

Introduction- Revelation

I Background Information for Bible Study Leader:

A Information from Revelation

Key questions:

- **What kind of book is this?**

Overall, the book is an apocalypse, written to reveal a deep truth about the world.

The book also is prophecy, written to proclaim God's message of salvation and judgment.

The book also is a letter, written to specific Christian communities, and intended to be read aloud in worship or with other Christians.

- **Who wrote it?**

John of Patmos, who likely was of Jewish background.

Not John the Baptist or the apostle John or the writer of the Gospel of *John*.

- **When was it written?**

Around 95–96 AD, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian.

- **Where was it written?**

Patmos, a small island off the coast of modern Turkey.

- **What was going on at the time?**

Rome had destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. Christian communities existed under Roman rule, which meant experiencing hardships, abuse of power, and unjust policies. Christians were sometimes faced with choosing between worshipping God and the Roman emperor.

- **To whom was it written?**

Christian churches in Asia.

- **For what purpose was it written?**

To prod Christians in congregational communities to wake up, repent, and act faithfully and justly, despite the bleak situation caused by Roman rule.

Introduction- Revelation

To encourage believers to have hope in God's future, and to see that future breaking into the present.

To offer an urgent warning that God will judge evil, injustice, inaction, and worship of Roman culture and the Roman emperor; God alone receives worship.

To inspire and encourage Christians to become witnesses to God's way of life, through Jesus Christ.

To answer the question, "Who is the true God?"

B Main Points of Lesson

Introduction

The key themes in the introduction are **hope**, **praise**, and **journey**. We are also given **Guiding Principles** that will enable us to read *Revelation* with increased understanding.

1. *Revelation* is one of the most difficult books of the Bible, full of mysterious symbolism. Its twenty-two chapters can be intimidating, so it is important for readers to know that the message of *Revelation* is, most of all, one of **hope**. Hope is the message that has sustained countless Christians in situations of tyranny and oppression throughout the ages. The vision of hope in *Revelation* also speaks to us today (RP 3) (L P 3).

2. *Revelation* is rich in songs of **praise** to God and Jesus. No other book of the Bible has inspired so many of the hymns we know best—from "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!" (*Rev. 4:8–11*) and Handel's "Hallelujah" chorus (*Rev. 19:6, 16; 11:15*) to African American spirituals. It is a wonderfully Christ-centered book, full of praise (RP 3) (L P 3).

3. *Revelation* takes us on a **journey** into the heart of God's own dream for our world. A journey of radical hope and transformation, *Revelation* takes us back in time 2,000 years to get to know the struggling churches in the cities of the Roman Empire. This journey ultimately leads us, through a series of visions, to the throne of God (RP 3) (L P 3)

Introduction- Revelation

C Introduction Summary

Revelation takes us on a journey into the heart of God's own dream for our world. A journey of radical hope and transformation, *Revelation* takes us back in time 2,000 years and introduces us to the struggling churches in the bustling cities of the Roman Empire. This journey ultimately leads us, through a series of visions, to the very throne of God.

As the journey unfolds, each successive vision reminds us that God alone is worthy of our praise and allegiance. We meet the crucified Lamb, Jesus, who leads us on a great exodus out of an unjust empire and its system of domination. We experience mythic battles and perilous plagues as God judges satanic violence and calls evildoers to repentance. Above all, the journey leads to a wondrous river of life, a healing tree of life, and ultimately to a God who lives with us in a renewed creation. The good news at the end of the *Revelation* journey is that God comes to live with us on earth. God's will is for the healing of the nations, and the healing of our wounded world. This wonderful, hope filled vision can encourage and strengthen us in the midst of the urgent crises of today.

D No suggested hymns:

E Handouts for Introduction:

1. Revelation Outline

II Additional Information:

III Another suggested Lesson Guide:

Lesson Outline:

1. Explain the Main Parts of the Lesson (section B)
2. Give out outline of Revelation handout and review the whole book.
Read the last two paragraphs of the introduction (RP 5) (L P 7)
3. Explain that the whole journey through Revelation will lead us to a final vision of heaven, coming down to earth, where God's dwelling is in our midst. Read 21:1-22:5 . Ask the women to meditate on the images of the tree of life, the river of life, and the city of God as they listen to the two chapters.

Introduction- Revelation

4. Review the guiding principles for the study (RP 4) (L P 4 & 5)
5. Examine the art for the introduction (RP 2 & 5) (L P 2 & 7) If you are using the large print, the foldout sheet of the map has the lesson pictures in color.
6. Look at the list of hymns that come from the words of Revelation. The Hymnbook (red) page 554 or The Presbyterian Hymnal (blue) page 690. Give out handout Two.
7. Close with prayer.

Introduction- Revelation

Revelation Outline Handout

Chapter 1: Introduction of the author and his task as given by Jesus Christ.

Chapters 2–3: Letters to seven churches in Asia.

Chapter 4: A vision of Christ worshipped on the throne.

Chapter 5: A vision of Christ as the Lamb, worthy of worship.

Chapter 6: A vision of Christ opening the first six seals of the scroll.

Chapter 7: Interlude (A pause so the saints can be “sealed” and worship God).

Chapters 8–11: A vision of the opening of the seventh seal, followed by the plagues of the seven trumpets and an interlude.

Chapter 12: A vision of Satan defeated through witness and testimony, and thrown out of heaven.

Chapter 13: A vision of two beasts who represent the evil power of the Roman empire.

Chapter 14: A vision of God’s just judgment.

Chapters 15–16: A vision of the seven bowls of God’s wrath.

Chapters 17–18: A vision of the judgment of the evil city of Babylon (Rome).

Chapters 19–20: A vision of the final battle fought by a heavenly army, and already won by the blood of Christ.

Chapters 21–22: A vision of the New Jerusalem, in which God dwells with humanity.