

# Jesus and the Seven Gold Lamps



## SABBATH—JANUARY 5

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Revelation 1:9–2:5

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Everyone who hears this [message] should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches’ ” (Revelation 2:7, ERV).

**THE WRITER OF PSALM 73** is confused by something he sees in life: people who do not follow God have more than they need. At the same time, God's true followers suffer deeply. These things upset the writer of the psalm (Psalm 73:2–6). Life does not seem fair at all! The writer wants answers. So, he goes to find them in God's sanctuary (Psalm 73:16, 17). God's sanctuary was the place on earth where God lived with His people before Solomon built God a temple.

Several hundred years later, Jesus' follower John was sent to the small island of Patmos. On this rocky “jail,” John learned some news that upset him. People who did not love God or believe in Him hurt the churches that John was in charge of. Then God gave John a vision to help him understand things better. John saw Jesus in heaven's sanctuary. Heaven's sanctuary is the place where Jesus works right now to save and help His people. John's vision helped him trust that Jesus cared for him. Jesus gave this same message to the writer of Psalm 73 many hundreds of years before. Jesus wanted John to give this message about His love to His people living in John's day and to Christians living in our time too. This week we will look at (1) the work Jesus does for us right now in heaven and (2) His first special message to one of the seven churches in Asia.



**John's vision about Jesus in the sanctuary helped John to trust that Jesus was with him and cared for him.**

## JOHN ON PATMOS (Revelation 1:9)

**In Revelation 1:9, John tells us the reason he was put on Patmos. Why was he there?**

Patmos was a rocky island in the Aegean Sea. Not many plants grew on Patmos. The island was 10 miles long and 6 miles wide at its widest part. The Romans used Patmos and the islands around it as a prison. The Romans sent people who broke the law to these islands. There were some Christian writers alive at about the same time that John wrote the book of Revelation on Patmos. All these writers agree that the Romans sent John to Patmos because he was loyal to the Good News about Jesus. John was very old when he was sent to Patmos. He must have suffered many awful things as a Roman prisoner. No doubt the Roman guards in charge of the prisoners were not nice to John. No doubt John was chained, not given enough food, and forced to work hard or get beaten if he did not do it.

“Patmos was an empty, rocky island in the Aegean Sea. The leaders of Rome chose Patmos as a place to send criminals. But to John, who was God’s servant, this dark and sad prison became the gate to heaven. Here on Patmos, John was shut away from the busy rush of life and from all the work he did in his past. On this island, God Himself and Jesus were John’s Friends. The angels from heaven were his friends too. God and His angels gave John the messages and information that the church needed for that time and for all the future.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, pages 570, 571, adapted.



**Jesus came to John with words of hope and support while John was a prisoner on Patmos.**

**Who are some other people in the Bible who suffered hard times? Did they suffer because they were loyal to God? As examples, look at the stories of Bible heroes found in Daniel 3:16–23 and Acts 7:54–60.**

Jesus’ followers always should remember that God never leaves them alone, even during the worst times. Remember that Jesus came to John with words of hope and support while John was a prisoner on Patmos. This same Jesus continues to be with His people and to give them hope and support in difficult times.

**How can we learn to trust the Lord always?**

## ON THE LORD'S DAY (Revelation 1:10)

Read Revelation 1:10. Now read Exodus 31:13; Isaiah 58:13; and Matthew 12:8. All of these verses clearly show the name of the day that belongs to the Lord. Which day of the week is it? God gave John his visions on the Lord's Day when John was a prisoner on Patmos. How much comfort do you think the Lord's Day gave John during this hard time?

"The Lord appeared in shining beauty on the Sabbath day to John the apostle. [An apostle was one of the 12 men Jesus chose to lead His church after He went back to heaven.] John had been sent as a prisoner to the island of Patmos. There, John honored the Sabbath as much as he did when he preached to people in the towns and cities of Judea. God gave many precious promises in the Bible to His followers about the Sabbath. John trusted those promises."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 581, adapted.

John does not say in the first verse of his book that the message God gave him happened on the Sabbath day. But Revelation 1:10 uses the words "on the Lord's Day" (NLV) to give us a big hint that God gave John His message on the 7th-day Sabbath. Some people think that "the Lord's Day" that John talks about in Revelation 1:10 is really the same as "the day of the Lord" that Isaiah and Peter talk about (Isaiah 13:6–13; 2 Peter 3:10). But these two days are not the same. The Lord's Day is the 7th-day Sabbath. But "the day of the Lord" that Isaiah and Peter talk about is Jesus' Second Coming. John was looking forward to that day with all his heart. But that is not the same day that John means in Revelation 1:10 when he says that God gave him the message about future happenings on the Lord's Day. God gave John His message on "the Lord's day," the Sabbath.

No doubt the message that God gives John on Sabbath made him feel better. When John got the message, maybe he felt it was the same as getting a small taste of fruit from the tree of life in heaven! In the same way, the Jews teach that the Sabbath gives us a small "taste" of something wonderful. In the Hebrew language, this thing is named the "olam haba." The "olam haba" means "the life to come."

**How does the Sabbath help us remember that God made us and saves us? Why must we always remember this truth?**



**When John got the message, maybe he felt it was the same as getting a small taste of fruit from the tree of life in heaven!**

## JESUS AND THE SEVEN GOLD LAMPS (Revelation 1:12–18)

**In Revelation 1:12–18, John gives us a picture of Jesus. How is John’s picture of Jesus the same as, or different from, the one Daniel gives us in Daniel 10:5, 6? What does Jesus do in John’s vision?**

John sees Jesus in heaven. Jesus wears the clothes worn by a high priest. A high priest is a holy leader who works to save his people. Jesus is our High Priest in heaven. Jesus wears the High Priest’s robe as He walks around seven gold lamps. The Jewish temple had lamps that looked the same as the lamps in heaven. The lamps gave light to the Jewish temple (read 1 Kings 7:49).

In John’s message from God, John watches Jesus, who “walks among [between] the seven lights [lamps] made of gold” (Revelation 2:1, NLV). What Jesus does here is a word picture. It helps God’s people remember God’s promise to His people. God promised to walk with His people as their God (Leviticus 26:12). In Revelation, the seven lamps are word pictures for the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 1:20). (The lamps also are a word picture for God’s church from John’s day until the end of time.) Jesus asked John to send the book of Revelation to the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 1:20). Jesus walks between the lamps to show that He will keep His promise to Israel. He always will be with His people.

The picture of Jesus walking between the lamps as our Priest shows us something else that Jesus does for us. The lamps in the Jerusalem temple help us better understand what that thing is. Every day, a priest watched the lamps in the Holy Room in the Jerusalem temple to make sure the lights burned brightly. The priest filled the lamps with fresh oil. He lit the lamps again. The priest learned what he needed to do to keep the lights shining. In the same way, Jesus knows the needs of each church and knows what to do to take care of all His people.

**Read Revelation 2:2, 9, 13, 19 and Revelation 3:1, 8, 15. In these verses, Jesus says “I know” when He talks about the needs of His people in the seven churches. What do these words show us about how much Jesus loves His people and knows what they need?**



**Jesus walks between the lamps to show that He will keep His promise to Israel. He always will be with His people (Leviticus 26:12).**



## THE SEVEN CHURCHES (Revelation 1:11, 19, 20)

In Revelation 1:11, 19, 20, Jesus tells John to send messages to the seven churches in Asia. There were more churches in Asia than just these seven. But these seven churches were the only ones to get messages from Jesus. How do these facts help us to see that the churches are word pictures for the Christian church at different times in history? We know that the seven churches are signs. How does that help us to see that God's messages to the seven churches in Asia also are messages for all His people?

Jesus gave John messages to send to the seven churches in Asia. John wrote these messages down in Revelation 2 and 3. We can understand the meaning of each message in three ways:

**First, the messages help us understand history.** The seven churches in the rich cities in Asia suffered many hard times. Several cities worshiped the High King of Rome in their temples. People worshiped the High King to show they were loyal to Rome. Then Rome made a law that forced people in Roman cities to worship the High King of Rome. Citizens of these Roman cities also were told they must join the celebrations that were public and pagan. "Pagan" means the people worshiped nature and many gods. What happened when Christians refused to join in these big pagan parties? They were forced to go to court. Sometimes they were put to death. Jesus gave John the seven messages to help His people who suffered these hard times.

**Second, the messages help us understand future happenings.** The spiritual health of each of the seven churches is a word picture that shows us the spiritual health of God's church during different times in history. The seven messages that John writes help us see how strong or weak the Christian religion was or is, from early in the first century A.D. (years 3–100) until Jesus comes.

**Third, the messages help us understand Christians in different times and places.** John sent the seven messages together in one letter for every church to read (Revelation 1:11). That helps us to see that the things that were true for Christians living in one time or place also may be true for Christians living in a different time or place.

**Make a picture in your mind of God writing a letter to your church about its problems and its spiritual health. What do you think God's letter will say to your church?**



The things that were true for Christians living in one time or place also may be true for Christians living in a different time or place.

## GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH IN EPHEBUS (Revelation 2:1–4)

Ephesus was the largest city in the part of Asia controlled by Rome. Ephesus was the most important shipping port in Asia. So, that made Ephesus an important place for business and religion. Many temples, theaters, gyms, and bathhouses filled Ephesus. Many people in Ephesus used magic. Many people knew about the sex sins and superstition that happened in Ephesus. So, you may be surprised to learn that the most powerful Christian church in all of Asia was in Ephesus.

**In Revelation 2:1–4, Jesus describes Himself to the church in Ephesus. What picture of Himself does Jesus give the church? Jesus praises the church for some good things. What are they? What is the one thing that Jesus does not like about the church in Ephesus? (Read Jeremiah 2:2 for a hint.)**



Church members in Ephesus started to make correct teachings and right behavior more important than their love for Jesus. Then their love for God and for each other started to grow weak and cold.

When the church in Ephesus first started, the whole Christian church heard about how the Ephesian church members were very loving to each other and loyal to God (Ephesians 1:15). The Ephesian church experienced trouble from people both outside and inside the church. But the members of the Ephesian church stayed loyal to their faith. They worked hard. They obeyed Bible truth. They did not allow any false leaders or teachers in their church. But then something happened. Church members in Ephesus started to make correct teachings and right behavior more important than their love for Jesus. Then their love for God and for each other started to grow weak and cold.

**In Revelation 2:5–7, Jesus asks the church to do three things to bring back their love for Him and each other. What three things does Jesus ask them to do? How are these three things connected?**

The things that happened in the church in Ephesus show us what happened to the Christian religion in the first century A.D., from years 31 to 100. When the Christian church first started, it was loving and loyal to the Good News. But by the end of year 100, the church started to lose its love for the Good News and for each other. Then it stopped following the plain truth found in the Good News.

**How can Jesus' advice to Ephesus help churches today that are cold and have lost their first love for the truth?**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “Patmos,” pages 568–577, in *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*.

“God used John’s dark time on Patmos to show us His loving-favor. Jesus came to John on Patmos. Jesus’ glory made the island very bright and beautiful. In the past, John saw Jesus in human form. John saw the healed marks from the nails that used to be in Jesus’ hands and in His feet. These healed marks bring praise and honor to Jesus. Now John was allowed to look again at his Lord, who woke up from the dead. Jesus was covered in shining glory. He wore this glory the same as clothing. John saw as much of Jesus’ glory as a human can see and not die from looking at all that holy light.

“Jesus showed Himself to John. What John saw is proof to all believers that we have a Savior who woke up from the dead. This proof should give the power of life to the church. At times, dark clouds are all around God’s people. It seems as if the heavy weights and attacks on their lives will destroy them. But in these awful times, God teaches the church very important lessons. In these times, Jesus often enters prisons and shows Himself to the people He chose to serve Him. Jesus is in the fire with His people who are burned to death for their faith. When the night is darkest, that is when the stars shine the brightest. In the same way, we can see the brightest beams of God’s glory in the darkest gloom.”—Ellen G. White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, April 5, 1900, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① John wrote the book of Revelation. John shared in his book what he saw and heard in God’s vision to him on Patmos. As you read Revelation 1:12–20, what do you learn and experience? How do John’s words comfort you?
- ② In Revelation 14:7, the 1st Angel tells the people on the earth to worship the One who made the heavens and the earth. These words come from Exodus 20:11. What does the 1st Angel’s Message tell us about the Sabbath and how important it is in the end time, as shown in the book of Revelation?
- ③ Some Christians who have been members in the church for a long time are in special danger. They fight hard to keep the “fire” of their faith hot and not let it grow cold. How can we keep the “fire” of our faith hot? How can we cause it to burn more brightly?



**“When the night is darkest, that is when the stars shine the brightest. In the same way, we can see the brightest beams of God’s glory in the darkest gloom.”—Ellen G. White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, April 5, 1900, adapted.**