

The Good News From John on Patmos



SABBATH—DECEMBER 29

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 1:1, 2; John 14:1–3; Deuteronomy 29:29; Daniel 7:1–3; Revelation 1:4, 5.

MEMORY VERSE: “Blessed is the one who reads out loud [shares with other people] the words of this prophecy [special message]. Blessed are those [people] who hear it and think everything it says is important. The time when these things will come true is near” (Revelation 1:3, NIV).



The special messages in the book of Revelation give us hope for the future while we wait for Jesus to come back.

GOD GAVE SPECIAL MESSAGES to His follower John more than 1,900 years ago. At the time, John lived on Patmos. Patmos is a small, rocky island in the Aegean Sea (Revelation 1:9). The High King of Rome sent John to live on Patmos to punish him because John refused to stop preaching about Jesus. There on Patmos, John wrote a book about the messages or visions that God gave him. John's book is named Revelation.

Revelation 1:3 tells us that God wanted His people to read the book of Revelation to the church. God will bless in a special way everyone who shares with other people the book of Revelation. God also promises to bless the people who listen to the messages and obey them (Revelation 22:7).

The messages in the book of Revelation show us God's love. They show us Jesus and His work in heaven as our High Priest, or Holy Leader, and King. They also show us that God wants us to share the Good News with other people.

Special messages about the future also are named prophecies. God gave us the prophecies in Revelation to guide our lives today. They also give us hope for the future while we wait for Jesus to come back.

THE NAME OF THE BOOK (Revelation 1:1, 2)

Revelation 1:1, 2 talk about the meaning of the name “Revelation.” What does the name “Revelation” mean? How does this name show us who the book of Revelation is about?

Revelation 1:1 says that the name of the last book of the Bible is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” What does that name mean? The word written as “Revelation” comes from the Greek word “apokalypsis [ä-po-kä’-lū-psēs].” “Apokalypsis” means “to show clearly” or “to remove the cover from something so that it can be seen.” The book of Revelation shows Jesus to us. The book of Revelation is both **from** Jesus and **about** Jesus. That means the book of Revelation came from Jesus (Revelation 22:16). But at the same time, Jesus is the center of all Revelation’s messages. The book of Revelation is a picture about Jesus that He gave to His people to show them that He loves them.

The book of Revelation starts with Jesus (Revelation 1:5–8) and ends with Him (Revelation 22:12–16). “Let us learn from the books of Daniel and Revelation. But whatever parts of those books we teach, let us show everyone that Jesus is the center of our hope.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [special messages] to Ministers [pastors] and Gospel [about the Good News] Workers*, page 118, adapted.

The Jesus in the book of Revelation is the same Jesus in the four Gospels. The Gospels are the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus’ story starts in the Gospels. But it does not stop there. The Gospels tell us only about the work Jesus did to save humans while He lived on earth. The book of Revelation continues Jesus’ story after He goes back to heaven. The book of Revelation shows us different parts of Jesus’ work to save humans. It starts with Jesus’ waking up from the dead and going back to heaven.

The book of Revelation tells us what Jesus does for us in heaven right now. Without the book of Revelation, we cannot fully understand the things that Jesus does for us in heaven. Thanks to the books of Revelation and Hebrews, Jesus’ work for us right now in heaven is not a mystery.

Read the promise in John 14:1–3. How does this promise help us understand better the things that Jesus does for us in heaven right now? How does this promise give us hope?



The word written as “Revelation” comes from a Greek word that means “to remove the cover from something so that it can be seen.”

THE REASON WHY GOD GAVE US THE BOOK OF REVELATION (Deuteronomy 29:29)

Revelation 1:1 tells us the reason that God told John to write the book of Revelation. God wanted to show His people the future. Some of the future things that John sees in his vision start to happen right after John writes down the vision in the book of Revelation. Anyone who reads the book of Revelation will see that it is mostly about the things that John says will happen in the future. Some of these things already happened in the past.

What is the most important reason that God gives us prophecies? You will remember that prophecies are special messages from God to show us the things that will happen in the future. God gives us prophecies to show us that He is in control. The special messages about the future in Revelation show us that Jesus was with His people during everything that happened in the past. He also will continue to be with them during all the trouble that the book of Revelation shows will happen in the future.

The prophecies, or special messages about the future, in the book of Revelation help us in two important ways: (1) these messages teach us how to live today. (2) They help get us ready for what will happen in the future.

Deuteronomy 29:29 tells us why God does not show us everything about the future. What reason does this verse say to help explain why God does not tell us everything? Also, this verse tells us why God shows us things about the future. Why does God do that? (Read also Revelation 22:7).



God wants us to know about what will happen in the future so that we understand how much we need Him.

The special messages about the end time in the book of Revelation do not tell us everything that will happen in the future. God shows us only the parts of the future that we need to know. God wants us to know these things that will happen so that we will understand how much we need Him and trust Him even in hard times.

In John 14:29, we learn about an important rule. How does this rule help us understand why God gave us His special messages that warn us about what will happen?

WORD PICTURES IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION (Revelation 13:1)

Read about the visions that God gave to John in Revelation 13:1, to Daniel in Daniel 7:1–3, and to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 1:1–14. What is the same in all of the visions?

Revelation 1:1 says: “This is the revelation [special truths and secrets that God shows us] of [from and about] Jesus Christ. God gave this revelation to Jesus, to show his servants what must soon happen. Jesus sent his angel to show it to his servant John” (ICB). Do you see the word written as “show”? That word is important. “Show” comes from the Greek word “sēmainō [sā-mī-nō].” “Sēmainō” is written as “show” in Revelation 1:1. This Greek word means “to use word pictures or signs to explain the meaning of something.” The word “sēmainō” is used in the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the Greek copy of the Old Testament. In the Septuagint, Daniel explains to King Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the statue that the king saw in a dream. The statue was made of gold, silver, brass, iron and clay. God uses the statue to show (“sēmainō”) the king “what will happen in the future” (Daniel 2:45, NLV). When John writes in the book of Revelation the same word “sēmainō” that Daniel uses, John tells us that the things God shows him are signs and word pictures for things that will happen in the future.

We see that Daniel and John use “sēmainō” to explain things that they see in their visions. So, when John uses this Greek word in Revelation 1:1, we know that most of the word pictures in the book of Revelation are signs and not real things. Yes, these word pictures show us real happenings that will come true in the future. But we also understand that the word pictures are **not** real things. Here is a rule to remember when you read the book of Revelation. When you see a word picture, you should understand it as a sign of something else. But what if you read about a person, place, or thing in Revelation that clearly is not a sign? When it is clear that a person, place, or thing is not a sign, you may trust that it is a real thing and does not mean something else.

This rule will help us understand the special messages in the book of Revelation. Most of the word pictures in the book of Revelation come from word pictures in the Old Testament. So, we must let the word pictures in the Old Testament help us understand what the word pictures mean in the book of Revelation.



Most of the word pictures in the book of Revelation show us real happenings that will come true in the future.

THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT (Revelation 1:4, 5)

Look at the greetings in Revelation 1:4, 5 and Romans 1:7. What is the same about both greetings? Who says the greeting in each of these books?

Both verses give a greeting that many people at that time used when they wrote letters: “May you have loving-favor and peace from God” (Revelation 1:4, NIV). This greeting is really two separate greetings from the Greek and Hebrew languages. Both John and Paul combine the Greek greeting “charis [khä’-rēs],” which means “loving-favor,” and the Hebrew greeting “shalom [shä·lôm],” which means “peace.” We see in John’s letters to the church, and in Paul’s letters, too, that the Givers of “loving-favor” and “peace” are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

John tells us that God the Father is the One “ ‘who is, and who was, and who will come’ ” (Revelation 1:8, NIV). This picture of God helps us remember His name Yahweh, which means, “ ‘I AM WHO I AM,’ ” (Exodus 3:14, NIV). The name Yahweh shows us that God was not made by anyone. He has always been alive. He always will be alive.

John uses the word picture of “the seven spirits . . . in front of God’s throne” (Revelation 1:4, NIV) to show us the Holy Spirit. Seven is a number sign that Bible writers use to show readers that something is full or perfect. So, “the seven spirits” are a word picture that shows us that the Holy Spirit is at work fully in all seven churches. He never stops helping God’s people do their work.

In Revelation 1:5, John tells us about Jesus in three special ways. Each one of these facts about Jesus shows us a different part of His work for us: His death on the cross, His waking up from the dead, and His work for us in heaven. Then John tells us that Jesus died for us on the cross because He “loves us!” (Revelation 1:5, 6, NIV).

The words written as Jesus “loves us!” have a special meaning in Greek. The Greek words show us that Jesus’ love is so big that He loves all people who lived before this time, who live now, and who will be born in the future. Because Jesus loves us, He made us free from sin by His blood. The Greek language shows us that Jesus’ death was a perfect act: His death freed us fully from our sins.

What does it mean that Jesus freed us from sin to serve His Father? How should that change how we live?



**Because Jesus loves us,
He made us free from our
sins by His blood.**

THE MOST IMPORTANT IDEA IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION (Revelation 1:7, 8)

John writes his introduction to the book of Revelation in Revelation 1:1–8. At the end of his introduction, John shows us the most important idea in the whole book: Jesus' Second Coming. Jesus will come in power and glory. Jesus says this promise three more times at the end of John's book (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20).

When John wrote Revelation 1:7, 8, he used words from other books of the Bible: Daniel 7:13, 14; Zechariah 12:10; and Matthew 24:30. What do these verses tell us about why we can trust that the Second Coming will happen?

In the book of Revelation, John shows us that the Second Coming will cause this earth's history to end. God's everlasting kingdom also will start at the Second Coming. The Second Coming will free God's people from all evil, deep sorrow, pain, and death.

Revelation 1:7 and the New Testament teach us that Jesus' Second Coming will be real. He will come in Person. He will come with royal power and glory. Every human will see Jesus' coming. Even the men "who stabbed him" (Revelation 1:7, ICB). These words show us that God will wake up a special group of people from the dead right before the Second Coming. This group includes the men who killed Jesus on the cross. They will wake up to see Jesus come back. At that time, Jesus will free His people. But He will judge the ones who turned away from His love.

John uses two words to show us that we can trust that Jesus will come back. **"Yes, this will happen! Amen"** (Revelation 1:7, ERV; emphasis supplied). The word written as "yes" comes from the Greek word "nai [nī]." "Amen" is a Hebrew word that we use to show we agree that something is true. These two words together, "yes" and "amen," show us we can trust that Jesus will come back. John also uses these two words at the end of his book to show us that we can trust in Jesus' promise to come back again (Revelation 22:20).

A promise is only as good and strong as the person who makes it. God gave us the promise that Jesus will come back. God never broke a promise that He made. How does that fact help you trust that Jesus will come back exactly as God promised?



John uses the two words "yes" and "amen" to show us that we can trust that Jesus will come back.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Study of the Books of Daniel and the Revelation,” pages 112–119, in *Testimonies [messages] to Ministers [pastors] and Gospel [about the Good News] Workers*.

“God gave His people the messages in the book of Revelation to guide and comfort them from the day of the first church until the end time. . . . A revelation is something that someone tells or shows to people. The Lord Jesus Himself showed to His servant John the secrets that we read about in the book of Revelation. Jesus wants everyone to have a chance to study these truths. They were not only for the people living at the same time as John. God also gave those truths to the people living in the last days of this earth’s history. Some of the happenings in the book of Revelation show us the past. But some things in the book show us what is happening now. Some of the happenings help us to see how the big war between the powers of darkness and Jesus, the Prince of heaven, will end in the future. Other happenings in the book of Revelation show us that God’s people will win the victory over sin. We also see their joy in the new earth.

“Many people who study the book of Revelation cannot explain the meaning of every word picture and sign. But they should not stop studying the book of Revelation. Remember that the same God who showed John these secrets also will give understanding to the person who tries very hard to know the truth. People must open their hearts to the truth. Then God will help them understand the teachings in the book of Revelation. God will give them the same thing that He promised to the people ‘who hear this message and do what is written in it’ [Revelation 1:2, ERV].”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, pages 583–585, adapted.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What do other Christians think about the messages in the book of Revelation? Why are so many Christians afraid of these messages?
- ② Think about all the people in the last 20 years who said that some things will happen in the future. But then these things never happened. How do you think the people who believed in these messages felt when the messages did not come true? As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in the special messages about the future in the Bible. So, what is the best way to teach these truths to other people?