

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Dig Deeper Study Tools

- Author's Purpose
- Context
- Structure
- Linking Words
- Parallels
- Narrator's Comment
- Vocabulary
- Translations
- Tone and Feel
- Repetition
- Quotation/Allusion
- Genre
- Copycat
- Bible Timeline
- "Who am I"
- "So What"

Revelation—Awaiting Christ's Return

Sermon Series

05, 12 January 2025

Rev 1; Rev 4

Revelation of the Lord Jesus

19, 26 January 2025

Rev 12; Rev 19

Revelation of the Gospel

Guidelines for Reading of the Book of Revelation

1. The author's purpose guides our reading of the Book. Therefore, we must be clear about what it is, and isn't, meant to do. It isn't written to provide a time map of events leading to the end times since the last days started at Pentecost in Acts 2. It is, however, written to inspire our faith and perseverance in Christ because we are in the last days.
2. Historical context shapes its message. It is written for a church undergoing intense persecution by the Roman Empire and its rulers: Christians were forced to abandon their faith or be tortured and killed or exiled.
 - Therefore, it is written to transform believers into overcomers through repentance, faith, perseverance, obedience, worship and witness, giving glory to God. These form the themes of this book.
3. It uses repetition to drive home its message: the seals, the bowls, and the trumpets, are parallel descriptions of the same period between Christ's first and second coming, with growing intensity, from the first defeat of Satan at the cross to his final defeat in the lake of fire.
4. It is apocalyptic literature, using word pictures, symbols, and figurative language to stir up faith and hope in times of intense persecution, fear, and desertion. A literal interpretation of its apocalyptic segments will lead to a wrong reading of its message.
5. It is also an epistle to the churches, eg. Rev 2-3, and the final segment of Rev. 22. They require literal reading. So, use your discretion.
6. It is Scripture, therefore, read it in the light of the whole Scripture. It draws from and alludes to the OT frequently. Like all Scripture, Christ and His Gospel remain its main message and guide its reading.
 - Always ask, "What does it teach about the Gospel of sin and salvation in Christ? And how does it connect with the rest of Scripture?"

Broad Outline of the Book: The Full Revelation of the Gospel of Jesus

Rev 1-3: Call to the 7 churches, representing churches of all ages, to be overcomers amid their challenges, oppositions, and struggles.

Rev 4-11: Call to persevere. God reigns through the Risen Lamb, and the faithful witness of believers despite their suffering and martyrdom, culminating in their final salvation.

Rev 12-18: Call to be faithful amid Satan's last-ditch effort to avenge his mortal defeat by Christ at the cross, through his earthly agents—the beast, the false prophets, and Babylon the harlot and counterfeit bride, within the short-given time before Christ's return.

Rev 19-22: Call to hope in Christ's return to bring eternal judgement on His enemies, and eternal salvation for His faithful followers, in the wedding of the Lamb, in the new heaven and earth.

O5, 12 January 2025

Rev 1:1-20 and Rev 4:1-11

Revelation of the Lord Jesus

PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT

Read the text throughout the week(s) before your group time.

1 The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

⁴ John,

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits ¹ before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

⁷ “Look, he is coming with the clouds,” ^u
and “every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him”;
and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”
So shall it be! Amen.

⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

⁹ I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹ which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

Notes and Questions

¹² I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, ^u dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

¹⁹ "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Revelation 4:1-11

Notes and Questions

4 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits ^w of God. ⁶ Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

" 'Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,' ^f
who was, and is, and is to come."

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

¹¹ "You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being."

PREPARE TO SHARE (INDIVIDUAL): LOOK BACK

What has God been teaching you in the last few weeks?

Who has God laid on your heart to pray for?

GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

GROUP: STUDY

Read Rev 1:1-20

OBSERVATION



What do you notice as you read this passage?

1. What do you notice about the source and purpose of the book of Revelation from vv.1-3?
2. What strikes you in the description of the Lord Jesus in vv.4-8 and “what must soon take place”?
3. What did John see in v.12-16? Compare with Daniel 7:9-10.
4. What claims did the Lord Jesus make in v.17-20?

Read Rev 4:1-11

5. What description ascribed to God the Father is also given to the Lord Jesus, affirmed by the heavenly worship in Rev 4? See 1:4, 8, 17; compare with 4:8.

Comments

What we can learn about the author and audience of this book in 1:9-11

1. John who wrote this book was a fellow companion in suffering with the churches that he was writing to.
2. He was exiled to Patmos for his faith in Christ.
3. The letter is addressed to the 7 churches in Asia. They represent all the churches of Christ throughout the ages.
4. These churches were suffering persecution for their faith like John.
5. History suggests this was the persecution under Roman Caesar Domitian.
6. Hence John is writing to inspire his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to press on in their faith despite their sufferings.
7. He is doing so under the command and authority of the Lord Jesus.

INTERPRETATION



What is the meaning and significance of your observations?

6. Why do you think John devoted so much space to the description of the Lord Jesus in this first chapter of Revelation? What conclusion can you make about the Lord Jesus?

7. How do your answers to question 5 support the purpose of this book of Revelation given in 1:1-3?

8. What does the heavenly scene in Rev 4 teach us about our appropriate earthly response to God the Father and the Lord Jesus? You may like to read Rev 5 to see how it reinforces the message of Rev 1 and 4 by highlighting the Lord Jesus.

9. Rev 1:3 emphasizes that “blessed is the one who reads . . .” and “blessed are those who hear . . .” In John’s message to the persecuted church, what do you think this blessedness is about and what kind of person can receive these promised blessings?

Connecting Rev 1 to 5, to Rev 6 to 11

While Rev 1-3 deals with the earthly challenges the churches were facing, Rev 4 unveils the spiritual reality behind the curtains—God is on His throne, ordering all things after the counsel of His will.

Rev 5 shows at the centre of God’s throne is Jesus the Lamb. He alone is worthy to break the scroll to unleash the 7 seals, unfolding “the things to come” (Rev 6-11)—the rest of earth’s history and the completion of God’s plan in (a) Christ’s victorious return, (b) accomplishing the full salvation of His people and (c) the final judgment of His enemies.

BIG IDEA



What is the main message of the passage?
(Sum up the main idea and supporting ideas)

APPLICATION



Why did the Holy Spirit give us this text?

10. How may you remain in God's blessings always?

11. What must you repent of in your attitude and response to Christ?
How does the revelation of the Lord Jesus in this text help you to surrender completely to Him?

GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

In what ways can these texts in Rev 1 and 4 help us draw near to God as a Discipleship Group?

19, 26 January 2025

Rev 12:1-18 and Rev 19:1-21

Revelation of the Gospel

PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT

Read the text throughout the week(s) before your group time.

12 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. ²She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. ³Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. ⁴Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. ⁵She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” ^d And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. ⁶The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

⁷Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Messiah.

For the accuser of our brothers and sisters,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.

¹¹They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.

¹²Therefore rejoice, you heavens
and you who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and the sea,
because the devil has gone down to you!
He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his time is short.”

¹³When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ¹⁴The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness,

Notes and Questions

where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. ¹⁵ Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

19 After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

"Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
² for true and just are his judgments.
He has condemned the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.
He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

³ And again they shouted:

"Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."

⁴ The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

"Amen, Hallelujah!"

⁵ Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

"Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
both great and small!"

⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah!
For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.

⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)

⁹Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

¹⁰At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus."

¹¹I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹²His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." ¹⁶He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

¹⁷And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, ¹⁸so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small."

¹⁹Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. ²⁰But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. ²¹The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

PREPARE TO SHARE (INDIVIDUAL): LOOK BACK

How was your walk with God in the last few weeks?

Who has God laid on your heart to pray for?

GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

GROUP: STUDY

Read Rev 12:1-17

OBSERVATION



What do you notice as you read this passage?

1. Who are the characters in Rev 12:1-9? Who do they represent?
2. What resulted from Satan's defeat by Christ at the cross, symbolised by Satan's heavenly defeat by Angel Michael (12: 7-10; see also Col 2:14-15)? Consequently, how can believers overcome the assaults of Satan here on earth? See 12:10-12, 14.

Read Rev 19:1-21

3. Satan, after his defeat by Christ at the cross in Rev 12, was hurled down to earth and continues to battle God's people ever more furiously. He inflicts believers with great tribulations through His anti-God agents—the beast, the false prophets, and Babylon the great harlot, representing the world's religious, political, economic, and ethical ideologies and systems that deny God and Christ (Rev 13 to 18). How does Rev 19 describe the end of Satan and his associates at Christ's return in 19:1-3, 11-21? Where was the place they were assigned to, and for how long?
4. What blessedness (v.9) is reserved for those who like John, hold fast to the testimony of Jesus? (19:5-10)

Comments

- Rev 11:7 introduced the beast as the spiritual dark power opposing and exterminating God's people, the church, represented by the two witnesses, for 42 months or 1260 days.
- Who is this beast, what are the 3.5 years about? Rev 12 lifts the curtain again to explain the tribulations of believers are Satan's last-ditch efforts to avenge his defeat, knowing his time on earth is short.
- Noticed the four names given to the evil one in 12:9. Here and Rev 20:2 are the only two times Scripture addresses Satan with a string of 4 titles.
- In Isa 51:9-10; and Eze 29:3, 32:2, the dragon was Israel's ancient enemy, Pharaoh of Egypt, who after his defeat at the Passover, became enraged, pursued Israel and was fully and finally finished off by God at the Red Sea. Pharaoh's end foreshadows Satan's final defeat which is described in both Rev 19 and 20.
- The 1260 days are thus the time between Christ's first and second coming, the church age, a time of testing for believers. It's the period of tribulation described in Rev 1 to 18 through the seals, the bowls, and the trumpet, culminating in the final defeat of Satan and the full salvation of believers.

INTERPRETATION



What is the meaning and significance of your observations?

5. What truths of the gospel are highlighted by this text? Which is most precious to you?
6. What marks us as those belonging to Christ?
7. Despite our trials and temptations, why do we not have to be fearful or defeated by Satan? What is the ground of our assured confidence?



BIG IDEA

What is the main message of the passage?

(Sum up the main idea and supporting ideas)



APPLICATION

Why do you think the Holy Spirit gave us this text?

8. How will this text impact your attitudes, affections, and actions in the coming week?
9. How can this text help you to persevere in your faith, worship, and witness for the Lord Jesus?

- Rev 19:18-19 are imageries from OT like in Ezekiel 39:1-5, 17-18, or the battle of Armageddon, to describe the final defeat of God's enemies. This is the use of apocalyptic language to highlight the greatness of God's final judgment. Isa 9:4-5 employs this method. The Midianites' defeat by Gideon in Judges 7 was used to picture Christ's victory at the cross and on judgment day over his enemies, thus establishing his eternal kingdom.
- The Book of Revelation will end with the wedding of the Lamb in new heaven and earth, at the return of Christ (Rev 19-22), concluding the whole Bible story in the new creation, the new Eden, fulfilling God's creational intent in the Genesis creation account.
- Thus, Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, "*Blessed* are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." (Rev 22:14)

GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

10. What are some challenges your group is facing? How may we use the truths in this text to encourage one another in our struggles?