

REVELATION

Lesson 1

Overview and Chapter 1

**Note: We have two weeks to do this lesson! Check with your leader for Tuesday morning and/or Wednesday evening for your groups' schedule.*

We are embarking on an exciting journey! I get the opportunity to introduce you anew to my Best Friend. For many years I wanted to say that Jesus was my Best Friend, but couldn't quite say that with integrity. I wanted to know Him intimately and with a depth that was beyond any human relationship that I had ever known. It is now true for me! I can honestly say—He is my Best Friend!

It is incredible to think that this One who is all glorious, all victorious, the Maker and Ruler of Heaven and Earth, the coming King of kings would even allow me to be His acquaintance, much less His friend (John 15:15)! Can you even imagine?!

So, it is with great pleasure that I start on this journey with you—with the goal in mind of knowing Christ in a deeper, more meaningful way than you have ever experienced before. There are things about Jesus in the book of Revelation that we wouldn't know if God had not given us this Book through John's pen. If we can finish this study with a picture of Christ in our hearts and minds, a deeper understanding of His glory and victory, and a more intimate awareness of His presence, then we will have succeeded in "studying Revelation."

It's not a Book that you can study once, and know all about it! In this 9 week study, we will only be able to touch the surface. So...let's commit ourselves to 9 weeks of a passionate pursuit of Jesus as seen in the Book of Revelation, and learn what it means to live victoriously in Him because He IS indeed the coming King of kings and Lord of lords, the Alpha and Omega, the Faithful Witness, the Amen, the Lamb (there are 28 references to the "Lamb" in Revelation!). Can you just not wait?! The best explanation of the Book that I know is WOW! WOW, WOW! WOW, WOW, WOW, WOW!

WEEK 1

Read the book of Revelation. It takes the average reader 1 hour and 17 minutes to read the book. You will be tempted to skip this week, but it will be invaluable to your study the

next 8 weeks if you will take the time to do this. Don't read for details, and don't stop to figure things out, but read through to get the "big picture."

WEEK 2

DAY 1

I encourage you to begin today with prayer. Kay Arthur's Inductive Method of Bible Study teaches students of the Bible to begin each time of studying the Word of God with prayer. She says: "Truth is revealed! You are to do your part—study—but we must also allow God to do His part, and that is to lead you and guide you into all truth. Therefore, always begin your study with prayer, not as a formality, but as a necessity."

One of our sons says he learned this principle as a Boot Camper at Precept Ministries some 15 years ago and credits this process as a key to meaningful Bible Study in his own life. He disciplines himself to take this time to seek God's help and revelation before He opens the Word. And God is faithful to answer:

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2:10-11)

Let's stop to do that now. (Perhaps you would like to use the prayer on the bookmark entitled "A Place of Quiet Rest." If you don't have the bookmark, I have copied the Scriptures below.)

"Open my eyes, Lord."

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Law.
Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.
Show me your ways, O Lord, Teach me your paths;
Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior,
And my hope is in you all day long. That which I see not teach thou me:
If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.
Psalm 119:18, 34; 25:4-5
Job 34:32 KJV

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We will study the Book by segments. There are three segments in Revelation which give us the outline of the Book. You will find Revelation easier to understand when you have the outline in your mind.

Interestingly, the book is outlined in the text:

Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. Rev. 1:19

Here is the outline of the Book as seen in the above verse:

- A. **The Things that You Have Seen** - (Revelation 1)
- B. **The Things that Are** - (Revelation 2-3)
- C. **The Things that Are to Take Place After This** - "Hereafter" (Revelation 4-22)

The "**things that you have seen**," refers to John's immediate experience (Rev. 1). He recorded the setting and the first parts of Christ's revelation to him. The phrase "**things that are**" refers to the present circumstances, which Jesus is about to describe. These "**things that are**" have to do with the condition of Jesus' Church, represented in various cities. They have to do with the ongoing challenges that confront the church of Jesus Christ and the consequences that follow when faithfulness falters. These are the things that *always* are, for they describe the opposition faced by the Church throughout the centuries (Rev. 2-3).

The phrase "**those that are to take place after this.**" refers to what Jesus will show John regarding events beyond the Church age. This last phrase states that John will write about things now yet seen and which are not yet. Chapter 4 begins a vision of the future—future for John and his time and future for us as well. (Rev. 4-22).

READ REVELATION 1.

DAY 2

READ REVELATION 1 AGAIN.

I love the way this Book starts—God gives us so much information in the first few verses! The "key" to the Book is found in Revelation 1:1—"the Revelation of Jesus Christ."

"Revelation" is the Greek word *apokalupsis*—*the unveiling, the revealing of the Truth.*

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. John to the seven churches... (Verses 1-4).

Fill in the blanks and then sketch the verse. I know...that is hard...but it will give you a clear view of why God gave us the book...and how He gave it! I'll get you started:

God gave the revelation to _____; who then gave the message to His _____ who then gave it to _____ who gave it to His _____, and the _____.

(Answers: Jesus, angel, John, servants, churches)

Can you sketch that?

Interesting, isn't it?! One more time...

- How does the author receive the revelation?
- What is the revelation of?

As stated in the book study *Behold, Jesus is Coming*: "Watch your answer carefully. You are not looking for who gave the revelation but for what is going to be revealed. By the way, the Greek word for Revelation is *apokalupsis* which means "an unveiling." According to Revelation 1:1, 2 what is going to be unveiled?"

Copy Revelation 22:6 below:

You may be saying "What difference does it make?!" It tells you what the entire Book is about! It is the *key* to the Book! God unveiled to John the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and what soon would come to pass.

God gave the revelation of the things that must soon take place to Jesus who then gave it to His angel who then gave it to John to give to the seven churches, His bond-servants. That is the thesis sentence of the following 22 chapters!

Now answer these questions from the first ten verses:

- 1.) Who wrote Revelation?
- 2.) Where was it written?
- 3.) To whom was the Book written?
- 4.) Why was it written?
- 5.) When was it written?

DAY 3

*Let's look at the author of the Book. _____

John wrote five Books of the New Testament:

1. _____ the fourth Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke and _____)
2. _____ 1st _____ John
3. _____ John
4. _____ John
5. R _____

John, whose name means "whom Jehovah loves", was the son of Zebedee and Salome. He was the younger brother of James. He came from a family of fishermen.

John was one of Jesus' first disciples of Jesus. When Jesus began selecting the disciples at the beginning of His ministry, He first selected Simon Peter and Andrew, and then James and John. "As a boy, John must have thought of Jesus as just a cousin, one of the sons of his Aunt Mary, his mother Salome's sister." The IISB Study Notes continue: "Little did John realize that someday he would be chosen by God to be one of His twelve apostles."

He and his brother were given a "nickname" by Jesus, The Sons of Thunder (Mark 3:17), indicating they showed a great degree of boldness and a ready temper. You will also remember, their mother was the one who asked Jesus if her sons could sit in the places of honor in His Kingdom one day.

John became "the disciple whom Jesus loved" living out the original meaning of his name. (John 13:23; 21:7). He saw the risen Christ (John 20:19) and became active in missionary work (Acts 3:1-11). He wrote the book of John sometime around A.D. 85, and then the Epistles of 1, 2, and 3 John sometime between A.D. 85 and 95.

When Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, John went to Asia Minor, where he was the pastor of the church in Ephesus and for twenty five years. Ephesus is in the now country of Turkey. Find these places on the map provided with this Lesson.

John had remained faithful to his calling even in the midst of Nero's persecutions of Christians in A.D. 54 through 68 and then Domitian's in A.D. 81 through 96. While John was exiled on Patmos, God unveiled to him the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and what soon would come to pass (IISB Study Notes, The New Inductive Study Bible.)

John was the last living of the 12 apostles. He was submerged in a cauldron of boiling oil. However, he was miraculously delivered from death. He then was exiled to the Isle of Patmos. The other disciples had been martyred.

John was in exile on the island of Patmos, approximately 90-95 years old, when he was given this revelation. He is last mentioned in the Scriptures in Revelation 22:8.

List the three facts about the author of this Book that you find most interesting:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

***Where was the Book written?** _____

John was on an island named Patmos. It's off the coast of modern Turkey, Asia. It's a small island, 6 miles by 10 miles, in the Aegean Sea southwest of Ephesus. It was not a pleasant place to be because of its rocky terrain.

Look at the map and locate Patmos, where John saw the vision, in relation to the seven churches to whom he was to deliver the message.

***To whom was the Book written?** _____

Nancy Leigh DeMoss, in her series *A Vision of the Glorified Christ*, says about this time and people: "The revelation was given toward the end of the first century, toward the end of the Roman emperor Domitian. Domitian was a cruel, autocratic dictator. He declared himself to be lord and god, and he demanded to be worshiped. Anyone who refused to worship him was persecuted. This created a tough situation for those who said, "Caesar is not lord; Domitian is not lord. Jesus is Lord and God, and we will not bow the knee to any Roman emperor or any other emperor. We will only bow the knee to Christ."

So the believers were harshly persecuted under Domitian's rule. Nero had begun those first persecutions 25 years earlier, which had mostly centered in Rome, but when Domitian came to the throne, he initiated a more systematic, thorough persecution of Christians throughout the empire. This was the world in which these Christians were living."

***Why was it written?** _____

The phrase "to show the things that must shortly -soon—take place" is interesting. There's a sense of urgency about this revelation of Jesus Christ.

The word "shortly", translated "soon" in some translations, is the Greek word *tachos*. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* says it means speed, quickness, swiftness: *The disclosure of things which must quickly, speedily, take place--when these things begin to happen, they happen with speed.* John Walvoord gives this explanation of the word: '*Quickly or suddenly coming to pass, indicating rapidity of execution after the beginning takes place. The idea is not that the event may occur soon, but that when it does, it will be sudden.*'"

Kay Arthur says the phrase "shortly take place" is *en tachei*... "And *en tachei* means that once it's going to happen, it's kind of like an avalanche. Once it starts, it is so rapid that if you're on that mountain and an avalanche starts you can't ski to safety. You can't run to safety because it happens so quickly... He wants you and me to know what's going to take place shortly, what's going to happen in the future and how rapidly it's going to come."

DAY 4

There is a promise connected with the reading of this Book.

What is it? (Revelation 1:3 and Revelation 22:7)

Note: "blessed," *makarios*—the closest definition of this word is happy, but it's more than that. It is possessing the favor of God, that state of being marked by fullness from God. The blessing comes from heeding the things written in the revelation.

***Read Revelation 1:4-7.**

Can you see the Trinity in these verses?

_____ Who is and was and is to come

_____ Seven Spirits before the throne

The number seven is used over 50 times in Revelation. This number is believed by many to represent the number of completion. Therefore, some scholars say that the seven Spirits is a reference to the Holy Spirit of God (Isaiah 11:2).

_____ The Faithful Witness, the First Born of the Dead...

*Read Revelation 1:7 again and relate it to Zechariah 12:10-12.

In Zechariah 13:1, what does God do for them?

Verse 7 is the first time Jesus' coming is mentioned in the book, but it is used several times after this. The things which must shortly take place are connected with the second coming of Jesus. His coming will be seen by all. "Those who pierced Him" is also mentioned in Zechariah 12:10-14 as a reference to the Jews living in Jerusalem. The mourning might be because it will be too late for those who did not believe in Him.

DAY 5

In Revelation 1:12, 13 and 20, John says he saw "one like a son of man" (vs. 13) standing among seven lampstands. Jesus, the "one like a son of man," explains that the seven lampstands represent the seven churches He has chosen to review. Dr. Woodrow Kroll in his Revelation study says: "Why lampstands? If the passage said 'chandeliers,' you would immediately connect the object with its purpose—to give light. Lampstands in John's day are like chandeliers today. One of Jesus' original challenges to His followers was, 'You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven' (Matt. 5:14, 16)."

*Evaluate your church—Is your church fulfilling its purpose of giving light to the world? In what ways are you involved and committed to the quality /quantity of "light" that your church shines in the world?

Now for the crowning truths of this week's lesson, read Revelation 1:5-20 and list everything you see about Jesus—His names and His appearance. I'll get you started:

His Names:

Vs. 5 Jesus Christ
The Faithful Witness
The Firstborn of the Dead

His Appearance:

Vs. 13 One like a Son of Man
Clothed in a Robe reaching to His Feet
A Golden Sash Girded across His Chest

Finish the week with a time of worship. Consider all you have learned about Jesus this week and give Him glory and praise from what you know of Him.

Jesus, You are...