we see that both creation and deliverance/redemption are to be celebrated on the Sabbath day.

The best explanation for the Lord's Day in Revelation 1:10 is that John was referring to the seventh-day Sabbath. While the exact phrase "the Lord's Day" (*kuriakê hemêra*) is never used elsewhere in the New Testament or in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, many strong equivalents refer to the seventh-day Sabbath. The seventh day is "the Sabbath of the Lord [*kuriô*] thy God" (*Exod. 20:10, Deut. 5:14*). "The Lord" (*kurios*) often refers to the seventh day as "my Sabbath" (*ta sabbata mou—Exod. 31:12, 13; Lev. 19:3, 30; Lev. 26:2; Isa. 56:4-6; Ezek. 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24; Ezek. 22:3-8; Ezek. 23:36-38; Ezek. 44:12-24*). In the Hebrew of Isaiah 58:13, Yahweh calls the Sabbath "My holy day" (*NKJV*). And finally, all three Synoptic Gospels (*Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:27, 28; Luke 6:5*) quote Jesus as saying that "the Son of Man is Lord . . . of the Sabbath [*kurios tou sabbatou*]." It would be strange, therefore, if John used the phrase "the Lord's Day" for any other day of the week than the one we call Saturday.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 27. [Italic type and brackets are in the source.]

12. Read Revelation 1:12-18; compare Daniel 10:5-6. Notice the very striking similarities in the description of the one who was speaking to those two prophets.

<b>Revelation 1:12-18</b>	<b>Daniel 10:5-6</b>
A robe that reached to his feet	Linen clothes
A gold belt	A belt of fine gold
His eyes blazed like fire.	His eyes blazed like fire.
His feet shone like brass that has been refined and polished.	His arms and legs shone like polished bronze.
His voice sounded like a roaring waterfall.	His voice sounded like the roar of the great crowd.

13. Does it look like these two passages are talking about the same Person? The passage from Daniel was talking about Gabriel. Read Revelation 1:17-18 to determine the identity of this Visitor. Clearly, this was Jesus Christ Himself who had come to visit His friend John.

14. Read Revelation 1:19-20. Jesus told John specifically that the seven stars which He held in His hand represented the angels or messengers to the seven churches; the seven golden

lampstands were the seven churches. It should be noted in passing that these lamps that were seen by John were not candlesticks; they were lampstands burning olive oil and needing wicks to be changed and replaced. Those lamps were originally lit from fire provided by God Himself, and that fire was never supposed to go out. What happened to that fire during the captivity?

15. Read Revelation 2:2,9,13,19; and Revelation 3:1,8,15. These verses make it very clear that God is fully cognizant of every detail of our lives. Compare Acts 10:5-6.
16. Jesus identified Himself with the titles of God as “The first and the last.” Compare Isaiah 44:6 and Isaiah 48:12
17. What does it mean to suggest as in Revelation 1:18, *NKJV* that He is the one “who lives” and possesses “the keys of Hades and of death”? As Christians, we firmly believe that Jesus has been given authority over death, (Job 17:16, Psalm 9:13; **John 10:18**) and, thus, the power to raise from the grave into everlasting life all who have been faithful to Him. (1 Corinthians 15:21-23.) Thus, He assures us that no matter what happens to us in this life, He has the ability to raise us from death and take us to heaven. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
18. Among Christians in modern times, there have been generally two different approaches to studying the book of Revelation. To many Christians the book is full of mysteries that they cannot understand, and generally, they do not read it. On the other hand, **many Christian scholars believe that not even God has the ability to predict the future**; so, they try to interpret all the details of the book of Revelation in light of events going on in the days of John. But, read Revelation 1:11,19-20. Notice in verse 19 that it says: “Both the things that are now and the things that will happen afterwards.”—*Good News Bible*.\* For those who are willing to take God at His word, there are three important applications of these prophecies.
  - 1) **The historical application.** Although they were allowed, in general, to practice their religions privately, people who lived in those cities were expected also to worship Rome and caesar. Those who refused to do so, faced trials and, at times, even martyrdom. John, who knew each one of those church groups personally, must have been thinking about them as he wrote those messages recorded in Revelation 2&3.
  - 2) There is also a **prophetic application**. We know for sure that there were many other churches in Asia Minor besides those that are mentioned in Revelation 2&3. This suggests that these churches were chosen specifically because their spiritual conditions were to coincide with certain future spiritual conditions of God’s church in different historical periods. Thus, we can look at the seven churches as prophecies laid out in the history of our world up until the time when Jesus comes again.
  - 3) There is also a **universal application**. We know for a fact that the book of Revelation was sent first to Ephesus. It was probably copied and sent to all of the churches mentioned as well as others. The entire book was to be read by people in every church. (Revelation 1:11; 22:16) This suggests to us that there are lessons from each of these messages to each church representing different types of Christians under different circumstances. While the characteristics, for example, of the church of Laodicea might be the most common characteristics to be found in God’s final end-time church, there are, no doubt, other people in God’s end-time church with characteristics of some of the other churches. Clearly, this is God’s attempt to meet us in our spiritual condition—to meet “fallen human beings where they are.”—Ellen G. White, *Letter 121*,\* 1901; *7SDABC*\* 946.1; *Selected Messages*,\* book 1, 22.3; *FLB*\* 10.4.
19. Suppose that your church had been one of those churches that God came to and gave a message to the pastor. What would God say about your church?
20. Read Revelation 2:1-7, the message to the church at Ephesus. In the Roman Empire of John’s day, Rome was the largest and most important city. It was followed in size and importance by

Alexandria in Egypt, and then, by Antioch in Syria. The fourth position fell to either Ephesus or Corinth. Ephesus was clearly the principal city in the Roman province of Asia. Ephesus was not the capital of Asia, Pergamum was. But, it was located at the terminus of the Cayster Valley and the Cayster River. There were roads that converged on Ephesus from every direction. Roads came from as far away as the far off Euphrates River in Mesopotamia; Ephesus was considered to be the seaport and the market of Asia. It was the gateway also to Asia for those who came from the west. Whenever a new proconsul came from Rome to officiate in Asia Minor, that proconsul had to enter Asia Minor via Ephesus and first be recognized there. In later times, Christians were brought from Asia to be flung to the lions in the arena in Rome; Ignatius, one of the later Christian historians called Ephesus the highway of the martyrs. Ephesus was the wealthiest and greatest city in all of Asia Minor. It was a free city. They had bestowed honors on the Roman caesars frequently enough to be given that status. It was more or less self-governing; they never had Roman troops garrisoned there.

21. Ephesus was also the center of the worship of *Artemis*—or in Latin, *Diana* of the Ephesians. That temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was 425 feet long by 220 feet wide and had 112 columns, each 60 feet high; 36 of those columns were richly gilded and inlaid. It was four times as large as the Parthenon in Athens. The so-called goddess, *Artemis*, is pictured as a squat, black, many-breasted figure which had come down from ancient times; none knew its origin. There were temples in Ephesus for the worship of Claudius and Nero; later, temples were added for Hadrian and Severus. Ephesus was also famous for its pagan amulets and charms which were supposed to be infallible remedies for sickness. Ephesus was home to a wide variety of citizens. Some of them were original natives of that country. Others were colonists who had moved there from Athens. And some were Jews.

Besides being a centre of religion the Temple of Artemis was also a centre of crime and immorality. The Temple area possessed the right of asylum; any criminal was safe if he could reach it. The temple possessed hundreds of priestesses who were sacred prostitutes. All this combined to make Ephesus a notoriously evil place. Heraclitus, one of the most famous of ancient philosophers, was known as “the weeping philosopher.” His explanation of his tears was that no one could live in Ephesus without weeping at its immorality.—Barclay, William (Ed.). (1976). *The Revelation of John*,\* vol. 1, p. 60. Philadelphia: The Westminster John Knox Press.

22. Ephesus later became the publication center for the Christian church. Important Christian documents including probably virtually all of the New Testament books were taken there, copied, and distributed to other Christian groups.
23. Read Revelation 2:1-4 and Ephesians 1:15. Clearly, the Ephesian church was a model church in its early days under Aquila, Priscilla, Paul, Apollos, Timothy, and, later, John himself. It is also quite possible that the Onesimus spoken of in the small book of Philemon may have later become one of the church leaders in Ephesus.
24. But, unfortunately, we have Revelation 2:5-7. Over time, the church in Ephesus gradually fell away from its first love. God called them to think about how far they had fallen, to turn from their sins, and to go back to their first love.
25. Seventh-day Adventists, in general, have equated the church at Ephesus as a symbol of the Christian church from A.D. 31-100, the church during the apostolic age.
26. Have you ever belonged to a Christian group where you felt that the Christian love was waning? Perhaps everyone was attending church and going through the motions of being a Christian; but, nothing was really happening. What should we do if we find ourselves in a church like that?

The appearance of Christ to John should be to all, believers and unbelievers, an evidence that we have a risen Christ. It should give living power to the church. At times dark clouds surround God's people. It seems as if oppression and persecution would extinguish them. But at such times the most instructive lessons are given. Christ often enters prisons, and reveals himself to his chosen ones. He is in the fire with them at the stake. As in the darkest night the stars shine the brightest, so the most brilliant beams of God's glory are revealed in the deepest gloom. The darker the sky, the more clear and impressive are the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, the risen Saviour.—Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*,\* April 5, 1900, par. 7; *Manuscript 106*,\* 1897; *CTr*\* 311.6.

27. Read Revelation 1:12-20. Try to imagine yourself on a quiet Sabbath afternoon, having a vision and seeing Jesus Christ as John saw Him. How do you think you would react? John was probably 90 years old—or nearly so—when he received the visions recorded in Revelation. What do you suppose was the history of his Christian experience. A high point, surely, must have been the time when he was with Jesus on this earth. Pentecost certainly must have been another high point. We do not know a lot about what happened for the next 60 years. Notice some of the high points of this introduction to the book of Revelation.
- 1.) We have clearly identified *the Lord's day* in Revelation 1:10 as the seventh-day Sabbath.
  - 2.) It is clear that Jesus knows where we are and what we are doing and that He meets us where we are.
  - 3.) John was clearly told that his visions would include details about the current conditions of churches in Asia Minor; but, they also were about the future of the Christian church down to the end of time.
  - 4.) We are left with the challenge of interpreting the seven distinct messages to the seven churches.
28. Why do you think the book of Revelation starts with a picture of Jesus in the sanctuary among the lampstands? There is no question about the identity of this Person. We are told that John fell at His feet to worship Him; but, Jesus gently lifted him up. Did John immediately recognize who that Person was? Did he try to greet Him or welcome Him in any particular way?
29. We will be interested to note that as we work our way through the book Revelation, we will find Jesus located at different spots in the sanctuary, first of all in the holy place and, finally, in the most holy place?
30. Read Revelation 4:1. A voice said to John: "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this."—*Good News Bible*.\* As a matter of fact, we know that the book of Revelation includes the earliest history of the great controversy—even before this world was created. (Revelation 12:4,7,9)
31. John had known the human Jesus for years. Jesus was always gracious and forgiving and, as we know, on one occasion washed the feet of His disciples. Would a real God do such a thing? Why do you think He appeared in Revelation in this awesome way, standing in what appears to be the holy place of the tabernacle?
32. The fact that Jesus addressed Himself to each of those seven churches—each with its own problems and characteristics—should make it clear to us that He understands every single one of us, what our needs are, and what our hopes are. He understands exactly what He can do to help us. Are we ready to accept His offer?

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