

# lesson one

DECEMBER 29–JANUARY 4

## *The Gospel From* **Patmos**

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*“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near” (Revelation 1:3, NKJV).*



The Bible is a guide for our earthly life. When we hear it preached, we receive a blessing that we can then pass on to others.

Rev. 1:1 | **Introduction**  
**The Lion, the Witch, and the  
Wardrobe like Revelation?**

In 2005 the blockbuster movie *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, based on the children's series by C. S. Lewis, was released worldwide with an interesting public relations dilemma. The titular Lion was originally marketed widely among Christian communities as a representation of Jesus, but when they tried to reach the wider audience, they backed off the religious analogy that C. S. Lewis was making. The Lion is an allusion to Jesus; at the allegory's climax he lays down his life to save Edmund, the betrayer, and to undo the ever-winter curse cast on Narnia by the witch.

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**Can Revelation be understood? Yes!**

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Revelation was similarly written with analogies clearly intended for the church. It has been dubbed the most mysterious book of the Bible. Varying interpretations have been made and dispensed by differing faiths, causing quite a bit of confusion in the Christian community. Some churches have chosen to ignore this important book entirely because they find it too mysterious and difficult to understand.

In order to understand Revelation and its various symbols, one needs to have a good knowledge of the other sixty-five books of the Bible. Only in the context of Scripture can we get an accurate rendering of the symbolism in Revelation. Remember that John wrote this book for the church, people already schooled in the basic teachings of the Bible.

Can Revelation be understood? Yes! Study with a willingness to dig deeper into Scripture, and God's truth will be revealed to you in the book of Revelation. "Those who desire light must search the Scriptures, comparing scripture with scripture and pleading with God for the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The promise is that those who seek shall find."<sup>1</sup> And Jesus promised, in the Beatitudes, that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. May you be filled as your eyes are opened to the mysteries of Revelation by diligent study and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who will guide you into all truth.

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1. Ellen G. White, "Sanctify Them Through Thy Truth," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 6, 1911.

# Logos *Encouragement for the Discouraged*

Rev. 1:9, 19; 11:15

## **The Reason for the Letter (Rev. 1:9)**

Revelation is a passionate pastoral letter intended to produce confidence and hope among God's people. It was written by the apostle John on the island of Patmos, forty miles from his hometown of Ephesus. John, who was also suffering persecution, had a concern for the persecuted Christian community. The book is frequently referred to as The Revelation of John; however, the book identifies itself as The Revelation of Jesus Christ. This is significant, because a revelation of Jesus will always transform one's outlook and thereby affect the outcome of their situation.

## **A revelation of Jesus will always transform one's outlook.**

While the book of Revelation contains seven letters to the churches in Asia Minor, the entire book was actually one letter, expected to be read publicly to all the churches. This letter is apocalyptic in nature; the Greek word for apocalypse, *αποκάλυψη*, means the uncovering or revealing of things that are otherwise hidden. One characteristic of this apocalyptic literature is that the revelations are about not just what will happen in the unseen future but what is happening right now in the present unseen realms. The book is more than just a revelation of hidden things; it is also profoundly prophetic in nature. The predominant reasons for the prophetic literature are to proclaim the impending judgment of God and to promote the certainty of His promise of salvation.

## **Things Hidden yet Seen**

*The things which are* (Rev. 1:19; 2; 3). The book of Revelation unveils deep structures of the universe. These deep structures are not visible to the most powerful space telescope or particle accelerator. Revelation reveals them by drawing back the veil of spiritual obliviousness to show us a world unseen by the human eye. We are able to see a world of despair and pain; however, in that world there is also hope and promise. This encourages and inspires Christians to endure and remain faithful during the time of conflict, both the internal wars between personal faithfulness and the abandonment of faith, and the external wars of a culture out of control. There are three hidden truths from the things which are that everyone must acknowledge. First, nothing is hidden from God. He knows all about us, our struggles, our failings, and our triumphs. Second, overcoming is an imperative and is possible through the power of Jesus. And finally, it is important to heed the revealed warnings and counsels of the Holy Spirit.

*The things which shall be (Rev. 1:19; 4–22).* We see these deep structures also at the beginning of John’s vision when he is caught up into heaven to be shown “what must take place” (Rev. 4:1, NIV). There, in heaven, he sees a throne and One seated upon it. Everything else is described in relation to this throne. The throne is surrounded by four cherubim who cry out “Holy, holy, holy” (verse 8) and by twenty-four elders who fall down and say, “You are worthy” (verse 11, NKJV). There is a single throne at the center of the universe, and its occupant rightly receives worship because He is the Creator of all things. The world is not out of control. The One who created it is still actively sovereign.

Also, on the throne is a Lamb “standing as though . . . slain” (Rev. 5:6, NKJV). This Lamb is also the Lion of Judah, who has conquered and thereby has the key to God’s plan of history. Here is the second deep structural truth: the key to history is this mixed metaphor of the conquering Lion who is the slain Lamb. He has conquered by being slain and raised to new life. At his feet the cherubim and the elders fall down and say, “You are worthy” (verse 9, NKJV). They are joined by all the angels, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain” (verse 12, NKJV). There is a hidden truth from the things which shall be that everyone must acknowledge: the throne of God is still the center of the universe, and a glimpse of that throne will dethrone all other gods we worship.

### ***Making Room for the Kingdom (Rev. 11:15)***

To understand the book of Revelation in our day, we have to understand the nature of hope. For Christians hope is not a wish. It is not a tooth under a pillow or fingers crossed. Christian hope is assurance, a firm, binding promise. It is not a feeling; it is a fact. Hope is independent of circumstances, and it will never be conquered by evil. Even if hurt seems to be winning, the battle has already been won. It is a fact rooted in the reality of the prophetic nature of the book that “the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15, NKJV). This is the promise to those who are suffering for the kingdom—and the warning to those opposing the kingdom.

### **REACT**

1. What are some of the challenges you face that are discouraging as a Christian?
2. How is your life impacted by the revelation of the promise that the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of God?
3. Explain how you find encouragement in the promises revealed.

## Testimony “Sealed Book”?

Rev. 1:1–3

“Many have entertained the idea that the book of Revelation is a sealed book, and they will not devote time and study to its mysteries. They say that they are to keep looking to the glories of salvation, and that the mysteries revealed to John on the Isle of Patmos are worthy of less consideration than these.

“But God does not so regard this book. He declares: ‘I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly’ [Rev. 22:18–20].

### “The book of Revelation opens to the world what has been, what is, and what is to come.”

“The book of Revelation opens to the world what has been, what is, and what is to come; it is for our instruction upon whom the ends of the world are come. It should be studied with reverential awe. We are privileged in knowing what is for our learning. But do we treat the word of God with the reverence which is his due, and with the gratitude which God would be pleased to see? All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works’ [2 Tim. 3:16].

“The Lord Himself revealed to His servant John the mysteries of the book of Revelation, and he designs that they shall be open to the study of all. In this book are depicted scenes that are now in the past, and some of eternal interest that are taking place around us; other of its prophecies will not receive their complete fulfillment until the close of time, when the last great conflict between the powers of darkness and the Prince of heaven will take place.”<sup>1</sup>

### **REACT**

1. In the contemporary world that we live in, what can you do to study and share the book of Revelation in an innovative way?
2. How are we blessed when we hear and read the words of prophecy?
3. If we are counseled on the importance of studying the book of Revelation, why do we see so little understanding of this book today?

1. Ellen G. White, “What the Revelation Means to Us,” *Review and Herald*, August 31, 1897.

Rev. 1:3

## Evidence *Vision From the Volcano*

The rocky landscape of Patmos, a volcanic island off the coast of modern-day western Turkey, would experience its mightiest eruption in the form of a supernatural delivery of a message from the Son of God. In the Aegean Sea, on one of the northernmost islands of the Dodecanese (literally meaning “twelve islands”), the disciple at the heart of Jesus’ inner circle was in exile because of his unwavering commitment to the Lord. At the time, John was a figurative island on a literal island, separated from the other eleven apostles because he was the sole survivor.

### **John was a figurative island on a literal island.**

Most historians believe Revelation was written in A.D. 95, near the end of Emperor Domitian’s rule. Unlike the emperors of his time who waited until after death to be hailed as gods, Domitian wanted his worship while he was alive. While championing an effort to get Christians to renounce their faith, he came face to face with a bulwark who refused to bow down. John had walked with Jesus and wouldn’t deny Him to elevate an earthly emperor’s ego.

Roman historian Tacitus mentioned a Roman policy of exiling political prisoners to the small islands. At the time of banishment to Patmos, John was a very senior citizen, which would have made the terrain of this location difficult to navigate. Yet he knew God would see him through the trials (Rev. 1:9).

At the base of the mountain on Patmos John was separated from the familiar. However, halfway up the mountain lies the Cave of the Apocalypse, where it is believed that John resided when he received the visions. Today, it is a World Heritage site.

Fellow believers suffering persecution deeply desired hope, and Jesus would not fail to deliver a sure word. In fact, Revelation 1:3 gave immediate encouragement to John, who was enduring exile because he read, heard, and kept the Word of God. Verse three additionally initiates the first promise in a series of seven blessings, or “beatitudes,” occurring throughout Revelation.

In the book of Luke, the blind man desperately wanted his vision restored. Through the book of Revelation, Jesus maximized that singular opportunity to restore sight to invite the entire world to heed spiritually eye-opening instruction that would lead to permanent restoration to Him and the Father.

### **REACT**

1. What are some ways to decode biblical symbols?
2. Should any of Revelation’s language be taken literally?
3. Is Revelation’s mysterious message still relevant for Christians today?

*Tamra Clarke, Weirsdale, Florida, USA*

## How-to *Is Your Heart Ready?*

John 14:1–3;  
Rev. 1:1, 2; 22:16

From the beginning, God has had a plan of salvation for us all. His Word does not return void, neither is He slack in His promises (Isa. 55:11; 2 Pet. 3:9). John 14:1–3 presents Jesus' promise to return and take us to a prepared place where we will live with Him forever. This is in stark contrast to the state of the earth now, a place that has lost its color, vibrancy, and life. Just as in climates where trees with green leaves lose their chlorophyll, change color, and fall, sin has caused us to do the same.

### **Only plants that are rooted and grounded in good soil are able to thrive.**

Only plants that are rooted and grounded in good soil are able to thrive against strong winds, rain, or other severe weather. In this same way, as Christians we must be rooted and grounded in Christ. He is the only thing that can keep us strong in times of trouble.

A little pruning is good for our “branches.” Thinning out the thick leaves of a tree can help increase air and sunlight, which results in increased plant health. We must be willing to open our hearts completely to Christ, thereby letting Him remove our sin and those elements that block His light to our lives. God gave John the revelation and the words of Jesus Christ. Those words, when applied to our lives, work to cut out those parts of our lives that keep us resistant to Him (Heb. 4:12). His pruning is a necessary component to our spiritual growth. Jesus admonishes us to follow His example and have love for humankind but not to take on or love the things of this world (1 John 2:15–17). Pruning helps us remove those things while keeping us bound to Christ.

Daily sunlight and water allow the process of photosynthesis to occur, which feeds the plant and allows it to thrive in all its beauty. Our daily sunlight and water are the things that we let into our hearts. Jesus cautions us not to let our hearts be troubled (John 14:1). If we pour in prayer and Bible study, then we will have peace and bear good fruit that testifies of Christ and is a witness to others.

### **REACT**

1. Revelation 22:16 says that Jesus is the “bright and morning star.” How can you let His Word penetrate the dense canopy of your life and shine through? Reflect upon what needs to be removed so that He can come in and give you His peace.

2. We know that God is preparing a place for us. Will you be ready to go?

*Opal Leighvard, Orlando, Florida, USA*

John 14:1–3, 29;  
2 Pet. 3:4

## Opinion

# *Is It Real?*

We often hear the words *we are living in the end times*, but some of us struggle to understand the concept of these words. Some may even argue that history is repeating itself or that it didn't end then, why will it end now? In 2 Peter 3:4 we see mockers and scorners say, “Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (NIV).

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### **God did not give the gift of prophecy to satisfy our curiosity about the future.**

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What makes this time any different? Well, the difference lies in the fact that the book of Revelation is a gift that God promises to those who read, hear, and obey (see Rev. 1:3). The ultimate gift is Jesus Christ, on whom all prophecy centers. Here, history is exclusively revealed to His people, enabling us to understand the past, acknowledge the present, and prepare for the future. Jesus prophesied many times in the Bible, but one instance that caught my attention is that of Him comforting His disciples before His crucifixion. He reassures them, telling them not to worry because He will return to take us home, to a place He will prepare for us. Further, He informs them—and us—“before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe” (John 14:1–3, 29, NIV). This statement illustrates the significance of prophecy. God did not give the gift of prophecy to satisfy our curiosity about the future but to solidify our faith in Him so that when it does come to pass, we shall believe.

Revelation further allows us to exercise our faith through His servant John, by whom we are warned of the end times and given hope for our future. Prophecy informs us of the trials, tribulations, and persecutions to come, through the letters written to the seven churches and the three angels' messages. The book also reveals to us that a new earth will be created as a reward for those who persevere. Christ wants each and every one of us to be saved. He doesn't want us to be in darkness or to be deceived. This was His mission while on earth. Therefore, He grants us the opportunity to be aware of the future so that when it happens, not only will we believe, but we will be ready.

### **REACT**

1. If you were able to have a vision of your week, would you be better equipped to face the challenges ahead?
2. Are you among the mockers and scorners? If you are, what can you do to change that?

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*Ugochi Nkoronye, Orlando, Florida, USA*

# Exploration

## One Set of Footprints

Revelation 1–3

### CONCLUDE

It was a critical time for the church, and most of John's followers had already suffered martyrdom. John was exiled, presumably in an effort to silence him. All appeared to be lost, but the Lord Himself was in control. John was given a vision of the conditions of the church; the problems they would endure; and insight of God's authority, power, and love at each period. He who preserved the early witnesses continued to sustain those who keep the faith, for we will encounter the same suffering (Rev. 2:10). Now we can look back in hindsight at the words of this prophecy (Rev. 1:3). Do we have enough evidence to determine whether Christ is able to meet our every need? Yes. There is no situation where He has not made sufficient provision to help us.

### CONSIDER

- Applying daily affirmations that will remind you that no matter what you face, of yourself you can do nothing, but with Christ you can do everything!
- Getting charged through prayer and staying connected by reading, listening to, or watching related media or text. Like. Share. Subscribe to any additional sources that you find relevant and encouraging.
- Starting a daily blog or other type of media that speaks to the blessings in store for those who overcome, for instance, a new name, unlocked doors that no human can shut. Collaborate and share the message with others.
- Meditating on the goodness of God in your test of endurance. Encourage others along the way. Think: *When I'm going through my test, I know I will have a testimony in the end.* Listen to or read the words of a song that inspires you to hold fast.
- Prayerfully reading to understand and analyze prophecy. Note the things that surprise you or key details that you need to remember. What are some things you still don't understand? Get clarity. Don't give up.
- Journaling all experiences in which our all-sufficient God took care of you. Compare and contrast your growth out of the experiences. What do you need to start, stop, or save?

### CONNECT

Ezekiel 33:13; Matthew 18:21–35; 24:13; Luke 8:12, 13; 12:42–46; John 15:1–6; Colossians 3:4; Hebrews 10:38; Revelation 3:5.

Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 57, "The Revelation."

Joe Crews, *Can a Saved Man Choose to Be Lost?* (Amazing Facts, 2013).

Doug Batchelor, *Compromise, Conformity and Courage* (Amazing Facts, 2007).