

## ***Rest in Christ***

### ***The Ultimate Rest***

Lesson #13 for September 25, 2021

Scriptures: Revelation 1:9-19; 14:6-12; Matthew 24:4-8,23-31; Hebrews 11:13-16; Philippians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 2:9.

1. We live in a world that is in upheaval. **There is a battle going on between right and wrong; but, that battle has its basis in something that began in heaven thousands of years ago.**
2. **It is a battle over the character and government of God.** It was won by Jesus Christ 2000 years ago; but, Satan has managed to delay the final conclusion to the great controversy by alluring so many of us to follow his ways. It is a life and death matter for him! What about us? And the great controversy is being played out on two levels: (1) The **cosmic, universe-wide level** in which everyone is involved and which Christ has already won. It involves wars, political problems, natural disasters, pandemics, and death. Revelation 12:6-12 make it very clear how the war started and who the antagonists are. (2) But, **the great controversy also happens inside our minds.** Every day there is a battle between doing what we selfishly want to do and what we know from God's Word that we ought to do. We will face a lot of troubles, maybe even death, if Jesus doesn't come before that event in our individual lives.
3. John was the only apostle left. Many of his friends and fellow apostles had already suffered martyrdom. He himself had been through a lot of troubles. But, he remembered the promise of Jesus just as He was taken up into heaven that He would come again. More than 60 years had passed since those promises had been made. The church had changed. There was a new generation of believers. And John must have felt alone, tired, and restless. He had been exiled to a lonely island called Patmos in the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece. Do you think John, exiled to that island, was required to do hard labor? Review a bit of John's history.

The rulers of the Jews were filled with bitter hatred against John for his unwavering fidelity to the cause of Christ. They declared that their efforts against the Christians would avail nothing so long as John's testimony kept ringing in the ears of the people. **In order that the miracles and teachings of Jesus might be forgotten, the voice of the bold witness must be silenced.**

John was accordingly summoned to Rome to be tried for his faith. Here before the authorities the apostle's doctrines were misstated. False witnesses accused him of teaching seditious heresies. By these accusations his enemies hoped to bring about the disciple's death.

John answered for himself in a clear and convincing manner, and with such simplicity and candor that his words had a powerful effect. His hearers were astonished at his wisdom and eloquence. But the more convincing his testimony, the deeper was the hatred of his opposers. The emperor Domitian was filled with rage. He could neither [570] dispute the reasoning of Christ's faithful advocate, nor match the power that attended his utterance of truth; yet he determined that he would silence his voice.

**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.**

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.

**Patmos, a barren, rocky island in the Aegean Sea, had been chosen by the Roman government as a place of banishment for criminals; but to the servant of God this gloomy abode became the gate of heaven. Here, shut away from the busy scenes of life, and from the active labors of former years, he had the companionship of God and Christ and the heavenly angels, and from them he received instruction [571] for the church for all future time. 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.

**Among the cliffs and rocks of Patmos, John held communion with his Maker. He reviewed his past life, and at thought of the blessings he had received, peace filled his heart. He had lived the life of a Christian, and he could say in faith, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." 1 John 3:14. Not so the emperor who had banished him. He could look back only on fields of warfare and carnage, on desolated homes, on weeping widows and orphans, the fruit of his ambitious desire for pre-eminence.**

In his isolated home John was able to study more closely than ever before the manifestations of divine power as recorded in the book of nature and in the pages of inspiration. To him it was a delight to meditate on the work of creation and to adore the divine Architect. In former years his eyes had been greeted by the sight of forest-covered hills, green valleys, and fruitful plains; and in the beauties of nature it had ever been his delight to trace the wisdom and skill of the Creator. He was now surrounded by scenes that to many would appear gloomy and uninteresting; but to John it was otherwise. While his surroundings might [572] be desolate and barren, the blue heavens that bent above him were as bright and beautiful as the skies above his loved Jerusalem. In the wild, rugged rocks, in the mysteries of the deep, in the glories of the firmament, he read important lessons. All bore the message of

God's power and glory.

**All around him the apostle beheld witnesses to the Flood that had deluged the earth** because the inhabitants ventured to transgress the law of God. The rocks thrown up from the great deep and from the earth by the breaking forth of the waters, brought vividly to his mind the terrors of that awful outpouring of God's wrath....

**The history of John affords a striking illustration of the way in which God can use aged workers. When John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, there were many who [573] thought him to be past service, an old and broken reed, ready to fall at any time. But the Lord saw fit to use him still. Though banished from the scenes of his former labor, he did not cease to bear witness to the truth. Even in Patmos he made friends and converts.** [Imagine that!] His was a message of joy, proclaiming a risen Saviour who on high was interceding for His people until He should return to take them to Himself. **And it was after John had grown old in the service of his Lord that he received more communications from heaven than he had received during all the former years of his life.**—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles\** 569.2-573.0.<sup>†</sup> [Did he receive even “more communications from heaven” than when he spent three years with Jesus?]<sup>‡</sup>

4. We do not know the exact conditions under which John saw and heard the visions. Revelation 1:9-19 gives us some details. How do you think John felt about seeing his friend Jesus again? Jesus was not there just for a friendly visit; He was about to unfold to John an interesting set of visions, suggesting many things that would take place involving the Christian church from his day until the second coming and beyond.
5. How do you think John felt after receiving that first vision? Did he share it with the guards? Think of everything that he had been through! Sometimes, we feel that things are difficult in our day. But, have we been through anything even close to what the apostles, especially Paul, had experienced? After His final day on the Temple Mount, Jesus made that astounding statement that raised questions in the minds of His disciples.

**Matthew 24:2:** “I tell you this: not a single stone here will be left in its place; every one of them will be thrown down.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Matthew 24:2). New York: American Bible Society.

6. When they reached the Mount of Olives that evening, they asked of Jesus: “Tell us, when these things will be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3; *NKJV\**)
7. What was God's purpose in revealing the visions of Revelation to John? Was God's plan so that especially the final generation of us living on this earth would be prepared for what is coming just before His return? Are we listening? Are we prepared for the last plagues?
8. We Adventists know what Daniel said 500 years before John.

**Daniel 12:1:** The angel wearing linen clothes said, “At that time the great angel Michael, who guards your people, will appear. Then there will be a time of troubles, the worst since nations first came into existence. When that time comes, all the people of your nation whose names are written in God's book will be saved.”—*Good News Bible.\**

9. And it will not just be difficulties in the physical world. Notice these words recorded by Matthew.

**Matthew 24:4-8,23-31:** <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, “Be on your guard, and do not let anyone deceive you. <sup>5</sup>**Many men, claiming to speak for me**, will come and say, ‘I am the Messiah!’ and they will deceive many people. <sup>6</sup>You are going to hear the noise of battles close by and the news of battles far away; but do not be troubled. Such things must happen, but they do not mean that the end has come. <sup>7</sup>Countries will fight each other, kingdoms will attack one another. There will be famines and earthquakes everywhere. <sup>8</sup>All these things are like the first pains of childbirth....

<sup>23</sup> “Then, if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or ‘There he is!’—do not believe it. <sup>24</sup>**For false Messiahs and false prophets will appear; they will perform great miracles and wonders in order to deceive even God’s chosen people, if possible.** <sup>25</sup>Listen! I have told you this before the time comes.

<sup>26</sup> “Or, if people should tell you, ‘Look, he is out in the desert!’—don’t go there; or if they say, ‘Look, he is hiding here!’—don’t believe it. <sup>27</sup>**For the Son of Man will come like the lightning which flashes across the whole sky from the east to the west.**

<sup>28</sup> “Wherever there is a dead body, the vultures will gather.

<sup>29</sup> “Soon after the trouble of those days, the sun will grow dark, the moon will no longer shine, the stars will fall from heaven, and **the powers in space will be driven from their courses.** <sup>30</sup>Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky; and all the peoples of earth will weep as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup>The great trumpet will sound, and **he will send out his angels to the four corners of the earth, and they will gather his chosen people from one end of the world to the other.**”—*Good News Bible*.\*†

10. Jesus tried to impress upon His disciples the seriousness of what He was saying by comparing the end times to the days of Noah.

**Matthew 24:37-39:** <sup>37</sup> “The coming of the Son of Man will be like what happened in the time of Noah. <sup>38</sup>In the days before the flood people ate and drank, men and women married, up to the very day Noah went into the boat; <sup>39</sup>yet they did not realize what was happening until the flood came and swept them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

11. It is interesting that just before those words, Jesus had said:

**Matthew 24:14:** “And this Good News about the Kingdom will be preached through all the world for a witness to all nations; and then the end will come.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

12. Each one of us is expected to prepare ourselves for what is coming. So, what does it mean *to endure unto the end*?

13. It might seem like these momentous events affecting the entire world will be completely beyond our control. But, do we have a specific task that God wants us to do?

14. **Seventh-day Adventists believe that our commission as a church is to reveal to the**

## world the truth of Revelation 14:6-12 and its implications.

**Revelation 14:6-12:** <sup>6</sup> Then I saw another angel flying high in the air, with an eternal message of Good News to announce to the peoples of the earth, to every race, tribe, language, and nation. <sup>7</sup> He said in a loud voice, “**Honour God and praise his greatness! For the time has come for him to judge. Worship him who made heaven, earth, sea, and the springs of water!**”

<sup>8</sup> A second angel followed the first one, saying, “She has fallen! Great Babylon has fallen! She made all peoples drink her wine—the strong wine of her immoral lust!”

<sup>9</sup> A third angel followed the first two, saying in a loud voice, “Whoever worships the beast and its image and receives the mark on their forehead or on their hand <sup>10</sup>will themselves drink God’s wine, the wine of his fury, which he has poured at full strength into the cup of his anger! All who do this will be tormented in fire and sulphur before the holy angels and the Lamb. <sup>11</sup>The smoke of the fire that torments them goes up for ever and ever. There is no relief day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, for anyone who has the mark of its name.” [Does this sound like good news?]

<sup>12</sup> This calls for endurance on the part of God’s people, those who obey God’s commandments and are faithful to Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†‡</sup>

15. In the early days of Adventism, this message was preached loud and clear and often! Why is it that it is hardly heard now? Don’t we believe in present truth? Don’t we believe that the hour of God’s judgment is now upon us? Situations change, and that affects what is true!
16. After reading Revelation 13, we need to warn those around us, our coworkers and our neighbors, about what happens to those who do not listen to God’s warnings and will experience the third angel’s message. Are we doing that? Why does God find it necessary to let us go through these horrendously challenging times before He comes again? Couldn’t He just take us home before the seven last plagues? Some believe in the rapture.
17. Nevertheless, surely the best good news that we could get is that God is waiting to welcome us home to live with Him forever!
18. But, what about those who do not survive to see Jesus coming in the clouds? What does the Bible tell us about the dead saints?

**Hebrews 11:13-16:** <sup>13</sup> It was in faith that all these persons died. **They did not receive the things God had promised**, but from a long way off they saw them and welcomed them, and admitted openly that they were foreigners and refugees on earth. <sup>14</sup> Those who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> They did not keep thinking about the country they had left; if they had, they would have had the chance to return. <sup>16</sup> Instead, it was a better country they longed for, the heavenly country. And so God is not ashamed for them to call him their God, because he has prepared a city for them.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

19. Even the wicked angels are awaiting their judgment.

**Jude 6:** Remember the angels who did not stay within the limits of their proper authority, but abandoned their own dwelling place: they are bound with eternal chains in the darkness below, **where God is keeping them for that great**

**Day on which they will be condemned.**—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

20. These verses really do not make sense if you think that people go directly to heaven—or to hell—when they die. If people have already gone to their reward, these two passages do not make any sense. God does not make any mistakes in His judgments at the end—or ever.
21. Many people when looking at cemeteries notice that there is a familiar acronym, RIP, meaning “Rest in peace.” Why do people write that? Do they recognize that the one who was buried there is asleep? Or, do they really think that person is either in heaven or hell? That would not be resting in peace, would it? Especially if one is already in hell!
22. In John 11 the story of the resurrection of Lazarus is told in some detail. Jesus made it very clear that death—in His eyes—is just a temporary sleep. And He plans to wake us up.

To the believer, death is but a small matter. Christ speaks of it as if it were of little moment. “If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death,” “he shall never taste of death.” To the Christian, death is but a sleep, a moment of silence and darkness. The life is hid with Christ in God, and “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” John 8:51, 52; Colossians 3:4.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*<sup>\*</sup> 787.1.

23. Jesus made it quite clear that someday, both the saved and the lost will be resurrected.

**John 5:28-29:** <sup>28</sup> “Do not be surprised at this; the time is coming when all the dead will hear his voice <sup>29</sup>and come out of their graves: those who have done good will rise and live, and those who have done evil will rise and be condemned.”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup> [But, two different resurrections!]<sup>‡</sup>

24. Many people in the more advanced nations of the world find that GPS maps help them to find whatever they are looking for. Is John’s message in the book of Revelation something like that? Has God given us a general outline of how things are going to work out?
25. As we see difficult things happening, many of us are inclined to experience a lot of worry and doubt. Paul gave words for us.

**Philippians 4:4-6:** <sup>4</sup> May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice!

<sup>5</sup> Show a gentle attitude towards everyone. The Lord is coming soon. <sup>6</sup>Don’t worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*</sup>

26. Should we, indeed, stop worrying about things because we know that the coming of Jesus is soon?
27. It is amazing that Paul could make a statement like that, considering what we read in 2 Corinthians 11:21-33. Do we realize what Paul had been through?

**2 Corinthians 11:21-33:** But if anyone dares to boast about something—I am talking like a fool—I will be just as daring. <sup>22</sup>Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. <sup>23</sup>Are they Christ’s servants? I sound like a madman—but I am a better servant than they are! I have worked much harder, I have been in prison more times, I have been whipped much more, and I have been near death more often. <sup>24</sup>Five times I was given the 39 lashes by the Jews; <sup>25</sup>three times I was whipped by the Romans; and once I was stoned [and left for dead]. I have been in three shipwrecks, and once I spent 24 hours in the water. <sup>26</sup>In my

many travels I have been in danger from floods and from robbers, in danger from fellow-Jews and from Gentiles; there have been dangers in the cities, dangers in the wilds, dangers on the high seas, and dangers from false friends. <sup>27</sup>There has been work and toil; often I have gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty; I have often been without enough food, shelter, or clothing. <sup>28</sup>And not to mention other things, every day I am under the pressure of my concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup>When someone is weak, then I feel weak too; when someone is led into sin, I am filled with distress.

<sup>30</sup> If I must boast, I will boast about things that show how weak I am. <sup>31</sup>The God and Father of the Lord Jesus—blessed be his name for ever!—knows that I am not lying. <sup>32</sup>When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas placed guards at the city gates to arrest me. <sup>33</sup>But I was let down in a basket through an opening in the wall and escaped from him.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

28. So, what should be our attitude? And what should be our relationship to God in these troublous times?

We all desire immediate and direct answers to our prayers, and are tempted to become discouraged when the answer is delayed or comes in an unlooked-for form. **But God is too wise and good to answer our prayers always at just the time and in just the manner we desire. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes.** And because we can trust His wisdom and love, we should not ask Him to concede to our will, but should seek to enter into and accomplish His purpose. Our desires and interests should be lost in His will.—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*\* 219.1.<sup>†</sup>

It will only be a little while before Jesus will come to save His children and to give them the finishing touch of immortality.... The graves will be opened, and the dead will come forth victorious, crying, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Our loved ones who sleep in Jesus will come forth clothed with immortality.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,\* April 15, 1889, par. 5; *Counsels on Stewardship*\* 350.1.

29. The great controversy is very real. In fact, it is much more real than many realize because many in our world today do not believe in the existence of a literal Devil!
30. We need to avoid, however, the attempt to set a specific time when Jesus will come again. Think of all those who have set dates and been wrong.
31. One of the issues that is hotly debated even in Adventist circles is whether or not anything that we do can either hasten or delay the second coming. Is God waiting for us? Or, are we waiting for Him?

**2 Peter 3:10-12:** <sup>10</sup> But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that Day the heavens will disappear with a shrill noise, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth with everything in it will vanish. <sup>11</sup>Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your lives should be holy and dedicated to God, <sup>12</sup>**as you wait for the Day of God and do your best to make it come soon**—the Day when the heavens will burn up and be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies will be melted by the heat.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

32. Are we prepared to deal with everything the Devil is going to throw at us before the second coming? Do we clearly understand the warnings in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13? Do we understand what is implied by the prophecies of Revelation? Are we prepared to give the message of Revelation 14:6-12 to the world around us? Sometimes, great trials need to come in order to reveal who is honest, true, and faithful—and who is not. That will be true at the end of this world’s history as well.
33. Aren’t you glad that we have the book of Revelation? In this book we are told that Jesus will interact with us, help us, and then, finally, come to save us.
34. Jesus compared the second coming in some respects to what happened at the destruction of Jerusalem. Look at these comments from various scholars in the teachers Bible study guide about that experience.

The Jewish historian Josephus describes the devastating effects of the siege. He says that the starving people “would often come to blows over a small piece of bread; children would often rip food from their parents’ mouths. Neither brother nor sister had mercy upon the other. A bushel of corn was more precious than gold.”—“The Destruction of Jerusalem,” trans. D. J. Muehlenbruch (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922).

There were instances during the siege in which parents boiled their children who had died and ate them. Josephus goes on: “Driven by hunger, some ate manure; some, the cinches of their saddles; some, the leather stripped from their shields; some still had hay in their mouths when their bodies were found.” The effects of the attack on Jerusalem by the Romans were gruesome and devastating. Before it was over, fire broke out, and thousands more died in the flames.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 172.

35. The disciples had a very interesting experience with Jesus. How many of them would have stayed with Him if He had told them at the very beginning that most of them would end up being martyrs? They thought they were signing up to be in charge of a great Jewish government that would rule the world! They ended up believing that they would be a part of a greater government with their names on the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem!
36. Do we clearly understand the progress of events that are prophesied to take place before the second coming? God is waiting for us to do our part and preach the gospel.
37. Paul spent the last several years of his life imprisoned with only a brief period of time when he was released. Just before his release from the prison in Rome, Paul wrote a letter to the Philippians in which he was rejoicing. In his first chapter, he talked about “Joy in Trials.” The second chapter seems to be talking about “Joy in Humility.” In chapter 3, he saw “Joy in Surrender.” And finally, in chapter 4, he saw “Joy in Gratitude.”
38. Unfortunately, many of us have had to experience the death of family or friends or acquaintances. These are times of mourning; but, if those friends were faithful Christians, we believe that this will only have to be a temporary sleep. Are we prepared to be trusting and trustworthy? Are we prepared to speak the truth about God whenever we have the opportunity to see how that might help to finish the gospel?

© 2021, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. \*Electronic version. †Bold type is added. ‡Text in brackets is added. §Italic type is in the source. [Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)

Last Modified: July 23, 2021

C:\Users\Kenneth\Downloads\SS-13-Rest in Christ-2021\_09\_25-Fin+.wpd