



## **New Vision**

Seven: Letters of Revelation  
Session 1: Revelation of Jesus  
Revelation 1:1--20  
5/5/19

### MAIN POINT

The book of Revelation was written to give unshakable hope, encourage unwavering holiness, refute deception, and fuel mission among the nations and to help us understand the revelation of the glory and nature of Jesus Christ!

### INTRODUCTION

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

**Why do you think so many people are fascinated with the book of Revelation?**

**Why do you think other people might avoid studying it?**

**If you could understand just one thing in this study of Revelation, what would you want it to be? Why?**

### The Context of Revelation

The book of Revelation is about the end times, the 2nd coming of Christ, and is often one of the most debated books in the Bible. Many say it is too difficult to understand. Some people are perhaps overly concerned with the symbolism of trying to predict the future. But many others rarely even think about the end of time at all. To many of us, it seems like something only crazy people, or religious zealots think much about.

We've got to be careful not to overcomplicate this book. Our goal whenever we study the Bible is not just to hear what it says, but to get into the shoes of the people who were first reading or hearing it. But the only thing we necessarily and ultimately need to understand the book of Revelation is the Spirit of the living God.

In the history of the world, there has never been a more important, influential, and polarizing person than Jesus Christ. In this series, we'll explore seven reactions of seven ancient churches – *that sit in ruins today*—and discover what we, as the church today, can learn from Jesus' words to those churches in the book of Revelation. It may be difficult to interpret at first glance, but the book of Revelation is also one of the most encouraging books in the Bible, because in it we see Jesus vindicated before the world. Revelation really is a very simple book. It boils down to this: Jesus wins! The question for us is to understand how will the church respond?

### UNDERSTANDING

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

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 1:1-8.

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and [a]communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, <sup>2</sup> who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.<sup>3</sup> Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and [b]heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

*<sup>4</sup>John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who [c]is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins [d]by His blood— <sup>6</sup> and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to [e]His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. <sup>7</sup> Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.*

*<sup>8</sup>“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who [f]is to come, the Almighty.”*

**In your own words, what do these verses indicate about the content and purpose of this book?**

**Considering this vision took place 2,000 years ago, how do you account for the words “quickly” and “the time is near”? Do you believe Jesus could return today? Why is it important that we live like “the time is near”?**

**What application is there for believers in verse 3? Why do you think John used these three different verbs—read, hear, and keep?**

There is only one other time in the Bible where the three phrases, “revelation” (uncovering of truth), “what must quickly take place” (something that is happening or is going to happen soon), and “sent it and signified it” (made it known) appear together in the same verse—Daniel 2:28. In both places, God used a dream to uncover the reality that one day God will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.

**In verses 4-8: How does John describe God the Father in these verses? How does he describe Jesus? How does he describe believers?**

**What three things does Christ do for us (vv. 5-6)? How has your life been changed by each of these actions?**

John greeted his audience with the typical greeting of “grace and peace.” However, John said the source of these qualities was “One who is, who was, and who is coming.” The three tenses identified to the first-century readers that this Person is God. In threatening times Christians can take heart that God is always with them. No matter how desperate the times appeared, John

knew that God transcended time and stood ready to reassure those who follow Him. John described believers as Jesus' "servants" or "slaves" (v. 1), and also as "priests" (v. 6). John also identified Jesus in three ways: (1) the faithful witness, a reference to Jesus' ministry as a prophet; (2) the firstborn from the dead, a phrase referring to his death and resurrection; and (3) the ruler of the kings of the earth. With these descriptions, John encourages us to imitate Jesus' faithfulness, have hope in eternity, and remember that God's eternal kingdom is bigger than anything we face in this world.

**How does the grand portrait of God's greatness in verses 4-8 impact the way you live today?**

**If we look to Jesus in the past, present and future, what truths can we say about Him in those contexts?**

**What three facts about Jesus are especially significant to you in your life? Why are these facts so important?**

**Verse 7 could be considered the theme verse for the Book of Revelation? What does this text tell us that we should expect to find in Revelation? How are we to live today, in light of this verse?**

**How do you typically react when someone spoils the end of a movie or a book? Why do we prefer not to know the ending?**

**The book of Revelation tells us the ultimate outcome of history. How does knowing the ending to your story affect the way you live? Is this something you think about often? Why or why not?**

Sermon Notes

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HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 1:9-11.

***<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and <sup>9a</sup>perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I was <sup>10a</sup>in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup>saying, "Write in a <sup>11a</sup>book what you see, 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."***

Revelation 1:9-20 "... provides what may possibly be the most majestic portrait of Jesus ever penned on paper. If you are weak, you will find strength. If you are sorrowful, you will find comfort. If you are confused, you will find clarity. If you are weary, you will find hope. If you are struggling with sin, you will be empowered. If you are timid in your witness, you will be emboldened. By a vision of Jesus is all of His glory."

**What is significant about John's circumstances and the day when he received this vision? What would it have meant to 1st century believers that John identified himself as their brother and partner in "the tribulation, kingdom, and endurance that are in Jesus"? What does it mean to you?**

**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 recently?**

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. David put it this way: "From the beginning to the end of this book, John is making it clear that there is a price to be paid for proclaiming the Word of God and testimony of Jesus in the world today. It will not be easy, but don't stop. Proclaim Christ even when it costs you your life. Let us not let fear of isolation or rejection keep us silent."

Sermon Notes

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HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 1:12-20.

***<sup>12</sup> Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; <sup>13</sup> and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like <sup>[l]</sup>a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. <sup>14</sup> His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. <sup>15</sup> His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. <sup>16</sup> In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun <sup>[k]</sup>shining in its strength.***

***<sup>17</sup> When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup> and the living One; and I <sup>[l]</sup>was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. <sup>19</sup> Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. <sup>20</sup> As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.***

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

**Jesus is 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?**

The lampstands represent 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.

**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?**

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

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).

In verses 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?**

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

Sermon Notes

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#### APPLICATION

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

**Of the truths in this passage, which most motivates you to live a life of urgency and preparation, both in your own spiritual growth and your commitment to sharing the gospel with others? Explain your thoughts.**

**What are appropriate responses to the revelation of Christ's glory? What is one step you can take to make sure you acknowledge His glory every day.**

**Spend time in prayer thanking God that in Christ, we have no fear. Pray God's glory would continually captivate your imagination, His grace supernaturally empower your devotion, and His gospel radically compel you on mission.**