

# On The Lord's Day

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if I could, this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if I could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the book of Revelation chapter 1.

Revelation chapter 1, and if we look at verse 9. Revelation 1 at verse 9.

And to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea, and so on.

As you know, on Sunday morning, we're going through a study in the Ten Commandments. And last Sunday morning, we were considering the fourth house rule, or the fourth commandment. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And we're to keep the Sabbath day holy, because it's a day, as you know, that has been sanctified and set apart from all the other days in a week.

[ 1 : 42 ] Therefore, as we saw on Sunday morning, we're to remember to rest, and we're to remember to rejoice on the Sabbath. We're to remember to rest, and remember to rejoice on the Sabbath.

But as I mentioned on Sunday morning, I don't like referring to Sunday as the Sabbath, even though the word Sabbath means rest, because the Sabbath is actually much more than a day of rest. It's a day of resurrection. It's a day of redemption. It's a day of renewal, restoration, and it's a day of rejoicing. The first day of a new week is a day that reminds us and reassures us that we do not worship a saviour who is dead, but one who is risen.

He is Jesus Christ, the risen, ruling, and reigning king, who is, as we're reminded in this book, he is going to return. He is Jesus Christ, the risen, ruling, and reigning king, who is going to return. And for that reason, I prefer to call the Sabbath the Lord's day, but also because that's what the apostle John called it. That's what he called the Lord's, he called the Sabbath the Lord's day.

[ 2 : 55 ] We see that there in the verses we just read in verse 10. And you know, what's remarkable is that this is the last book of the Bible. This is the final revelation of Jesus Christ.

This is the book that closes the book of books. And yet this is the first time in the Bible that the Christian Sabbath is referred to as the Lord's day, which should make us question, well, what was John doing on the Lord's day?

What was John doing on the Lord's day? And I want to suggest this evening that on the Lord's day, John was loving, listening, and looking. On the Lord's day, the apostle John was loving, listening, and looking.

So first of all, we see that John was loving. He was loving on the Lord's day. He says there in verse 9, Now in this first chapter of the last book in the Bible, We've considered the prologue to the book of Revelation, which is in many ways the foreword or the preface to the book of Revelation.

And we noted that the book of Revelation is not the book of Revelations, but it's one long revelation. And it's not the revelation of John the apostle.

[ 4 : 38 ] It's the revelation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Because as a revelation, its purpose is not to conceal, but to reveal. It's a revelation.

It's a revelation from Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ, for the church of Jesus Christ. And it's the final revelation of Jesus Christ.

It is, as John tells us right at the beginning, it is the apocalypse. It is the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. And that word apocalypse, as we've said before, it gives to us the image of God lifting the lid.

He's removing the veil. He's opening the curtains. He's pulling back the curtain to reveal something glorious to the church of Jesus Christ. And what God wants to reveal to the church is something that will encourage and enable the church to remain focused and to remain faithful, even in the midst of opposition.

Because what's been revealed in this apocalypse, this final revelation, what's been revealed is not only the climax and the culmination and the conclusion of this world's history, but also the fact that, as we said, Jesus Christ is the risen, ruling, and reigning king who is going to return.

[ 6 : 11 ] But as we said before, this revelation is a Trinitarian revelation. It has been handed down to us from the throne of heaven. It was handed down from God the Father to God the Son to God the Holy Spirit, down to God's servant John, who wrote, as we read there, he wrote all the things that he saw and he handed it down to the church.

And the church has handed it down throughout the centuries, from the first century down to our day, the 21st century, where now it has been handed down to you and to me, which means that we have a role and responsibility now to hand down this revelation to the next generation.

Because as we read there in verse 3, and it's a key verse, verse 3, this apocalypse, this revelation of Jesus Christ, it comes to us with a personal and a powerful promise.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy. And blessed are those who hear, and blessed are those who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

And what is the time that is near? Verse 7, So we've been reminded here that Jesus Christ is the risen, ruling, and reigning King who's going to return.

[ 7 : 48 ] And so having introduced the writer of this revelation, having informed the reader of this revelation, we now then begin in verse 9. I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Now, as you know, recently we began a study on the disciples of Jesus. We're looking at them on Sunday evenings. We're doing the commandments in the morning and the disciples in the evening. And we've been considering how these 12 ordinary men were chosen, called, and commissioned by Jesus to turn the world upside down and alter what was human history.

But these 12 ordinary men, they were chosen, called, and commissioned to be disciples. And when they were chosen, called, and commissioned, as you see in the Gospels, they weren't fully aware of the cost of discipleship.

Even though Jesus said that the cost of discipleship is deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me, the disciples didn't really fully understand it.

[ 9 : 03 ] And yet all of them came to deny self, take up their cross, and follow Jesus all the way to a martyr's death.

As you know, and as we touched on last Sunday evening, or even the Sunday evening before, Peter was crucified upside down. Andrew, when we'll look at this, Lord's Day coming, he was crucified on a cross shaped like the Scotland flag, hence why we call it the St. Andrew's Cross. James was beheaded. Philip and Bartholomew were also crucified. Matthew, the Gospel writer, was killed with an axe. Thomas was thrust through with a spear. James, the son of Alphaeus, was stoned to death.

Simon the Zealot was crucified. And Matthias, the one who replaced Judas, he was also beheaded. All of the apostles were executed. They denied self.

They took up their cross. They followed Jesus all the way to a martyr's death. They were all executed by the order of the emperor, except John. John was ordered by the emperor to be exiled to the Greek island, that little island called Patmos, where he would die of old age and in complete isolation.

[ 10 : 22 ] But as we said, what was John doing on the Lord's Day? What was John doing on the Lord's Day? John tells us in verse 10, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. What does that mean? John was praying. John was praying on the Lord's Day, even though he was in exile, even though he was distant and detached from the gatherings of the Lord's people on the Lord's Day.

John spent the Lord's Day praying for the Lord's people. Why? Because he loved the Lord's people. John spent the Lord's Day praying for the Lord's people because he loved the Lord's people.

Is that not how John put it in his letter? His first letter, he says, we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. We know that we're Christians.

We know that we love Jesus because we love the brethren. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. My friend, John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

[ 11 : 31 ] He was praying on the Lord's Day because he loved the Lord's people. And you know, undoubtedly as a pastor, who had been pastoring for many, many years, John was praying for those whom he had pastored.

He was a pastor in Ephesus. He was a pastor in other places too. And John was praying for those whom he had pastored. He was praying for those whom he knew would be meeting together for public worship on the Lord's Day.

He was praying for those who were preaching God's Word. He was praying for those who were under God's Word on the Lord's Day. John was also praying for those who were being persecuted for righteousness' sake, even on the Lord's Day.

What was John doing on the Lord's Day? I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. He was praying. Because that's the privilege of prayer. That even when we're separated from the Lord's people, we can love the Lord's people by praying for the Lord's people.

And you know, it ought to remind us about the importance of praying for the church as it gathers. On that one day in the week. As it gathers on the Lord's Day.

[ 12 : 50 ] Because we're to pray. We're to pray for our presenters as they lead us in praise on the Lord's Day. We're to pray for the pulpit and the proclamation of God's Word on the Lord's Day.

We're to pray for the people who are under the preaching of God's Word on the Lord's Day. That God's Word would not fall by the wayside as it is in the parable of the sower.

Or among the thorns. Or onto the rocky ground. But into the good soil that the Lord has prepared for that day. And like John, we're to keep praying for the persecuted church.

As they faithfully meet, even in fear, on the Lord's Day. What was John doing on the Lord's Day? He was loving.

John was loving the church. He was loving the Lord's people by praying for the Lord's people. But John, secondly, was also listening.

[ 13 : 45 ] He was loving and he was listening. He was listening. He says there in verse 10, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.

I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. Do you know, this Lord's Day in John's life was a Lord's Day like no other.

Of course, John had experienced and enjoyed the Lord's Day on many occasions. I'm sure John never forgot his first experience of the Lord's Day because we all remember John's first experience of the Lord's Day.

He tells us all about it in his gospel in John chapter 20. He tells us that early on the first day of the week after Jesus had been crucified and buried in a borrowed tomb, he tells us that on the first day of the week, Peter and himself, John, ran to the tomb.

John even tells us that he got there first. He was the first one to look into the tomb. He was the first disciple to look down and see the grave clothes of Jesus which is something John would never forget in all his years of preaching and pastoring to the Lord's people.

[ 15 : 09 ] But this Lord's Day was different. This day was different because while John was in the Spirit, while he was praying for all his brothers and sisters in Christ, even though he was in isolation, he knew they were meeting together to praise the Lord and as he was praying, he says, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.

Now, I don't know about you but I would have jumped out of my skin if I had heard a loud voice like a trumpet while I was praying. Because I don't like praying when there's a lot of noise.

I don't know what you're like, what it's like in your house but I know we can pray anytime, anywhere, about anything. But for the most part, in my experience, I like peace and quiet in order to pray.

So we tell the children to be quiet for a moment. We like stillness and silence when we're praying which is why it must have been very startling for John to hear a loud voice like a trumpet speaking to him.

But when John heard the voice of Jesus, this wasn't the first time John had heard the voice of Jesus. John had heard the voice of Jesus on various occasions.

[ 16 : 28 ] He had heard Jesus preaching about the gospel of the kingdom. He had heard Jesus proclaiming all his different parables of the kingdom. He had heard Jesus even crying from the cross at Calvary.

John had heard the voice of Jesus. He had heard the voice of that good shepherd many times in his life. But you know, on this particular Lord's Day, John hadn't heard the voice of Jesus for over 60

years.

John hadn't heard the voice of Jesus for over 60 years. And you know, that's the thing about people who are no longer with us. We not only miss them, we miss their voice.

We miss the way they spoke. We miss the way their voice sometimes comforted and even consoled us in different situations and different circumstances. And the thing about someone's voice is that you recognise their voice.

And you especially recognise a voice if it's a voice that you missed hearing. And for John, when he heard the voice of Jesus, he knew it was him. John immediately recognised the voice of Jesus.

[17:49] That's why Jesus, our good shepherd, said, My sheep hear my voice. My sheep know my voice. And my sheep follow my voice.

As soon as John heard the voice of Jesus, he knew his voice. He recognised his voice. And John, he didn't need to be told who was speaking.

Although he is and he was told who was speaking. Now, I don't like mentioning this often, but this is where the ESV lets us down. Because verse 11, it's when you read the authorised version of the New King James, it says that he began, Jesus spoke to John and he began saying, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.

If you're using the ESV Bible, you won't see that in your Bible, but you will if you're using the authorised version of the New King James. It's to do with different Greek manuscripts, which you'll be glad to know is something I'm not going to go into this evening.

But it's something always to be aware of, that there's sometimes differences between Bible versions. So Jesus introduces himself. He doesn't need to introduce himself, but he does.

[19:06] He says, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. And when Jesus spoke to John, he gives him an instruction. He says, verse 11, regardless of what Bible you're reading, write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Now we mentioned last week that the number seven is the number of perfection or the number of completion because after God had created the world in six days, he rested, as we know, in the seventh day because he saw that his work was perfect.

It was complete. It was all very good. Therefore, the seven churches in Asia or the seven churches in Revelation, they symbolize not the perfect church but the complete church, the whole church, the entire church of Jesus Christ.

They are symbolic of the whole church. And they're the seven churches in Asia. You see there on the map, they're in Asia Minor which is Gentile territory.

Asia is not, not only modern day, part of modern day Turkey, it's also outside the country, it's outside the covenant people of Israel which emphasizes and explains that the church of Jesus Christ, it's not confined to a particular place or a particular people.

[20:41] The church of Jesus Christ is a universal church. It's a worldwide church. Therefore, these seven churches in Asia that we're going to look at in coming weeks, they symbolize not the perfect church but the complete church, the whole church, the universal, worldwide church of Jesus Christ.

But as you can see, the seven churches in Asia, they're not only symbolic of a complete church, they're also specific. We're given specific names and specific places.

They are, Jesus says to John, write what you see in a book, send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

And as we move into chapters two and three of the book of Revelation in the coming weeks, what we'll discover and what we'll discern about all these churches is that the first church, Ephesus, Ephesus is the loveless church.

They lack love. They've lost their first love. Smyrna is the persecuted church. Pergamum is a compromising church.

[22:01] Thyatira is a corrupt church. Sardis is sadly a dead church. Philadelphia, thankfully, was a faithful church.

And Laodicea was the lukewarm church. It doesn't really make for good reading, but it reminds us and it presents to us the whole church.

The seven churches in Asia, they're not only symbolic, but they're also specific. And they're specific because they emphasize and they exemplify to us all the sins, all the struggles, all the stresses, all

the strains that go on in the whole church, the complete church, the worldwide church of Jesus Christ.

And in the 21st century, as we'll see as we go into all the study of these churches, we're part of the same church. We are the ecclesia. We're the called out ones.

We're the church of Jesus Christ. Because as Peter wrote, we were once not a people, but we are now the people of God. We've been called out.

[ 23 : 13 ] We've been ecclesiaed out of darkness into the marvelous light of the gospel. And even though centuries have passed since this Trinitarian revelation was first handed down, all the sins, struggles, stresses and strains in the church of Jesus Christ are still the same.

They're still the same. And so what was John doing on the Lord's day? John was loving. John was listening. And lastly and briefly, John was looking.

John was looking. John was loving, listening and looking. He was looking. Verse 12. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me.

And on turning, I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace. And his voice was like the roar of many waters.

[ 24 : 20 ] In his right hand he held seven stars from his mouth, came a sharp two-edged sword. And his face was like the sun, shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

But he laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not. I am the first and the last, the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of death and hell.

You know, I'm sure that you've experienced the occasion when someone walks up behind you. Maybe you've done it yourself. Someone walks up behind you and they put their hands over your eyes and they say to you, Guess who?

Guess who? Maybe the girls do that at home. And you know, when you take your guess, when you guess who it is, you immediately turn around to discover their identity and the mystery voice that was speaking to you.

But for John, he didn't need to guess. He knew. He knew the voice of the shepherd. And on this particular Lord's Day on Patmos, John was loving and listening, but he also turned and started looking.

[ 25 : 31 ] He was looking towards Jesus. But when he turned around, we're told there that he saw seven golden lampstands. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands.

Now next time we'll come to, when we come to consider chapter 2, we'll touch on all these sevens. I don't want to pick up on it this evening. We'll touch on the seven lampstands and the seven stars and the seven angels and the seven spirits of the seven churches.

All these sevens. But for the little time that we have left, I want us to see what John was actually looking at. Because he says, verse 13, standing in the midst of the lampstands, he saw one like the Son or a Son of Man.

Now as you know, Son of Man is a familiar phrase that Jesus often used. Even when referring to the Lord's Day, Jesus said, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

But the Son of Man was a messianic title. It's a title that relates back into the Old Testament to the prophetic visions from the book of Daniel.

[ 26 : 48 ] And you know, it's interesting when you actually compare the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, they're very similar. The book of Revelation, as you know, and the book of Daniel, they're full of revelations. They're both prophetic books.

They're both apocalyptic books. And in Daniel chapter 7, Daniel says, I saw one, just like John says, I saw one like the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven.

And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom and all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed.

And you know, that's what's been revealed here in this revelation. The revelation of the risen, ruling and reigning King Jesus who is going to return. We're told there that John sees one like a son of

man clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

The hairs of his head were white like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace and his voice was like the roar of many waters. [ 28 : 08 ] In his right hand he held seven stars. From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. And you know, all these images and illustrations of the Son of Man that we read there, the long robe, the golden sash, the white hair, the flaming eyes, the feet refined in a furnace, the roaring voice, the mouth with a two-edged sword, the face as bright as the sun.

All these images, all these illustrations of the Son of Man, they emphasize one thing, his absolute, perfect holiness.

You talk about the Lord's Day, the day that's sanctified and set apart. Here is the Lord of the Lord's Day who has been sanctified and set apart.

All these images, these images, the long robe, the golden sash, white hair, flaming eyes, feet refined in a furnace, the roaring voice, the mouth with a two-edged sword, the face as bright as the sun, they all emphasize the holiness of this risen, ruling, and reigning King who is going to return. He is going to return. But you know, and this will conclude, the time has gone. But I love what John says in verse 17.

[ 29 : 39 ] When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last, the living one.

I died and behold, I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of death and hell. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

Just read those words again. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Do you know, the apostles, they had all these, they often have all these encouraging words for the church to encourage them and enable them to keep going, to keep pressing on in the Christian life despite persecution because one day we will see Jesus face to face.

And they picture and portray the meeting with Jesus, our meeting with Jesus as this great reunion. Paul says it in 1 Corinthians 13, he says, Now we see through a glass darkly but then face to face. Even John says it. John, the apostle said it in one of his letters to the churches. He said, Behold, we know that when he appears we shall be like him and see him even as he is.

[ 31 : 03 ] But for John, on that Lord's day, the reality was much, much more. Because when John actually came face to face with the holiness of this risen, ruling, and reigning king who is going to return, he couldn't take it.

He couldn't take it because he says there in verse 17, When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

He just dropped to the ground before King Jesus. I fell at his feet as though dead. But, and this is how gracious Jesus is, in all his holiness, in all his beauty, in all his perfection, he lays his right hand on me saying, Fear not.

John had heard that word many times before throughout his, his ministry with Jesus. Fear not. I'm the first and the last, the living one. I died.

And behold, I'm alive forevermore. And I have the keys of death and of hell. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet as though dead.

[ 32 : 27 ] What was John doing on the Lord's day? John was loving. He was listening and he was looking to Jesus. Do you know, what better way is there to spend your Lord's day than loving, looking, and listening to Jesus?

What better way is there to spend your Lord's day? Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for thy word.

Thy word that reveals Jesus to us. And our prayer is that as we study this revelation, that we would see him more and more, that we would realize how holy he is, how perfect he is, and yet how gracious he is and how merciful and how he shows us his kindness and his care and his compassion.

O Lord, bless thy truth to us, we pray, that even on the Lord's day we would realize how privileged we are to gather together to worship our great King, and that we might be like those of old who said, O greatly blessed, the people are, the joyful sound that know in brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go.

Bless us together then, we pray, go before us, take away our iniquity, receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing in Psalm 65.

[ 34 : 12 ] Psalm 65 in the Scottish Psalter, page 297. Psalm 65, we're singing from the beginning down to the end of the double verse marked four.

Praise waits for thee in Zion, Lord, to thee vows paid shall be. O thou that hear art of prayer, all flesh, shall come to thee. Now, I love the second half of verse four.

We surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace and with the goodness of thy house in of thy holy place. So sing these verses of Psalm 65 to God's praise.

Praise, wait for thee six years now.

All full after God's to Thee. Iniquities I must on clairs prevail against me too.

[ 35 : 52 ] But us for our transgressions then where shall wish of love.

Let this love of whom thou dost choose a mixed approach to Thee that he with him like courts, O Lord, may still a dweller be.

We surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace and with the goodness of thy house in all thy holy place.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.