



John Testifies to the Exalted Jesus Christ

Revelation 1:1–20



LESSON GOAL

Students will be encouraged despite trials that Jesus Christ continues to remain faithful to His church.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Describe what the church and the apostle John were experiencing.
- List the characteristics of the Son of Man in John's vision.
- Explain why Jesus Christ's message to John and the seven churches of Asia was written.

KEY VERSE

"Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this." — *Revelation 1:17b–19*

APPLICATION

- Eagerly wait for Jesus' return.
- Submit to Jesus Christ, who reigns as King and Lord over the entire universe.
- Be encouraged that Christ continues to love and look after His people.

NEXT WEEK

John Sees the Worthy Lamb
Revelation 5:1–14

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

As we approach the book of Revelation, we come upon the last chapter in God’s redemptive story; telling us how it all ends. From the Old Testament up until this point, we have seen God working out His plan of redemption through Adam, the patriarchs, the prophets, right on up to His beloved Son Jesus Christ. Now that we are at the end of this revealed redemptive plan, it is this Jesus Christ that we see once again. In fact, it is this very Christ that we see as the central theme of the entire book. Above all its features, the book of Revelation reveals the majesty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout the book of Matthew we read of his birth as the son of David, his teachings and miracles while on the earth, as well as his death and resurrection from the cross; all of which affirmed his deity and Messianism before men. Yet where the gospel of Matthew presented Christ in His first coming in humiliation, the book of Revelation now presents Him in His second coming in exaltation. Every vision and description of Him in Revelation is one of majesty, power and glory. In it the heavens are opened and its readers see, as did Stephen (Acts 7:56), visions of the risen, glorified Son of God.

As far as context is concerned, the year is 96 A.D. during the reign of Domitian of Rome. Throughout this period the church is undergoing immense persecution. John has been exiled to an island known as Patmos (1:9), at least one believer has already suffered martyrdom (2:13), and more persecution looms on the horizon (2:10). Despite such opposition, the church continues to grow, spreading rapidly throughout the province of Asia (not being limited to the cities mentioned in Revelation). It is to this suffering church in Asia that Revelation is given (1:4). This testimony about the coming glory of Jesus Christ is recorded and sent by way of the apostle John to encourage His church to persevere in the midst of suffering; drawing their hearts and minds to the reassuring truth that Christ will one day come to permanently conquer, rule, and gather His own unto Himself.

Christ’s Revelation Introduced (Rev. 1:1–3)

John the disciple had a very special place in Jesus’ heart. Having walked and talked with Him while He was on this earth, John was referred to in many of the gospels as the disciple in whom Jesus loved (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20). We saw much of this special relationship in the gospel of Matthew, as John (along with three others) was chosen from among the disciples to witness Jesus’ transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–13) and to even join Him as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane just hours before his death (Matt. 26:37). Well many years have now passed since Christ’s death and resurrection, and John continues to faithfully follow His Lord (John 19:35; 21:24; 1 John 1:2; 4:14). In fact, as will be noticed later, John even now is spending the latter years of his life suffering on account of having shared

the testimony of the Messiah (1:9). Having observed the teachings and miracles of Christ, John has been faithful to bear witness to the word of God and to the testimony of His Son Jesus (Rev 1:2). With all this in mind, it is of little wonder why Jesus now chooses to impart this revelation of future things to come to His faithful and beloved friend, John the disciple.

John begins recording this revelation with a very informative introduction and exhortation. This letter is the revelation that God has now given to His Son Jesus regarding the things to come in the future. Christ, having already been crucified and resurrected, now sits at His place with His Father in heaven (Heb 1:3). The first token of the Father's pleasure with the obedient Son was His resurrection; the second was His ascension; and third was the sending of the Holy Spirit. Having pleased His Father in every way, God has now given Jesus a revelation to reveal to His servants on earth. To impart this message to His people, Jesus has chosen to entrust this message with His beloved friend John. After receiving this message by way of an angel of God, John faithfully records that which he heard and saw from the risen Christ. Since the events recorded therein are soon to take place, John exhorts others who follow Christ to read these words aloud, to hear them, and to keep them safe until Christ's return. The knowledge that the events depicted in the book of Revelation are soon to take place has and should motivate Christians (both then and now) to live holy, obedient lives unto the Lord (2 Pet 3:14). Those who are obedient to such an exhortation will be considered blessed in the eyes of God.

Christ to Be Exalted Among the Seven Churches of Asia (Rev. 1:4–8)

After vv. 1–3, the apostle John goes on to add a bit of an expansion to the introduction of this letter. It is in this expansion that we find clues as to the themes of the rest of the letter. That John expounds so fully on Jesus' roles in 1:5–6 suggests the central place that Christ will play in this book, as well as the end times. Part of this role will be to impart grace and peace to the seven churches of the Roman province of Asia. John here has recognized, and is experiencing first hand, the persecution that the church was facing at that time. Because of such persecution, the apostle understands just how necessary the blessings of both grace and peace are in difficult times as these. What is most interesting here is that this blessing comes from the entire Trinity.

That God "is, and...was, and...is to come" frames the source of the entire blessing (1:4, 8) (also echoes Exod. 3:14), a point that John certainly wishes to underline by encapsulating this section of the chapter with this particular phrase. As to "the seven spirits who are before His throne," many take this to be the "sevenfold Spirit" of Isaiah 11:2 or some other analogy for the Spirit of God. This view allows us to understand the "seven spirits" here as the third persons of the Trinity. If we read the seven spirits as God's Spirit here, 1:4–5 invokes a blessing from the Trinity: Father, Spirit, and Son. Regardless of whether John invokes the Trinity here, he closes with Jesus because his role is the central focus. After all, it is especially because of their allegiance to Jesus that John's readers face opposition from the synagogue community and hence from Rome.

John here provides three titles that describe Jesus' person in 1:5 and three statements about his work in 1:5–6. Each of Jesus' titles in 1:5 provides special encouragement to the suffering church: Jesus had testified (and so suffered like many of John's first audience), had risen from the dead (a promise of hope to that audience), and now reigns (an assurance against their persecutors). That Jesus is the "firstborn from the dead" does not recall that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead, but rather that out of all those who had ever been or ever will be resurrected, His is the greatest. This resurrection was especially relevant to Christians who might soon face death for his name. As the "firstborn," Jesus' resurrection was

the guarantee that those who followed him in death would be raised as well (1 Cor. 15:20)—hence they had nothing to fear, even from death itself (Rev. 1:17–18). That Christ also rules over the kings of the earth is also refreshing to the church. The language alludes to Psalm 89:27, where God’s “firstborn” rules over the “kings of the earth.” To believers suffering under agents of mighty Caesar, this title of Jesus would have encouraged them indeed!

As John lists three titles of Jesus in 1:5, he also lists three works of Jesus in 1:5–6: He “loves us”; he “freed us from our sins”; and he “made us...a kingdom and priests.” Jesus’ love for us is expressed in his death on our behalf, as elsewhere in the New Testament (John 3:16; Rom 5:5–8; Gal 2:20). This assurance of Christ’s love would encourage the suffering believers among John’s readers; his death also provides an example for those called to join the Lamb’s sacrifice on behalf of God’s mission in the world (Rev 6:9).

In declaring that Jesus made us a “kingdom and priests,” John reminds his audience of what God has saved them for; and that is to be agents and worshippers (1:6). As priests (an allusion back to God’s treasured possession in Exod. 19:5–6), Jesus’ followers will offer worship (Rev. 4:10–11, 5:8–10) and offerings, both the incense of prayer (5:8; 8:4) and the sacrifice of their own lives (6:9). From his statement concerning being part of a priesthood, it is not surprising that John then pauses to offer a doxology to Jesus (1:6). The work of Christ on behalf of believers caused John to burst forth in praise to the risen Christ. Because of his work on the cross, John and his readers had utmost reason to rejoice. Christ’s shed blood on the cross had ultimately released them from their sins. They now stood as sinners forgiven by God, set free from sin, death, and hell by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

John closes his greeting to the seven churches with an encouraging promise (1:7), and another affirmation of God’s character (1:8). The promise: Jesus is coming! That Jesus would return in the clouds reflects Daniel 7:13; that those who pierced him would see him and mourn reflects Zechariah 12:10. No assurance could have better encouraged suffering believers than the knowledge that Jesus will come to set matters right, and that the church’s oppressors will have to acknowledge the wrong they have done to God’s servants. This hope that Christ will one day return and take believers to heaven to live forever in His presence provides hope and comfort (John 14:1–3; 1 Thess 4:18).

Finally, John confirms once again that all history is in God’s hands—the future as well as the present (1:8); thus his people need not fear as if something will happen to them apart from God’s plan. Their God is “the Alpha and the Omega”; a title that alludes back to the book of Isaiah where God is declared as being the “first” and the “last” (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). Like the one “who is, and who was, and is to come,” to God all history from beginning to end is the same to him. God is not only Lord over time, but he also rules the entire universe: he is “Almighty,” a common title for God in this book (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). For Christians suffering under Caesar, the emperor, knowing that they served the “Almighty” must have provided strength. Caesar might rule his empire there in limited ways, but God rules both the world and its course of history.

Christ Envisioned (Rev. 1:9–16)

Immediately after his greeting the seven churches, John quickly turns to describe his vision of the risen Christ. Here the apostle humbly identifies himself as a one sharing in the suffering that the church was currently experiencing. This suffering was on account of them having given testimony of Jesus, for by this point Christianity had become a hated and despised religious sect within the Roman Empire. That John shared in this suffering is evident in the fact that he was on the

island of Patmos (1:9), a barren island strictly used by the Roman empire to house those who had been exiled. The leaders of John's society had cut him off from everything else familiar to him, but the aged prophet still retained his greatest security: God remains sovereign in testing (1:8), and just as he suffered with Christ, he would also reign with him (Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12). If he shared with his fellow believers the sufferings of Christ, he also shared Christ's perseverance and ultimately his kingdom, as this passage declares (1:9).

While worshipping on the Lord's Day, John hears a loud voice instructing him: "Write what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." These seven churches were chosen because they were located in the seven major cities unto which the province of Asia was divided. John was to strategically deliver the Revelation of Jesus Christ to these churches because this would have provided a fast and efficient way of sending out the message. When John turns to hear the voice "like a trumpet," he sees "seven golden lampstands" (1:12), identified in verse 20 as the seven churches. These lampstands were golden because gold was the most precious metal. The church is to God the most beautiful and valuable entity on earth—so valuable that Jesus was willing to purchase it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). While these were actual churches in real places, the seven lampstands are symbolic of the kinds of churches through out all of church history.

In the middle of the lampstands John saw "one like a son of man" (1:13). This is none other than the glorified Lord of the church, Jesus Christ. What is most significant here is that Jesus appears among the lampstands (1:12–13; 2:1). Since Christ explains these lampstands as being the churches in all their fullness (1:20), His appearing among the lampstands in the vision probably suggested Jesus' presence with His church (John 20:19). That Jesus was present with the churches in this vision would have been a significant encouragement to those who were suffering for his name. The encouragement here is that Christ has not left them. He has been faithful to the promise He made back in the gospel of Matthew, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20; also Heb 13:5).

The first thing that John noticed was that Christ was "clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest" (1:13b). The robe and sash recall the biblical high priest in the temple (Exod. 28:4; 39:29; Lev. 8:7) and suggest that Jesus is his people's high priest. Thus Jesus appears not only as king, but as priest, a combination of images that grew familiar to Jewish people. As High Priest, Christ once offered the perfect and complete sacrifice for sins and permanently, faithfully intercedes for His people (Rom. 8:33–34). The knowledge that their High Priest was moving sympathetically in their midst to care for and protect His own provided great comfort and hope to the persecuted churches.

The rest of John's vision of the son of man notes the deity of the risen Christ, much of which was foreseen in the book of Daniel. Daniel 7:13–14 recalls a figure who likened as "the son of man" would reign as God's agent. The hair like wool and comparison with white snow (1:14) alludes to God himself, the "Ancient of Days" in the same Daniel passage. The voice like "the sound of rushing waters" (1:15; 19:6) even recalls the sound of God's own voice as many waters in Ezek. 1:24; 43:2. Even the point of Jesus' fiery eyes, white hair, and bronze feet (1:14–15) is that he was radiating light or fire—drastically similar to many other visions of God in the Bible (Ezek. 1:27; Dan. 7:9–10; Rev. 21:23; 22:5). This is why John could only describe his face as "like the sun shining in its strength" (1:16c). John's vision of the glorified Lord of the church culminated in this description of the radiant glory evident on His face. This appearance of Jesus in his glorified state was of great importance for Christians of any race or culture. The risen Lord is powerful,

even deity, and therefore can protect and empower his people in the face of their oppressors. This is evident in the very sword that came out of his mouth (1:16b) and him holding the seven stars (or messengers/leaders of the church) in his right hand (1:16a, 20a). The point of Jesus' description here was not to tell the churches of his appearance but to declare his power. He was the reigning Lord of the universe, the one with power over life and death (1:18). John was writing to persecuted Christians, reminding them that God was bigger than their trials; and that day John's message spoke across the churches as they recognized the awesome power of their faithful Lord.

Christ's Message (Rev. 1:17–20)

While the envisioned Christ would have been encouraging to the churches, of greater importance was his message. In a manner similar to his experience with the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. Matt 17:6), John was again overwhelmed with terror at the manifestation of Christ's glory and "fell at His feet like a dead man" (1:17). And just as He had done so long ago at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:7), Jesus "placed his right hand on" John and issued to the frightened apostle the comforting words of "Do not be afraid" (1:17). While overwhelmed by the glory and majesty of Christ, John was to find comfort in the assurance of God's gracious love and merciful forgiveness. This message of comfort and assurance that Jesus offers is based on both who He is and the authority He possesses.

First, Jesus identified Himself as "I am"—the covenant name of God (Exod. 3:14). It was this name with which He had comforted the terrified disciples who saw Him walking on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:27). Jesus next identified Himself as "the first and the last," which was another title used of God in the Old Testament (Isa 44:6; 48:12). This title again reaffirms to John and his readers the deity of Christ. Inferred by the title is the reality that Jesus has existed before all things and will continue to exist eternally. Jesus is far greater and superior than any of the false gods of surrounding nations, and when all of them have come and gone, only He will remain.

The entire message of 1:18 also involves Jesus' triumph over death. In the Bible and Jewish tradition, God is the "Living God" or the "Living One," but Jesus is specifically called the "Living One" here because, though he had died, he is alive forever. Paul even wrote that "Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him" (Rom. 6:9). Early Christians actually recognized this resurrection of Christ as the literal first fruits, or first installment, of the future resurrection. Thus by rising from the dead, Jesus guaranteed eternal life to all his followers, even if they faced death for his name (20:4). Since Christ now always "lives to make intercession" for His people, he "is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him" (Heb. 7:25). Despite his sinfulness in the presence of the glorious Lord of heaven, John had nothing to fear because that same Lord had paid by His death the penalty for his sins (and those of all who believed in Him) and risen to be his eternal advocate.

Because of his victory over death, Jesus also held the "keys of death and Hades" (Rev. 1:18). Hades was a Greek deity who ruled over the realm of the dead, the "house of Hades." "Death and Hades" therefore represented death's power over creation. For Jesus to hold the keys of Hades denotes the fact that He possessed all authority over death. For John to have seen such a vision of Christ would have made ultimate sense to those of the first century church. In ancient palaces of that day, the one who held the keys was an important official, able to admit or shut out people from the king's presence. Christ therefore has the authority to decide who dies and who lives; He controls life and death. Understanding this John, like all the redeemed, had nothing fear, since Christ had already delivered him from death

and Hades by His own death. Knowing this that Christ has authority over death provided those of the churches with assurance, since believers no longer have reason to fear it.

At the end of the vision, John is given an added reminder of his duty. Christ's earlier command to "write" (Rev. 1:11) is now expanded on, is John as told to record three features. First, "the things which you have seen" the vision John had just seen and recorded in verses 10–16. Next, "the things which are," which is a reference to the letters to the seven churches describing the present state of the church. Finally, John was to write "the things which will take place after these things," the prophetic revelations of future events unfolded in visions to come. Christ here closes the vision with his beloved follower by reminding him of his duty to pass on the truths he had learned in the visions.

Conclusion

In the book of Revelation, Christ has given his church a very encouraging yet sobering message. As the apostle John was faithful to have written this revelation down, the persecuted church of that day would have been given comfort and assurance in the fact that Christ, their Messiah, is now exalted. As they are suffering opposition, or perhaps even death, at the hand of Caesar, they are to be encouraged that Christ still continues to live and reign with His Father. He has defeated death by giving His life for the sins of men. Now that death is defeated, all that is left is that final day when He will return for His own. This "time is near" and will be unexpected (Mark 13:32–37; 1 Thess 5:2). It is for this very reason that Christ is calling those of that time to be ready, which can readily apply today. Jesus' return will bring the final scene of human rebellion to close—an announcement that is a happy ending to God's people, but a tragic one for all who choose to reject his way. Because the specific time is unknown and near, no one dare postpone repentance. There is never a good time for Christians to be attached to worldly possessions or allegiances, because there is never a time when testings or the Lord's literal return may not call us to account for all of our choices.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth."
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Where was Paul going in last week's lesson?

Paul was heading to Rome.

Where did Paul live while he was under arrest?

Paul was allowed to live in his own rented house while he was under arrest.

What did Paul tell the Jewish leaders in Rome?

He told the Jewish leaders that he was innocent of why he had been arrested.

He also told them about the kingdom of God and the good news about Jesus.

What did the Jewish leaders think about what Paul had said?

They said that they hadn't heard about Paul but they would like to. When Paul shared the good news about Jesus some believed and others did not.

What did Paul say to those that rejected his message?

Paul said that they were rejecting God's word just as their ancestors had done.

How long did Paul share the good news about Jesus while in Rome?

Paul continued to share the gospel with many people while in Rome for two years.



Difficult Concepts

Prophecy: God gave men called prophets the special ability to tell what would happen in the future. A prophecy was God's message about the future. Prophecies told about future events before they happened, but their purpose was to encourage holy living. Explain that weathermen try to predict what weather will happen in the future, but they are not always right. God's prophets were always right about the future. Ask the students how they would act if you told them there was going to be free ice cream outside when they went on their bathroom break. They would all look for it and be excited. It would change how they felt and acted about their bathroom break. Similarly, prophecies were meant to encourage or motivate Christians to live for Christ right now. Prophecy is intended to change how Christians live.

Symbolism: A symbol is an object used to represent an idea, person, or event. For instance, an American flag is the symbol for our country. A "+" is the symbol for addition. The book of Revelation uses symbols often to help us picture what it is talking about. Symbols stand for something else. Draw a musical note on the board. Ask the students what that symbol represents. Explain that the note isn't music, it only represents music.

Revelation: Revelation means to expose or present something that was hidden. It can be telling or showing something people didn't know before. Write a simple message like "Hello class!" on the board and have it covered up. Remove the covering to show the class what it means to reveal.



Visual Aids

Bring in pictures or actual objects of the following: a sword, sun, waterfall, belt, white wool, stars, and keys. Ask the students what each object reminds them of or makes them think of. Explain that in today's lesson we will learn about Jesus, and how each of these objects describes something about Him.



Fear

Ask your students what they are afraid of. Discuss the dark, or thunder storms, or heights, or snakes. Tell them that the great apostle John, who wrote Revelation, also had something he was afraid of. Explain John's fear when he saw the exalted Christ. He was so afraid he fell over like he was dead, but Jesus told him not to be afraid. Ask the students how their moms and dads comfort them when they are afraid. Jesus comforted John by explaining he was safe. This discussion can be used to explain how Jesus' words would have been an encouragement to the people who were in persecution at this time.



Encouraging Game

The revelation of Jesus Christ provided a great encouragement to the church. To introduce this concept of encouragement instruct the students to line up in a huge circle. Take this opportunity in the class time to have each student then say something encouraging to the person sitting next to them.



Encouragement

Discuss with the students different ways that they are encouraged. Some may say that a nice word is encouraging, others might say a hug. Explain to the students that in John's fear and in the church's persecution encouragement was needed. Ask the students how Jesus' actions and words would have been an encouragement to both.



To Reveal

Many of the students might not understand what a revelation is which then hinders their ability to understand the revelation of Jesus Christ mentioned in today's lesson. To illustrate this, have the students close their eyes. While none of them are able to see, begin describing a specific object (i.e. apple, tire, etc.). As the students are listening to your description, each of them will then be able to guess the identity of the object being described once they think they have figured it out. This provides an opportunity to explain the nature of revealing something and to mention how John himself received a revelation from Jesus in today's lesson.

Revelation can also be illustrated by hiding an object or snack before the students arrive. As revelation is being described reveal the object hidden.



Who Is John?

Take some time before the lesson to describe who John is and what things he has done. This can also be done during the lesson by a teacher dressed up as John. John could introduce himself and then tell what had happened from his perspective.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Passage Outline

Christ’s Revelation Introduced (1:1–3)

Christ to Be Exalted Among the Seven Churches of Asia (1:4–8)

Christ Envisioned (1:9–16)

Christ’s Message (1:17–20)

Reading of the Text

Read Revelation 1:1–20.

Introduction

Have you ever gone through a hard trial or difficult situation? If you have, you know how important it is to have your loving parents close by. Having loved ones like these can be so encouraging during difficult circumstances. Apart from our parents, there is another who is always close at hand. This person is none other than Jesus Christ. For believers, the Savior is always present, regardless of the situation. Well in today’s lesson we see that it was this very truth that gave the early church reason to be encouraged. While undergoing persecution, Christ sent His people a revelation telling them of things that were to come in the future. According to this revelation, Christ would be with them until the very end.



Lead-off Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: At the beginning of today’s lesson, to who does Christ choose to give His revelation to?

Answer: Christ was given a revelation from His Father to give to the church. The messenger that Jesus chose to give this revelation to was none other than his beloved disciple John. He would be entrusted with the task of delivering this revelation of the things to come to the church. In the future, whoever reads this revelation aloud, listens to it, and obeys it, will be considered blessed in the eyes of God.

LOQ: What are John and the church experiencing during this time?

Answer: Even while receiving this revelation, John was suffering imprisonment on a little island called Patmos. There the Roman government held him for having given testimony to Jesus Christ. Like Peter and Paul before him, John was suffering for his allegiance to Christ the Messiah. The church was also experiencing similar

persecution. Much like Stephen years earlier, the church continued to receive resistance on account of their loyalty to the Messiah. All around the world believers were hated for following Jesus Christ.

LOQ: To where does the apostle John send out the revelation of the Jesus Christ?

Answer: While worshipping on the Lord's Day, John hears a loud voice instructing him: "Write what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodecia" (1:11). These seven churches were chosen because they were located in the seven major cities unto which the province of Asia was divided. John was to strategically deliver the Revelation of Jesus Christ to these churches because this would have provided a fast and efficient way of sending out the message.

LOQ: With what message does John greet the seven churches?

Answer: To begin the letter, John sends a most encouraging greeting from both God and Jesus Himself. The Lord God Almighty, the Alpha and the Omega wanted them to know that He was still eternally Sovereign. He was still in control, regardless of the circumstances. Christ wanted them to also know that He loves them, He has freed them from their sins, and made them kings and priests before God. Because of his work on the cross, John and his readers had utmost reason to rejoice. Christ's shed blood had ultimately released them from their sins. They now stood as sinners forgiven by God, set free from sin, death, and hell by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. To top it all off, Jesus was coming back for His followers. No assurance could have better encouraged suffering believers than the knowledge that Jesus will come to set matters right, and that the church's oppressors will have to acknowledge the wrong they have done to God's servants. This hope that Christ will one day return and take believers to heaven to live forever in His presence provided them with both hope and comfort during their suffering.

LOQ: What did John see when he turned to see the voice that was speaking to him?

Answer: When John turns to see whose voice was like a trumpet, he saw one like "the son of man" walking among seven golden lampstands. This is none other than the glorified Lord of the church, Jesus Christ. What is most significant here is that Jesus appears among the lampstands (1:12-13; 2:1). Since Christ explains these lampstands as being the churches in all their fullness (1:20), His appearing among the lampstands in the vision probably suggested Jesus' presence with His church (John 20:19). That Jesus was present with the churches in this vision would have been a significant encouragement to those who were suffering for his name. The encouragement here is that Christ has not left them. He has been faithful to the promise He made back in the gospel of Matthew, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20; also Heb 13:5).

LOQ: In John's vision, what did the Son of Man look like?

Answer: This appearance of Jesus in his glorified state would have been of great importance for any Christian. The one we serve is one whose hair is white like wool, and whose voice is like the sound of rushing waters. All of Him, from His fiery eyes to His bronze feet radiated His glory. That such glory could be seen meant that the risen Lord is powerful, even God Himself, and therefore can protect and empower his people in the midst of their oppressors. This is evident

in the very sword that came out of his mouth (1:16b) and him holding the seven stars (or messengers/leaders of the church) in his right hand (1:16a, 20a). The point of Jesus' description here was not to tell the churches of his appearance but to declare his power. He was the reigning Lord of the universe, the one with power over life and death (1:18). John was writing to persecuted Christians, reminding them that God was bigger than their trials.

LOQ: How does the apostle John respond when seeing the glorious Son of Man?

Answer: In a manner similar to his experience with the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. Matt 17:6), John was again overwhelmed with terror at the presentation of Christ's glory. The apostle John writes that he fell on his face before His magnificent Savior Jesus Christ. And just as He had done so long ago at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:7), Jesus "placed his right hand on" John and issued to the frightened apostle the comforting words of "Do not be afraid" (1:17). While overwhelmed by the glory and majesty of Christ, John was to find comfort in the assurance of God's gracious love and merciful forgiveness.

LOQ: In comforting the frightened apostle, who does Christ identify Himself to be?

Answer: To comfort John, Jesus says: "I am the first and the last, the Living One. I died and behold I am alive forevermore" (1:17,18). Jesus identifies himself as the one who has triumphed over death. Even though he died on the cross, the grave could not hold him in the ground. Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again. Thus in rising from the dead, Christ not only defeated death, but He guaranteed eternal life to all his followers, even if they faced death for His name. So despite his sinfulness in the presence of the glorious Lord of heaven, John had nothing to fear because that same Lord had paid by His death the penalty for his sins (and those of all who believed in Him) and risen to be his eternal Savior.

LOQ: What does the glorified Christ now say He has in His possession?

Answer: Because of his victory over death, Jesus also held the "keys of death and Hades" (1:18). The people of that day believed that Hades was a Greek god who ruled over realm of the dead, "the house of Hades." "Death and Hades" therefore represented death's power over creation. For Jesus to hold the keys of Hades denotes the fact that He possessed all authority over death. Understanding this John, like all the redeemed, had nothing fear, since Christ had already delivered him from death and Hades by His own death. Knowing that Christ has authority over death provided great assurance for those of the churches, since believers no longer have reason to fear it.

Summary

Before ending the Scriptures, God desired to give one more revelation concerning those things that are to take place in the future. To those who received such a revelation in the early church, its message would prove to be a great encouragement to them during their persecution. Despite their difficult circumstances, God continues to remain in control of all things. He is the Almighty One, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Even Christ His Son is there to give encouragement. He who loves them and has freed them from their sins continues to remain with them. Such is seen through John's vision of the Son of Man. Christ, in His full glory, appears to the apostle. Through such an encounter, Christ affirms that He is the Living One

who has conquered sin and death. John faithfully and obediently writes all that Christ has to reveal to him regarding the future. Of most importance is the fact that Christ is coming soon to make all things new. In the end what remains is the revelation of Jesus Christ as seen in the last recorded book of the New Testament.

Application

That Christ has died, been resurrected, and now lives continues to be a wonderful truth for so many Christians today. Each of us should be thankful that Christ has set us free from our sins by his blood and that he continues to love and look after his church. Now that death is defeated, all that is left is that final day when He will return for His own. This “time is near” and will be unexpected. It is for this very reason that Christ is calling those of that time to be ready, which can readily apply today. For those who remain outside of God’s family, the opportunity to turn to God is running out. Christ is coming and quickly, and if He comes while one is still rejecting Him their end will be a tragic one. Because the specific time is unknown and near, no one dare postpone repentance.

Presentation Ideas



Lesson Props

During the lesson use the following props to illustrate aspects of the lesson. (Many of these props represent what John saw in his vision of the Son of Man.)

Wool (The Son of Man’s hair)

A piece of bronze (The Son of Man’s feet)

A golden sash

A recording of rushing water

A sword

A picture of a star

A lampstand (the churches)

Use a map of Asia to point out the various cities where the revelation of Jesus Christ was to be sent. While looking at the map, the students should be able to see how God so strategically designed the message to be sent.

To illustrate different aspects of Jesus’ relationship with believers use the following props.

He loves believers—heart

He has freed believers—cross

He has made believers kings and priests—crown or group of people

To illustrate different aspects of Jesus’ character use the following props.

Jesus is the first and the last—the letters A and Z

Jesus is the living one who was dead and is alive forever more—empty tomb

Jesus holds the keys to death—keys



Write What You See

Give each student a sheet of paper and have him or her create a scroll by rolling up the long sides of the page with a pencil. Explain that in today’s lesson John was given instructions to write what he saw. As teachers or helpers act out scenes of the lesson have the students take notes on their scroll of the things that they are seeing so that they can give it to their parents or siblings.



Timeline

In order for the students to conceptualize what is taking place at this time and how much time has take place since Christ died, create a classroom timeline. Begin at Jesus' birth to show how long he lived and how much time has passed since his death. Be sure to note what has happened to all of the other apostles up to this point. This timeline can be created on butcher paper and stretched across the front of the classroom.



A Revelation

During teaching time write out the main points of the lesson onto butcher paper with invisible ink. As the lesson progresses use the revealing markers to reveal each point. This will make the lesson continue the theme of revelations. Invisible markers can often be found in toy stores and often come with a second revealing marker. This idea can also be used in the introduction of the lesson to excite the students of the lesson and make an initial explanation of revelations.



Where Were the Churches?

Bring in a large map or overhead of a map to class of the region where the seven churches were located in today's lesson. The church's locations could be located and identified with an icon such as a small church sticker.

Praise and Worship

Crown Him

Father, I Adore You

Holy, Holy, Holy Is The Lord Of Hosts

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Dictation for John

Give each student a nice piece of lined stationary and a fancy pen to write out Revelation 1:19.



"John testifies to the exalted Christ"

Use this worksheet to reinforce the key truths of today's lesson. It is located at the back of this lesson.

Coloring Pages

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



MEMORY VERSE

“Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am
alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”

—*Revelation 1:17b–18*

John *testifies* to the *exalted* Christ



Revelation 1:1–20

Name _____

1. Who does Revelation reveal? _____

2. God chose the disciple, _____, to reveal His message to the seven churches.

3. What does Alpha and Omega mean? _____

4. List five descriptions of Jesus' appearance in Revelation 1:12–16.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

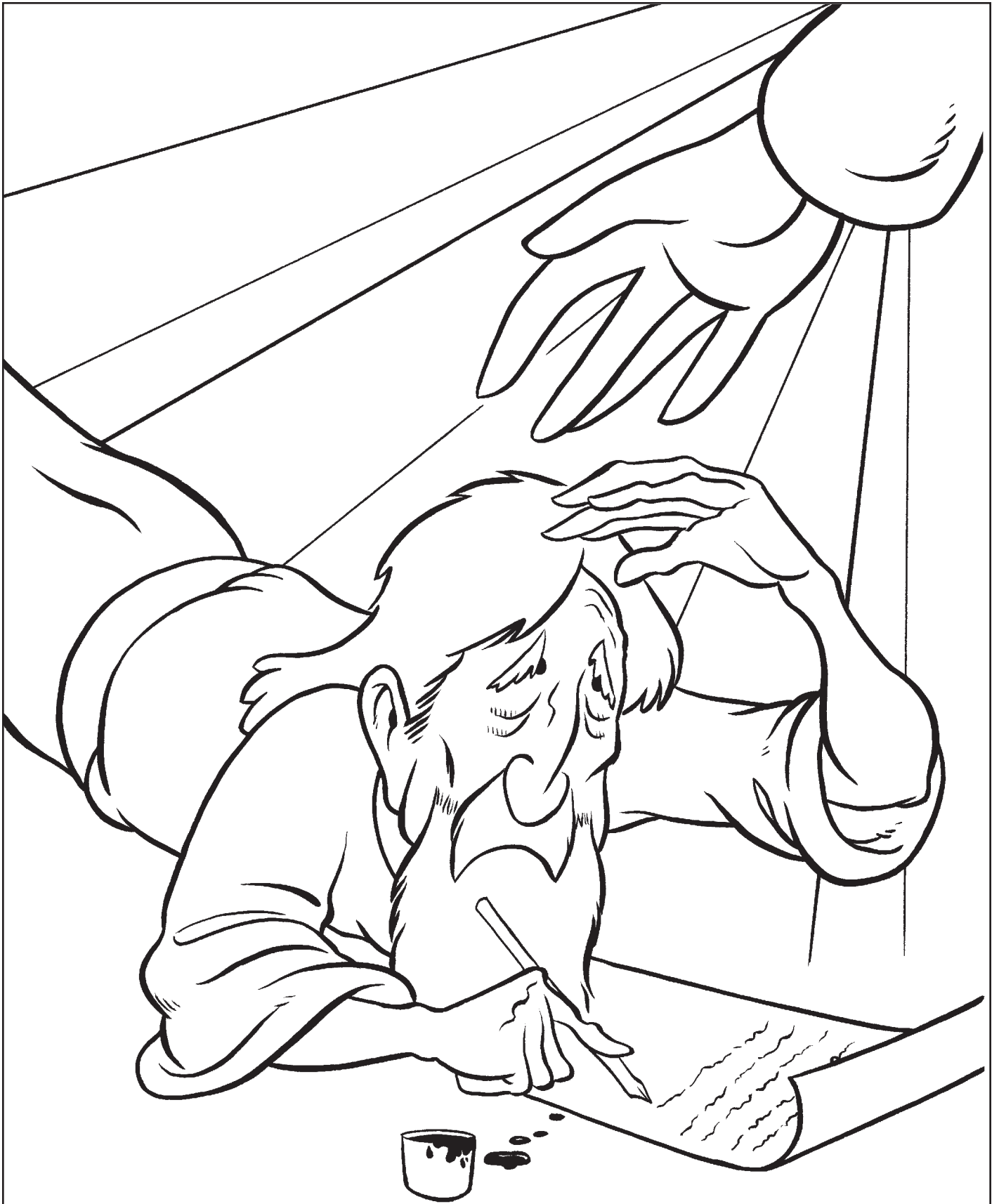
5. What did John do when he saw Jesus? _____

6. What did Jesus tell John to do? _____



“He has in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.”

—Revelation 1:16



**“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are,
and the things which will take place after this.”**

—Revelation 1:19

