

Unit 36

Jesus Will Come Again

Revelation

Memory Verse

“They said with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

—REVELATION 5:12

The Redeemer Reveals His Glory

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Jesus has promised to be with His church one day in full glory.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Revelation 1

Revelation is unique among the books of the Bible. As the closing book of the Bible, it brings together a variety of literary genres—from letters to churches, to psalms of praise, to descriptive prose, and of course, all the apocalyptic imagery of John’s vision. Much of the symbolism of Revelation is confusing to modern readers, which is one reason there is such a wide range of views on the best way to read and understand and apply this book. A century ago, G. K. Chesterton quipped: “And though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators.”¹

Some readers find the book so strange they leave it unread, something to hurry through, perhaps, at the end of a yearlong Bible reading plan. For others, the strangeness is itself the draw, especially since so many interpreters through the years have seen in this book a glimpse of what God has planned for the future. In either case—whether Revelation proves fascinating or frightening to you—the truth is this: God inspired this book, and as part of God’s Word, it is well worth our time of study and devotion.



How familiar are you with the Book of Revelation? What have you found challenging or intriguing about this book?

Group Time

Point 1: Jesus reveals Himself in glory (Rev. 1:9-16).

⁹ I, John, your brother and partner in the affliction, kingdom, and endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard a loud voice behind me like a trumpet ¹¹ saying, "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."

¹² Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me. When I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was one like the Son of Man, dressed in a robe and with a golden sash wrapped around his chest. ¹⁴ The hair of his head was white as wool—white as snow—and his eyes like a fiery flame. ¹⁵ His feet were like fine bronze as it is fired in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of cascading waters. ¹⁶ He had seven stars in his right hand; a sharp double-edged sword came from his mouth, and his face was shining like the sun at full strength.

Revelation isn't primarily a vision about the future; it's a vision of Jesus—who He is in His glory, what He has done to bring salvation, and what He will do upon His return. That's why the book begins with "The revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1), not "The revelation of the end times." The focus from the very beginning remains on Jesus.



Why is it important to remember the original context of John's writing this letter? What would happen if we ignored this context?

John heard a loud voice and then saw a mysterious figure, "one like the Son of Man." This figure was described with language from the Old Testament—from the prophet Daniel, another book with apocalyptic imagery. There the "Son of Man" approaches the "Ancient of Days," God Himself, who has hair "like whitest wool" (Dan. 7:9) and eyes "like flaming torches" (Dan. 10:6). What's striking about John's description of Jesus in this vision is that he uses imagery from the Old Testament referring to God Himself (Rev. 1:14). The Son of Man is the Son of God.

Jesus' Deity: Scripture teaches Jesus is fully _____ and fully _____. His divinity is on display in passages that describe Him as being _____ with God.

Point 2: Jesus reveals His authority over time, death, and hell (Rev. 1:17-18).

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. He laid his right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid. I am the First and the Last, ¹⁸ and the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades.

What was John’s response when he saw this magnificent vision of Jesus? He fell flat on his face. We shouldn’t be surprised. Throughout the Scriptures, when people come into contact with God in His glory, they fall in worship—undone because of their sinfulness, stunned at His holiness and magnificence, in fear for their lives. But here we see a touch of grace that coincides with this revelation of the fiery God of glory in the Son. Jesus gave John a comforting hand and comforting words: “Don’t be afraid” (1:17).

When you think of Jesus, do you think primarily of His majesty and magnificence or His mercy and closeness?



Majesty and Magnificence

Mercy and Closeness

The reason Jesus can say “Don’t be afraid” is connected to what comes next: “I am the First and the Last” (Rev. 1:17). Don’t miss the fact that Jesus has once again used an “I AM” statement (cf. Ex. 3:14; the Gospel of John). Just as Moses fell on his face before God on Mount Sinai (Ex. 34), John here was on his face before the Lord Jesus, when the Great I AM revealed Himself as the “First and the Last.” That means Jesus is the One who has all authority and power over *time* itself. But it’s not just time. It’s also *death* and *hell* that must fall before the conquering King. Jesus is the “Living One” who has gone through death and come out the other side with all authority given to Him.

Christ’s Exaltation: Whereas the death of Christ was the ultimate example of His humiliation, the _____ of Christ from the dead is the first and glorious example of Christ’s exaltation. Christ was exalted when He _____ to the Father’s right hand. He will be exalted by all creation when He _____. All of these aspects work together to magnify the glory and worth of Christ, resulting in the praise of the glory of His grace in rescuing sinners.

Point 3: Jesus reveals His presence among His churches (Rev. 1:19-20).

¹⁹ Therefore write what you have seen, what is, and what will take place after this.

²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars 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.

Jesus was revealed in His glory *among* the seven golden lampstands. The point here is one that John wanted to stress for the his original audience: this King of glory is present with His people. We are known to Him, and He is known to us. No matter what the circumstances may be, Jesus knows His people, and He is devoted to caring for us. The darkness of the world, the oppressive powers and principalities that manifest themselves in governments that seek to thwart the spread of the gospel, the sins and transgressions that continue to batter our hearts as we pursue holiness, the suffering of tragedies that threaten to overtake us—all of these are no match for the glorious King who stands amid the lampstands and cares for the churches.



In what ways should our belief that Jesus is present with and committed to His people shape our worship?

The churches here are described as lampstands. Why lamps? Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount that we are the light of the world; our good works are to shine before others so that people will give glory to our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:14-16). When we spread the truth of the gospel with our words, and when we back up the gospel with actions that correspond with our words, then others see the light of Christ and are drawn to Him. Jesus' presence among the lampstands indicates that He is committed to ensuring that we shine His light in the world. We are tasked with the mission of proclaiming His kingdom, but Jesus hasn't left us alone.



What does Jesus' presence with us mean for the church as we seek to be faithful to His mission?



Voices from Church History

"The preaching of the church is true and steadfast, in which one and the same way of salvation is shown throughout the whole world. For to her is entrusted the light of God ... For the church preaches the truth everywhere, and she is the seven-branched candlestick that bears the light of Christ."²

—Irenaeus (c. 130-202)

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Revelation 1:1-3

Revelation begins and ends with blessing. We see blessing in the beginning in verse 3, where the author blesses the one who “reads aloud the words of this prophecy.” And we see blessing at the end in Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.”

But the blessing at the beginning of the book, which focuses on the reader, is not given only to those who read Revelation but those who “hear the words of this prophecy and *keep what is written in it.*”

It’s easy to approach Revelation with a sense of curiosity. We hope to figure out what it all means and what these symbols point to. But if we read Revelation rightly, we will study this book as a way to encounter Jesus so that our lives are changed. The end affects the present.

Knowing how the story will unfold is not something God reveals so that we can go on living the way we have been (with a little knowledge to puff us up). No, the purpose of this book is that we would “hear” and “keep what is written in it.” The goal is that we would bring our lives in line with the truths we encounter. The point is that we would be changed.

Voices from the Church

“Always remember, you are not fighting *for* victory. You are fighting *from* victory. The battle has already been won.”⁴

—Tony Evans




What do you hope will be the result of your study of Revelation over the next few weeks? How would you like your life to change?

Day 2: Read Revelation 1:4-8

Look what God has done! In this passage, we see the past, present, and future work of Christ all at once, summed up in Jesus as the Alpha and Omega “who is, was, and is to come.” Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who was raised from the dead and is now King of the world, *loves* us (not past tense, but present tense—don’t miss that!), has set us free from our sins by His blood (a once-for-all event with continuing implications), and has made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.


To be part of a kingdom means we belong as citizens to Christ the King. To be a priest means we represent God to the world. We are showcases of His glory. Made in His image, now we are *remade* in the image of the One who is coming with the clouds.

 Reread verses 5-6 and stop after every phrase to ponder all the truths that are summed up in these short statements. What thoughts of wonder and praise come to mind?

Day 3: Read Revelation 1:9-16

No one said serving Christ would be easy. John wrote Revelation from the island of Patmos, where he had most likely been exiled due to his faith. He said he was a “partner in the affliction,” which reminds us of Paul’s words that he aimed to share in the “fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings” (Phil. 3:10) and Peter’s encouragement to rejoice when you “share in the sufferings” of the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 4:13).

When we think of partnerships, we think of business relationships and joining together for a common purpose and goal. When John used the word *partner*, he was referring first to the experience of suffering and persecution. As a leader in the church, he was not distant from suffering but well acquainted with it, just as Jesus was. But he also said he was a partner in the “endurance” that comes from being united to Christ. He knew pain, but he also knew power.

 How can we be a partner in the affliction with believers who are persecuted?

Day 4: Read Revelation 1:17-18

When John encountered the Son of God in all His glory, he fell to his feet in awe. This is what an encounter with God looks like. The façade you've created where you feel important and good just *crumbles* before the fire of God that strips you to the core of your being. The illusion that you are in control, that you are powerful and free and in charge of your life—the fire of God burns that up.

This feeling of being drawn to God's mystery and yet frightened by His majesty—that's a sign that you are dealing with the true God and not an idol you've made in your image. C. S. Lewis captured this truth when he wrote in *The Chronicles of Narnia* that Aslan, the great Lion, was not someone you'd feel safe around: "Safe ... Who said anything about safe?" the book says. "Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."⁵

And that's exactly why Aslan is such a compelling figure in literature. He's a lion with a ferocious roar that can burst your eardrums, but he's also the lion whose mane you can bury your head in and cry out all your tears of sorrow. God is untamable, unfathomable, unexplainable, but forever and always *good*. The all-powerful fire of God: dangerous to burn you and good to warm you.



When was the last time you sensed the majesty and holiness of God in a profound way?

Day 5: Read Revelation 1:19-20

The seven lampstands are the seven churches. God's people are to shine, just as Jesus said: we are the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14-16). But doesn't Jesus say *He* is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5)? Yes. It's the difference between the light of the sun, which gives light to the world, and the light of the moon, which also gives light but in a different way. The only light we see from the moon is that which is reflected from the sun. In the same way, we are not the light of the world in the sense that there is something in our lives apart from Jesus that shines.

We are the light because we reflect *the* Light—Jesus Christ—back to the world. His light has shined upon us so that we can reflect His light to the world and give Him glory. Your words proclaim the gospel of Jesus' love. Your works promote the gospel of Jesus' love.



What opportunities will you have today to reflect the light of Jesus in the world?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Jesus reveals Himself in glory (Rev. 1:9-16).
- Jesus reveals His authority over time, death, and hell (Rev. 1:17-18).
- Jesus reveals His presence among His churches (Rev. 1:19-20).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



Why should Jesus' present state of glory be an encouragement to us?



What are some ways we can remind one another that Jesus is the true and ever-loving ruler of our local churches?

Notes
