



LESSON 40

John testifies to the exalted Jesus

REVELATION 1:1-20



When trouble comes, stand firm in Jesus.



“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” (Rev 1:17b–18).

Supporting Truths

1. Stand firm because Jesus is coming to make things right.
2. Stand firm because Jesus is in control.
3. Stand firm because Jesus gave us His Word to bless us.
4. Stand firm because Jesus' love makes us His own.
5. Stand firm by finding peace in the Triune God.

Objectives

1. State that Jesus is coming soon—at any time.
2. List several things Jesus controls.
3. State that those who believe and obey are blessed.
4. Contrast who we were before and after experiencing Jesus' love.
5. Explain how Father, Son, and Spirit are all at work for the sake of the church.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Summary

After all the other apostles had died, John received one last message from Jesus. It was a message to a struggling church, to encourage them to stand firm in their faith despite trouble. John describes this message as one that brings blessing to all who believe. It gives grace and peace from the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. But it especially reveals the Son, who personally appeared to John, showing that He is glorious and that He is coming soon.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Revelation continues the gospel message: what Jesus began when He came the first time He will finish when He comes the second time. This brings fear and grief to many, since He will judge all who reject Him, including false believers who deny Him. But His coming gives great hope to those who believe. The One who saved them by His death will keep them by His love, and in the end, He will rescue them from every enemy, even from death.

LAST WEEK



**Paul testifies to the gospel
in Rome**

Acts 28:11–31

THIS WEEK



**John testifies to the
exalted Jesus**

Revelation 1:1–20

NEXT WEEK



**John sees the worthy
Lamb**

Revelation 5:1–14

THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO THE
REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Lesson Commentary

When trouble comes, stand firm in Jesus.

It had been about 60 years since Jesus ascended. Jerusalem had been destroyed and Israel ravaged, and the church was losing its love for Jesus in the face of false teaching, temptation, and growing persecution. All the apostles were dead except John, and he was in exile. Things did not look good. So Jesus Himself appeared to encourage the church to endure because He is in control and is coming soon.

John received from Jesus a message that blesses (1:1–8)

Jesus gave John a message that is, first, trustworthy. It came from a trustworthy source, from God Himself (Rev 1:1). It also came through a trustworthy messenger (1:2), since John was a faithful witness (John 21:24). He was also a humble witness, describing himself simply as a brother and partner like all believers (Rev 1:9a). Even though he was an apostle, John knew it was all about Jesus. Finally, John was an experienced witness. He could write to persecuted Christians because he was facing persecution himself, exiled to the prison island of Patmos near Ephesus (1:9b).

Second, this is a message we can understand. Even though it uses many signs and symbols, we can still understand it because it is *revelation, something that uncovers or unveils details of God's plan that were not known before* (1:1).

Third, this message is a prophecy about the future (1:1, 3). These future events were coming “soon” even though they still have not yet happened. The events connected with Jesus’ return are soon because they are the next major event on God’s timeline. These “latter days” (Dan 2:28) were not soon in Daniel’s time, since Jesus had not yet come the first time. They were not even soon during Jesus’ lifetime, because the temple had not yet been destroyed (Luke 21:9, 20, 28). But now the events of Christ’s return are soon: they are *imminent, the very next thing prophesied*.

Fourth, this message brings a blessing to those who believe and obey (Rev 1:3).

It blesses with grace and peace from the whole *Trinity*—from

Father, Holy Spirit, and

Son (1:4–5a). We can have peace even when things get worse and worse, because God is still the same now as He always has been; He is still King on His throne, and He is even now in the process of coming to us through His Son (1:4b). He is the *Alpha and Omega, the A to Z, the One who starts and ends it all*, the Almighty God who rules with absolute power (1:8; Isa 41:4). Along with the Father, the Holy Spirit brings grace (Heb 10:29) and peace (Gal 5:22). He is pictured as seven spirits to show that He fully empowers and blesses the church (Isa 11:2).

But this message especially blesses us in Jesus. First, He blesses us because He is the faithful *witness* (Rev 1:5a). He is the eternal Word, the *one who testifies to the truth* by showing us God (John 1:1, 18). Persecuted believers can also follow His example because He never compromised even when attacked (18:37). Second, He blesses us because He is the *firstborn* from the dead (Rev 1:5b). This not only shows that He has the *highest rank*, but it also *guarantees that those who hope in Him will rise from the dead* too (1 Cor 15:20, 23). Third, He blesses us because He has supreme *authority* (Rev 1:5c). No matter how wicked our earthly rulers may be, we need not fear them, for Jesus is ultimately *in charge*.

Jesus blesses us, fourth, because His love defines who we are (1:5d). We are free people, freed from sin by His past love and secure in His ongoing and never-ending love (Rom 8:38–39; Jude 21). We are also kingdom people, subjects of Christ who owe nothing to the world anymore (Rev 1:6a; Col 1:13). Despite our

THINK ABOUT IT

We must stay faithful to Jesus because He may return at any moment (Luke 12:40; 2 Pet 3:8–14).



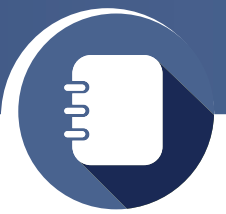
THINK ABOUT IT

Revelation is the only book of the Bible that promises to bless those who hear and obey its message.



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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weakness and suffering, we can even now experience the victory of Christ's kingdom by enduring, lasting, continuing without giving up, and overcoming (Rev 1:9). Finally, we are priests, people with direct access to God through Jesus, and we have received a mission from God to make Him known to the world (1 Pet 2:9). When we see what Jesus' love has done for us, we long to proclaim the excellencies of His glory, rejoicing in His never-ending reign (Rev 1:6b).

But there is more: the fifth blessing is that Jesus is coming (1:7). He will certainly arrive in the future because He is even now in the process of coming. He comes with the clouds, descending from heaven and shining with God's own glory (Matt 17:5). He comes to complete salvation for some, especially for Jews who truly repent for piercing their own Messiah (Zech 12:10). But since most people keep resisting Him, the majority of the world will mourn when Jesus comes to judge them (Dan 7:13–14; Matt 24:30). To believers, His coming is a blessing. But to those who oppose Christ and His followers, His coming is dreadful. For Jesus will certainly win, as John says, "**Amen**": "This is firm and certain."

John heard and saw Jesus (1:9–20)

Revelation is an amazing message, and now John shows us the amazing One it is about. On Sunday, John was in the Spirit, in a state of clear spiritual insight and in direct contact with the invisible spiritual world. But before he saw anything, he heard a voice that was loud, clear, and authoritative (Rev 1:10–11). This voice spoke from among seven lampstands, which represented the seven churches in modern-day Turkey where John had served for many years (1:12, 20). Since these seven represent the whole church, this sign encourages us: it shows us that Jesus is active and present with the church on earth (Matt 28:20).

The one present with the church is the "Son of Man," the Messiah who judges with authority and glory

equal to the Father (Rev 1:13; Dan 7:9–13). His long robe and golden sash picture His high rank (Rev 15:6). His blazing white hair—like the cloud of God's own glory—pictures His holiness (1:14; Dan 7:9). His flaming eyes see with piercing holiness into every heart (Heb 4:13). His glowing bronze feet show that judgment belongs to Him (Rev 1:15; Exod 38:1–7). His voice roars with divine power and authority (Ezek 43:2). His hand has control of seven stars, the primary human leaders of the seven churches (Rev 1:16, 20); thus He cares for them but also will judge those who are unfaithful. The sword of His mouth is His Word that judges (Isa 11:4; Heb 4:12). And His face blazes like a warrior fighting eagerly for God's glory (Judg 5:31).

What does this all mean? John rightly responded with fear, for Jesus is a fierce judge who must be taken seriously (Rev 1:17; Dan 8:17). But Jesus said, "Fear not," since He uses His great power and holiness for the good of those who trust Him. We need not fear when times get worse, since He is "the first and the last," the eternal God who is in control over all of history (Isa 44:6). We need not fear death either, since He is the Living One who conquered death and controls who lives and dies (Rev 1:18; Ps 42:2; Rom 6:9). Even though we live long after John, we can still be comforted, because this message covers all time (Rev 1:19): past (Rev 1), present (Rev 2–3), and future (Rev 4–22). And though we are not one of the seven churches, these seven represent the whole church, so we also can receive the blessing of Revelation. As we hear, believe, and obey, we learn to see things from God's perspective and to live in the hope of Christ's soon return. When we live that way, we can have peace in the middle of great trouble.

THINK ABOUT IT

Like lampstands burning oil to give light, the church shines by the power of the Holy Spirit to show God's glory to a dark world (Zech 4:1–10; Matt 5:16).



Lesson Outline

When trouble comes, stand firm in Jesus.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



When trouble comes . . .

1. Find peace through God's Word (1:1–3, 19–20).
2. Find peace in the Father's control (1:4a).
3. Find peace in the Spirit's power (1:4b).
4. Find peace in the Son's love (1:5–6).
5. Find peace because the Son is coming soon to make things right (1:7–16).
6. Find peace because the Son can rescue you from death (1:17–18).



AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. John received from Jesus a message that blesses (1:1–8).
 - It is a message about the future (1:1–2).
 - It brings blessing to everyone who reads, hears, and obeys (1:3).
 - It brings the church grace and peace from the Father and the Spirit (1:4).
 - It brings the church grace and peace from the glorious Son (1:5–8).
2. John heard and saw Jesus (1:9–20).
 - John wrote what he saw as one sufferer to encourage others (1:9–11).
 - Jesus appeared as the glorious Judge (1:12–16).
 - Jesus has power over history and over life and death (1:17–18).
 - Jesus' message was about the past, present, and future (1:19–20).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **How can you be blessed by God's Word?**
By hearing it, believing it and obeying it.
2. **When is Jesus coming back?**
Soon: at any time.
3. **When John saw Jesus, what did His face look like?**
It was shining like the sun in the middle of the day.
4. **What did Jesus tell John?**
Do not be afraid.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **Why is this book called Revelation?**
It reveals. It shows us the glory of Jesus and the events surrounding His second coming.
2. **Why did the church need this message?**
The church was struggling against temptation, false teaching, and persecution.
3. **How can we find grace and peace in the Father during trouble?**
By remembering that He is always alive, always on His throne, always in control.
4. **How can we find grace and peace in the Holy Spirit during trouble?**
By trusting in His power to fully bless and empower us to live as lights in this world.
5. **What three things does John call Jesus?**
Faithful witness, firstborn from the dead, ruler of the kings of earth.
6. **When Jesus returns, what will people do?**
They will mourn, some in true repentance, but most because He will judge them.
7. **What did Jesus' voice sound like?**
Like a trumpet and like the roaring of crashing waves.
8. **What does it mean that Jesus has the keys of death?**
He decides who lives, who dies, and when.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



BIG REVEAL

Hide an object under a small blanket. Begin describing the object, and see if any of the children are able to correctly identify it. After a few children have offered their guesses, remove the blanket and reveal the item to the children. Use this as an opportunity to introduce today's lesson: the book of Revelation "reveals" (uncovers, shows) Jesus at His second coming.

WRITE WHAT YOU SEE

John was instructed to write down the vision he saw and send it to the seven churches (Rev 1:11). Begin the lesson by talking about letters. Bring in a pen, piece of paper, envelope, stamp, and mailbox. Write a brief note on the piece of paper, and ask the children to help you get it ready to be mailed. Address it to "The Seven Churches" and place it in the mailbox. Be sure that the flag is up! In today's lesson, we will learn about a vision John was supposed to write down and send to other Christians.



VISUAL AIDS

Use the following props to illustrate aspects of the lesson: white wool or yarn (the Son of Man's hair), something the color 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), a heart (Jesus loves believers), a cross (Jesus has freed believers), a crown or a group of people (Jesus has made believers kings and priests), the letters A and Z (Jesus is the first and the last), an empty tomb (Jesus is the living one who was dead and is alive forever more), and keys (Jesus holds the keys to death).

RETURNING SOON

Bring a jack-in-the-box children's toy to class. Use this to illustrate the imminence of Christ's return: it can happen at any moment. A jack-in-the-box that opens at random times when cranked is the most effective. Explain that Jesus may return at any time.



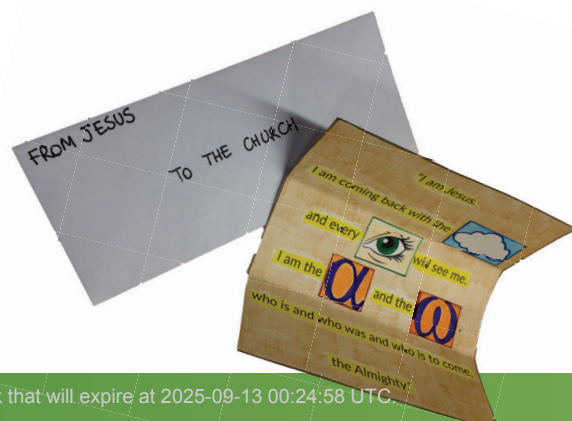
A LETTER FROM JESUS

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheets, crayons, glue stick, scissors, envelope.

Directions: Color the images, cut them and past them in the letter in the right order. Fold the letter and put it in the envelope. On the envelope write the sender (Jesus) and the receiver (the church).

A Letter from Jesus
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2



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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

PROPHECY

A prophecy is God's message about the future. Prophecies tell about future events before they happen, but their purpose is to encourage holy living. In today's lesson, John's prophecy is meant to encourage the church to endure because Jesus is in control and will return soon. Explain that this is somewhat similar to weathermen trying to predict the weather. Though they are not always right (unlike a true prophet), we use weather forecasts to help us plan what we will do and wear that day. A weatherman's forecast has the potential to impact our daily lives.

PERFECTION

The object of this board game is to put all the pieces into their corresponding holes on the board before the timer runs out. Bring this game to class and allow the children to play it before the lesson. Use it to introduce the concept of Jesus' "imminent" return. We must be ready for His return at any moment.



ILLUSTRATE

A REVELATION

Before teaching time, write out the main points of the lesson onto butcher paper with invisible ink. During the lesson, use the revealing markers to "reveal" each point.

BEDTIME BANDIT

Talk about the raccoon's remarkable ability to open trash cans and doors in search of food. You might show a picture or brief video from the internet of a raccoon breaking into something. These animals most often come out at night, under the cover of darkness, and have earned both by their actions and appearance (dark "mask" around the eyes) the reputation of a thief. This animal provides a picture of how the day of the Lord will come: "like a thief" (2 Pet 3:10). It will come like a raccoon on the prowl—at a time we did not expect.

Write What You See
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2



APPLY

WRITE WHAT YOU SEE

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheet, yarn, tan construction paper, tape.

Directions: Color the craft page. Make a hole in the dot and have a yarn pass through it. Cut a square with the construction paper and fold it to make a letter. Use the tape to keep the letter together. Taper the yarn in the back of the letter so that it can go up and down. (You can insert a piece of paper in the letter with "Revelation" written on it.)



AGES 9–11

**WHO DOES THAT?**

Do any of the children read the last page of a book first because they just have to know how it all ends? The book of Revelation is 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: Jesus is the central theme of the entire book.

FROM A TO Z

Have any of the children ever noticed where the arrow begins and ends in the Amazon logo? It starts at the letter "a" and ends at "z," a picturing the company's capacity to sell almost anything: everything from "A to Z." Jesus used this phrase long before Amazon included it in their logo to describe Himself: He is the "Alpha and the Omega" (Rev 1:8), the A to Z, the One who starts and ends it all, the Almighty God who rules with absolute power (Isa 41:4).

**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 some common symbols on the board and see if the children can identify what they represent: a musical note, the Olympic rings, skull and crossbones, peace sign, recycling sign, symbol for Pi, cross, etc.

WHERE WERE THE CHURCHES?

Bring in a large map or project a map on the screen or board 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 or laser pointer. Be sure to also point out John's location: the island of Patmos.

**Amen**

We hear this word uttered at the end of almost every prayer. What does it mean? It means "so be it" or "this is firm and certain." In today's lesson, John says it after describing the return of Jesus. While some will mourn (in repentance) over Him whom they pierced, most will mourn in anticipation of judgment (Rev 1:7). They fear the just punishment their sins deserve. Yet Jesus' return is certain: "Amen." Are you ready for Jesus' return? Next time you hear the word "Amen" at the end of a prayer, ask yourself the following question: Will I rejoice or wail at Jesus' return?