

TO THE CONQUERORS

OCTOBER 4, 2026 / CLASS 4 / STUDENT HANDOUT

Revelation 1:9-20 – Jesus among His churches

The passage at a glance

- **1:9–11:** John shares the churches' tribulation, Kingdom, and endurance, and a voice sends him to write to them.
- **1:12–16:** John sees seven golden lampstands and One like a son of man among them.
- **1:17–18:** Jesus touches John, tells him not to be afraid, and tells him Who He is.
- **1:19–20:** Jesus sends John to write and explains the stars and the lampstands.

Part I. The classroom argument

1. They already share His Kingdom

Revelation 1:9–11.

John calls himself the churches' "brother and partner in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance that are in Jesus." The three nouns share one article in Greek. They are one life, lived in Jesus. The churches are suffering, and they already belong to the reigning King. Both are true at the same time.

John is on Patmos "because of the word of God and the witness of Jesus." On the Lord's day, Sunday, he is in the Spirit, and a voice like a trumpet tells him to write what he sees and send it to seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These are real congregations in real cities, and the vision is written for them.

2. Jesus stands among His lampstands

Exodus 25:31–40; 27:20–21; Revelation 1:12–13, 20.

A lamp was a small vessel of olive oil with a linen wick, and a lampstand held lamps up so their light filled the room. The tabernacle's lampstand, the menorah, was hammered from one piece of gold: a central shaft, three branches on each side, almond-blossom cups along the branches,

and seven lamps on top. It stood in the Holy Place, across from the table and outside the veil (Exodus 26:35). The people supplied the oil, and Aaron and his sons kept the lamps burning "from evening to morning before the LORD" (Exodus 27:20–21).

When John wrote, that service still went on in Jerusalem every day: priests, oil, wicks, incense, and a golden lampstand in a room most people never entered. You didn't have to be a priest to know what went on in there.

John turns and sees seven golden lampstands, and in the middle of them One like a son of man, "clothed in a robe reaching to His feet, with a golden sash around His chest" (1:13). The word for that robe is the Greek Old Testament's word for the high priest's robe (Exodus 28:4). The One among the lampstands is dressed for the priest's work, and the priest's work was keeping the lamps burning. The letters that follow show what His care looks like: He knows each church, commends it, corrects it, and speaks to its real condition.

Then Jesus explains the lampstands Himself: "the seven lampstands are seven churches" (1:20). The lampstand of Israel's sanctuary now stands for the churches of Jesus Christ. They are God's covenant people, and Jesus is in their midst.

- **What the hearers could take for granted:** a golden lampstand meant the sanctuary and its service.
- **What Jesus had to explain:** these seven lampstands are seven churches (1:20).

3. Why seven lampstands?

Zechariah 4:1–14; Revelation 4:5; 5:6; 2:1; Leviticus 26:11–12; Deuteronomy 12:5–14; John 4:20–24; Acts 2:1–17; 1 Corinthians 3:16.

The tabernacle had one lampstand, and so did the Temple of John's day. John sees seven.

Zechariah 4 is the strongest connection in Scripture between the lampstand's oil and the Holy Spirit. The prophet sees "a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it," seven lamps, and two olive trees supplying its oil. When he asks what it means, the answer is, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (4:6). Its seven lamps are "the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth" (4:10). Revelation takes up the same picture. Seven torches of fire before the throne are the seven spirits of God (4:5), and the Lamb's seven eyes are "the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (5:6). The seven spirits are the Holy Spirit in the fullness of His work.

The Temple had one lampstand because God's presence was in one place, and Israel had to bring its offerings and sacrifices to that place. Now the Spirit has been poured out on God's people in Christ, so the Spirit of God is wherever Christ's people are. That is why each church is a lampstand. Jesus "walks in the middle of the seven golden lampstands" (2:1), just as God promised Israel, "I will walk among you and will be your God" (Leviticus 26:12).

This is also why Christians can worship God anywhere, and the reason comes from Scripture. Israel could offer its burnt offerings only "at the place that the LORD will choose" (Deuteronomy 12:14). Jesus told the Samaritan woman that "the hour is coming" when true worshipers would worship the Father "in spirit and truth" (John 4:21, 23). At Pentecost God poured out His Spirit on all His people (Acts 2:17), and Paul tells a congregation, "you are God's temple" (1 Corinthians 3:16). Every claim about worship needs a reason from Scripture, and this is the reason.

4. The One among them holds everlasting dominion

Revelation 1:13–16; Daniel 7:9–14; 10:5–6.

Daniel supplies most of the portrait, and it tells the churches Who is standing among them. In Daniel 7 the Ancient of Days takes His throne, the beasts lose their power, and One like a son of man receives "an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away" (7:14). Daniel's beasts seem bigger than life, yet they are subject to God's control.

John gives the Son of Man the Ancient of Days' white hair. Jesus bears the glory of God Himself.

- **One like a son of man** (Daniel 7:13–14): His dominion never ends.
- **Hair white like wool and snow** (Daniel 7:9): the Ancient of Days' own glory.
- **Eyes like fire, feet like burnished bronze** (Daniel 10:6): He sees what is hidden and judges it.
- **A voice like many waters** (Ezekiel 43:2): the sound of God's glory coming home to His house.
- **A sword from His mouth** (Isaiah 49:2; 11:4): His spoken word judges.
- **A face like the sun shining in its power** (Matthew 17:2; Judges 5:31): glory and victorious strength.

That same Lord knows His own churches. Belonging to Him brings a church under His truthful, and sometimes severe, correction.

5. His own death and life answer their fear

Revelation 1:17–19; Isaiah 44:6–8.

John falls at His feet "like a dead man." Jesus lays His right hand on him, the same hand that holds the seven stars, and says, "Don't be afraid." Then He gives the reasons.

"I am the First and the Last." In Isaiah that title belongs to the LORD, Israel's King and Redeemer: "besides Me there is no god" (44:6). "I was dead, and Behold! I am living forever and ever." John lies there like a dead man. Jesus actually was dead, and He is alive. "I have the keys of Death and of Hades." Keys mean authority over who goes in and who comes out. Death can threaten His people. It cannot take them out of His hands.

Then Jesus sends John to write "what you saw, and what is, and what is about to happen after these things" (1:19): the vision, the churches' present condition, and what is coming.

The stars and the churches' angels

Jesus explains that the seven stars are "the angels of the seven churches" (1:20). The word *angel* means messenger. It can mean a human messenger who took the letter to each church, or a heavenly representative of each church, which fits Revelation's star imagery. Either way, the stars are in Jesus' right hand.

6. Why these churches can trust Him

Revelation 1:9–20.

The vision gives these churches their Lord Himself: standing among them, holding the seven stars in His right hand, and holding the keys of Death and Hades. That is the ground on which they can trust Him.

Part II. Connected evidence and further explanation

1. How the priests kept the lamps burning

Leviticus 24:1–4; Numbers 4:9–10; 8:1–4; Exodus 30:7–8.

The Torah lists the oil, the lamps, the tools, and the priestly service that kept the light burning. When Israel broke camp, the lampstand traveled wrapped in blue cloth with "all the vessels for oil with which it is supplied" (Numbers 4:9). Each morning and each evening, when the high priest tended the lamps, he burned incense on the golden altar (Exodus 30:7–8).

The Mishnah, written down about AD 200, records the Temple's practice in detail. Each lamp received half a log of oil, three and a half logs for all seven (Menachot 9:3). The wicks were made from the worn linen garments of the priests (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 21a). A stone with three steps stood in front of the lampstand, and the priest stood on it to trim the wicks, clear the ash, and refill the lamps (Tamid 3:9). Josephus, a first-century priest, says three of the lamps burned through the day and the rest were lit in the evening (*Antiquities* 3.199).

2. Zechariah's lampstand and God's provision

Zechariah 4:1–14; Haggai 2:1–5; Revelation 11:4.

Zechariah saw this vision in February 519 BC, while the exiles who had come home from Babylon were rebuilding the Temple. Four months earlier, on the seventh day of the Feast of Booths, Haggai had told the same builders, "My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not" (Haggai 2:1, 5). The vision promises that the mountain in Zerubbabel's way will become a plain, and that the hands that laid the Temple's foundation will finish it (Zechariah 4:7–9). In the tabernacle the people brought the oil for the lamps. In Zechariah's vision, living olive trees feed the lampstand, and the supply comes from God.

Revelation returns to this picture more than once: the churches as lampstands (1:20), the fiery torches as the seven spirits (4:5), the Lamb's eyes as the seven spirits sent into all the earth (5:6), and the two witnesses as "the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the Lord of the earth" (11:4).

3. The returning glory, the Servant's sword, and the transfiguration

Ezekiel 43:1–7; Isaiah 49:1–6; Matthew 17:1–8.

Ezekiel hears the glory of Israel's God coming with a sound "like the sound of many waters," then sees that glory fill the Temple, where God says He will dwell among His people forever (43:2–7). Revelation's voice like many waters belongs to that scene of God coming home to His house.

Isaiah's Servant says of the LORD, "He made my mouth like a sharp sword" (49:2). Revelation makes Christ's effective word visible as a sword from His mouth.

On the mountain of the transfiguration, Jesus' face "shone like the sun." The disciples fell on their faces in terror, and Jesus came, touched them, and said, "Rise, and have no fear" (Matthew 17:2, 6–7). John was there. On Patmos the same face shines, John falls, and the same hand touches him. Daniel 10 gives the fuller prophetic parallel: Daniel falls before a heavenly man and is touched and told not to fear (10:8–12, 18–19).

4. Reading for recognition and explanation

Revelation 1:1–3, 20; 17:7–9; 22:10.

The revelation was given to show its first hearers what they needed to know. They were to hear it and keep it, and its words were to stay unsealed because the time was near. John's hearers knew their Bibles, so a few familiar images could say a lot. The book also explains itself where it needs to. Jesus explains the stars and the lampstands (1:20), and an angel explains the woman and the beast (17:7–9). Recovering the background and following the explanations are the same work of understanding.

5. The lampstand supplement

The lampstand supplement that goes with this class follows the lamp and the lampstand from the tabernacle to the New Jerusalem. It covers the lamps John's churches used every night, the menorah's history, Zechariah's vision, the great lamps of the Feast of Booths, what Rome did with the lampstand after AD 70, and why every church is a lampstand, with drawings and photographs of the lamps.