



# St. Peter's Lutheran Church

Pursuing God in Isolation

Session Seven: Isolated from Others at the End

Revelation 1:9-20

## MAIN POINT

John was isolated in exile at the end of his life but God still used him to deliver hope to the church.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What are some fears people have about the end of life? What are some fears you have personally?**

**Why do people find value in having loved ones near as they are in their last days?  
Why would it be hard to be separated from others near the end of life?**

Near the end of John's life, he was exiled to the island of Patmos. It would have been easy for John to be overwhelmed by the hardship of being alone near the end of his time on earth. Yet, it was in these very circumstances that God used John to give hope to the church throughout history about the promised return of Jesus. By considering these events in the life of John, we can take comfort that if we are in Christ, He is always with us, even when we are separated from others.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 1:9-11.

**What was significant about John's circumstances and the day when he received this vision? How do the circumstances of our lives affect our communication with God?**

**What was John's role in delivering God's messages? Can you relate John's responsibility to the responsibilities God has given you? How has God used you to spread His Word to others?**

John wanted the churches in Asia to know they were part of a larger community of believers who had not escaped hardships in living for Christ. John's hardship was exile on Patmos because of God's word and his (John's) testimony about Jesus. John had not allowed the political authorities to silence his preaching or evangelizing. God planned to reveal for the seven churches a picture of the distant future—a time when God would execute judgment on those who opposed Him and would rescue believers from their enemies. The churches in Asia needed to hear this message because they needed assurance of God's care while enduring persecution for Christ's sake until He returned.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 1:12-16.

**The seven lampstands in verse 12 represented Christian churches. What does it mean for a church to be a light? How do we do this?**

**Jesus was portrayed majestically among the churches (vv. 12-16). What does this mean? How does it apply to our present-day churches and our personal lives? How might this give you hope in the midst of a season of isolation?**

The lampstands represented Christian churches (v. 20), giving spiritual light to a dark world just as lampstands bring physical light to the darkness. John's first vision of Jesus was His presence, not in heaven, but among the lampstands. Jesus was with His people, assuring them of His presence. Christians throughout the centuries have found comfort in this vision because it gives them assurance of Christ's presence with them as well. This should be a great comfort to us when we find ourselves isolated from others and struggling to hope.

**Name characteristics of the glorified Jesus from Revelation 1:12-16. What do the images John saw suggest about Jesus?**

**How does focusing on these characteristics of Christ strengthen your commitment to serve Him? How might this spur you on in seasons of isolation?**

**Do you always picture Jesus this powerfully? Why or why not? If not, what are some things that stand in your way?**

John's descriptive words about Jesus would have encouraged the churches as they lived in such a sin-darkened world. They needed this reassuring vision of Jesus' presence. Be assured of this: Jesus, the living and reigning Lord, is still "among the lampstands" (Rev. 1:13). He is present with you each day.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 1:17-20.

The appearance of the Lord to John was so startling that he fell as a dead man at Jesus' feet. Worship is always the right response in God's presence. Jesus comforted John by reminding him that He is the "First and the Last." The living Christ is the Master over all time—past, present, and future.

**What are some circumstances or events that have happened in your past that caused you to be as overwhelmed by God as John was?**

**Would you say you are more likely to be overwhelmed by the greatness of God or the difficulty of your circumstances in hard times? How might focusing on the truth about God change the way you feel about your circumstances?**

**Jesus said that He is victorious over death and Hades (v. 18). What are the implications of this truth for your current circumstances?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How can the vision of Jesus in Revelation comfort you in times of great hardship?**

**How does it comfort you to be reminded that Jesus is with His people at all times, no matter what they face or their stage of life?**

**Where do you currently feel without hope? How might God use you in the midst of such difficult circumstances?**

**How might God use you during this time to share the gospel with others in unexpected ways?**

## PRAYER

Close in prayer thanking God that Jesus has promised to be with us always by His Spirit and will come again to be physically present with His people forever.

## COMMENTARY

### | REVELATION 1:9-20

1:9. Tradition indicates the apostle John was exiled by the Roman emperor Domitian to a penal colony on the island called Patmos, about 40 miles southwest of Ephesus in the Aegean Sea, in about a.d. 95. He was released sometime after Domitian's death in 96. John emphasized being a partner in tribulation (i.e., "suffering, distress"; see 2:9). This is not a reference to the unparalleled time of difficulty just before the second coming of Christ.

1:10. In the Spirit refers to the exalted spiritual state that John was in as he received the visions of the Apocalypse. The Lord's day is likely a phrase referring to the first day of the week—Sunday, the day of resurrection—which had become the day of worship for Christians (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

1:11. Some interpreters believe that Revelation was written as a "book" (i.e., in a codex format), but it is much more likely that the Greek word here (biblion) should be translated scroll. The seven local churches addressed in Revelation were chosen from among all the churches in Asia Minor to serve as examples of the kinds of realities playing out in church life. These seven were obvious choices since they were located on the roads of a circular postal route, giving them prominence due to their ease of access.

1:12-18. The seven gold lampstands are the seven churches (v. 11; chaps. 2-3). John had seen Jesus Christ in a similar glorified state on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2). He had also seen His resurrection body after He was raised (John 20; Acts 1:2-11). John was also acquainted with the rich Old Testament images of the glorified Son of Man (see Dan. 7:13) that this vision on Patmos recalled.

1:14. The similes of the Son of Man's head and hair being white like wool, depicting wisdom and purity, and His eyes being like a fiery flame, picturing piercing holiness, fuse the vision of the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9) and Jesus' appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2).

1:15. Unlike the feet of the statue in Dan. 2:33-35, which crumbled, the description like fine bronze... fired in a furnace speaks of strength and stability. A voice like the sound of cascading waters would have riveted John's attention as he was imprisoned on an island where powerful waves crashed ashore.

1:16. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches (v. 20). The sharp double-edged sword that came from His mouth symbolizes the power of the Word of God to judge (Heb. 4:12). The Son of Man's face... shining like the sun was another reminder to John of what he saw with his own eyes on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2).

1:17. That John fell at His feet was an act of fear and awe at the Lord revealing Himself so profoundly to mankind (Dan. 8:17). John's reaction shows he experienced the glory of Christ more fully here than on the Mount of Transfiguration or in His post-resurrection appearances.

1:18. Christ's authority over the keys of death and Hades was stated in His declaration that He would found the church (Matt. 16:18). This will be exercised when death and Hades are emptied and then destroyed at the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

1:19. The risen Christ here commanded John to write, just as in verse 11. What you have seen is the vision of verses 12-18. What is refers to the present state of affairs in the churches in chapters 2-3. What will take place after this refers to the body of the book (chaps. 4-22), which begins with "after this" (4:1).

1:20. The Greek word translated secret is musterion, which speaks of something formerly unknown which has now been revealed. The overwhelming usage of the Greek word aggeloi in the book of Revelation is in reference to spirit beings and not human messengers (v. 1; 5:2). Perhaps the angels of the seven churches spoken of here functioned like so-called guardian angels for members of those churches (Heb 1:14).