

# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

A lot of people find the book of Revelation confusing. It doesn't have to be.

One key is the book's first five words. It's not just 'The Revelation'. Its 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ'.

So as we read this book, we'll need to keep asking: 'What's this telling me about Jesus?' We might still find many things confusing. But we'll be looking in the right place for this book's blessings.

Many Christians approach Revelation like a *safari*. They're trying to spot things, like rulers, nations and wars, perhaps trying to figure out an approximate timetable for the end of this world.

This resource recommends approaching Revelation like a *symphony*, listening for the repeated patterns like rebellion, reckoning and rejoicing as the book builds to its magnificent crescendo.

Similarly, one scholar says studying Revelation is 'like studying an Impressionist painting; if we look too closely, we might lose sight of the big picture.' And in Revelation, the big picture is Jesus.

## Sermons

The following selected passages of Revelation can expose people to all of the book's main ideas and equip them for reading the rest of it themselves. This can be done in ten consecutive weeks, or the series be run in two parts (1-5 and 6-10). Suggested Old Testament readings are provided.

<b>1</b>	<b>The First Five Words</b>	Isaiah 41.1-10	Revelation 1.1-8
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The opening verses of Revelation introduce this amazing book, including its context and purpose. There's a clear Gospel hook ('loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood') and the opportunity to talk about apocalyptic literature, the Last Days and true blessing.

<b>2</b>	<b>Nearer Than You Think</b>	Ezekiel 1.26-28	Revelation 1.9-20
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On Patmos, John is far from God's people, but he isn't far from Jesus. Like Ezekiel in Babylon, he begins to experience an extraordinary vision of Jesus, which shows him that Jesus is near. [Note: Sermons and Studies 1 and 2 can be combined if you need to shorten the series.]

<b>3</b>	<b>Dear Church, Love Jesus</b>	Psalms 139.1-7	Revelation 2.1-17
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The so-called 'letters to the churches' provide material for one, two or even seven sermons, but it's important to highlight the common thread, especially the way each letter speaks of 'the one who conquers' and describes ways churches are conquering or being conquered.

<b>4</b>	<b>Everybody Worships</b>	Psalm 98.1-7	Revelation 4.1-5.14
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Chapters 4 and 5 use rich Old Testament images to portray the worship of God as creator and Jesus as redeemer. These chapters invite struggling saints to 'look up'. They also invite us to consider what we worship, i.e. where we look for security, significance and satisfaction.

<b>5</b>	<b>Everything Is Going to Be Alright</b>	Habbakuk 1.1-4	Revelation 6.1-7.10
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Featuring the so-called 'Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse', chapters 6 and 7 flood us with a torrent of devastation and desperation relieved by reckoning and rejoicing. These chapters are a great resource to Christians who are suffering in any way, especially from persecution.

<b>6</b>	<b>Sound the Alarm</b>	Amos 3.3-8	Revelation 9.13-11.13
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DA Carson has called Revelation 11 the hardest chapter in the book to understand, but there clear themes we can draw from them, especially the theme of warning (cf. trumpets). A tough crowd (the world) needs to hear a tough message (the gospel) shared by a tough church.

<b>7</b>	<b>Who's Side Are You On?</b>	Daniel 7.1-8	Revelation 13.1-18
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The Mark of the Beast fascinates a lot of people but it's just the counterpart to the 'seal of the saints' in 7.1-4. This chapter is a call to recognise human powers trying to intimidate or entice us away from Jesus, and to keep clinging to him no matter what it costs us in this world.

<b>8</b>	<b>Here Comes the Bride</b>	Isaiah 62.1-5	Revelation 19.6-21
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This sermon should invoke the joy of attending a wedding, though it's also sobering to realise that there are two suppers in this chapter: we can be the bride or we can be bird food. Even so, the 'bride' is a glorious image to help us consider Jesus' love for us and our love for him.

<b>9</b>	<b>In These Uncertain Times</b>	Ezekiel 38.14-16	Revelation 20.1-15
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Revelation 20 is the most controversial chapter in the book, the 'thousand years' being the main topic of dispute. However, there are things in this chapter about which all Christians can agree and have certainty, especially the final defeat of Satan and the judgment the world.

<b>10</b>	<b>How the Story Ends</b>	Revelation 21.1-22.5	
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In Revelation's grand finale, God's people don't go to heaven, heaven comes to us! As John sees a New Creation with a New Jerusalem he's also seeing the complete fulfilment of the New Covenant. This chapter inspires us to pray all the more fervently: 'Come, Lord Jesus!'

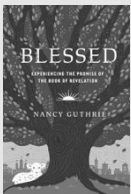
## Studies

This is a study-after-sermon series, which means that groups should complete the relevant study *after* the relevant sermon. Hopefully, the sermons will address controversial topics in a way that releases groups to spend less time debating the text and more time discussing what it means for us.

Each study begins and ends with an 'Around the Room' question, the former to help everyone 'warm up' for the discussion, the latter to help everyone share how the discussion has helped them.

## Resources

### If You Only Read One Thing...



Guthrie, Nancy. *Blessed: Experiencing the Promise of the Book of Revelation*. Illinois: Crossway, 2022.

### Other Recommendations

Chapple, Allan. *A Gospel Pageant: A Reader's Guide to the Book of Revelation*. Oregon: Resource Publications, 2015

Schreiner, Thomas R. *Revelation*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023.

The Bible Project. 'Revelation 1-11.' <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/revelation-1-11>

The Bible Project. 'Revelation 12-22.' <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/revelation-12-22>

## **Around the Room**

What's something you're looking forward to right now?

## **Pray, Read, Discuss**

Does anyone have any 'What does that mean?' questions?

What ideas in verses 1-4 can help guide the way we read Revelation?

What do 'grace' and 'peace' mean to you? Would you say that you have those things?

List each of the statements about Jesus in verses 5-7 and discuss what they mean to you.

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How does it help us to know that God is ‘the Alpha and the Omega’ and ‘the Almighty’?

## **Around the Room**

What’s one thing today’s passage is telling you about Jesus?

### **Around the Room**

How close do you feel to God at this point in your life?

### **Pray, Read, Discuss**

Does anyone have any ‘What does that mean?’ questions?

What three things does John say he is a ‘brother and partner’ in? What does each mean to you?

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John says he’s on Patmos ‘on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus’ (1.9). Have you experienced negative consequences for living as a Christian or sharing the Good News?

In the Old Testament, golden lampstands stood in the Tabernacle and the Temple (e.g. Leviticus 24.4, 2 Chronicles 13.11). In what way(s) are churches like these lampstands (1.12 cf. 1.20)?

The images in 1.13-16 identify Jesus with God (cf. Daniel 7.9-14). Do you tend to think of Jesus more as man or as God? How can it help us to remember that he is both man and God?

In verse 17, John falls at Jesus’ feet in fear. What does ‘the fear of the LORD’ mean for you?

In verses 17-18 Jesus gives us three reasons to 'Fear not...' How can each help us with our fear?

- 'I am the first and the last'
- 'I died, and behold I am alive forevermore'
- 'I have the keys of Death and Hades.'

## **Around the Room**

What's one thing today's passage is telling you about Jesus?

### 3. DEAR CHURCH, LOVE JESUS

2.1-3.22

#### Around the Room

If you could send a one-sentence message to every church in your region, what would it be?

#### Pray, Read, Discuss

Does anyone have any ‘What does that mean?’ questions?

Complete this table for each church in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

Church	What does Jesus tell this church about himself?	What does Jesus commend about this church?	What is Jesus concerned about in this church?	What does Jesus promise the one who overcomes?
Ephesus				
Smyrna				
Pergamum				
Thyatira				
Sardis				



Philadelphia				
Laodicea				

Circle and discuss the things in the table you think that you need to hear the most.

Try and sum-up what Jesus is saying to all churches here in one or two sentences.

## **Around the Room**

What's one thing today's passage is telling you about Jesus?

### **Around the Room**

Share a time you've been filled with joy.

### **Pray, Read, Discuss**

Does anyone have any 'What does that mean?' questions?

What is the image of God on his throne saying to you?

What is the image of the slain/standing Lamb saying to you?

Do you see yourself as 'ransomed' for God? (5.9) What does that mean for your life?

What does the word 'worship' mean to you? How would you say that you worship God?

What reason(s) would you give another person that they should worship God / Jesus?

What's competing with God for your worship (i.e. what are your potential 'idols')?

What's one thing that helps / has helped you worship God rather than other things?

Can you think of one step you could take toward deeper worship of God / Jesus?

## **Around the Room**

What's one thing today's passage is telling you about Jesus?

## 5. EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALRIGHT

6.1-7.17

### **Around the Room**

Share a time you've wished you knew what was going to happen next.

### **Pray, Read, Discuss**

Does anyone have any 'What does that mean?' questions?

What are some things the four horsemen tell us about life in this world?

How can it help us to know that these horsemen are 'part of the plan'?

How much do you relate to the question 'how long' in 6.9-11?

Do you ever face hostility due to your 'witness' that Jesus is Lord?

What's your level of concern about people facing the reality in 6.12-17?

How does / how could this reality affect the way you relate to...

- a. ... people making your life difficult?

b. ... non-Christian friends or family?

c. ... people in your church family?

Do you tend to think of Jesus as ‘for all tribes and peoples and languages’? Why / why not?

To what extent are you looking forward to being among the ‘great multitude’ in 7.-9-12?

## **Around the Room**

What’s one thing today’s passage is telling you about Jesus?

### **Around the Room**

Share a time a time you've received or given a helpful warning.

### **Pray, Read, Discuss**

Does anyone have any 'What does that mean?' questions?

What feelings or impressions do you get as you read these chapters?

In what way(s) do we see the things described in 9.20-21 at least partly in our own time?

List and discuss the five sins in 9.20-21. Why might Christians need to be warned about these?

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Looking at 10.9, in what ways do you find the message of Revelation (a) sweet and (b) bitter?

How could the images in 11.4-13 challenge and comfort Christians in any age, including us?

What does being a 'witness' for Jesus mean to you?

To what extent do you see yourself as a 'witness' for Jesus?

What are some realistic, practical ways we can be a 'witness' for Jesus?

What comfort is in 11.14-18 for Christians in any age? Does this comfort you? Why / why not?

## **Around the Room**

What's one thing today's passage is telling you about Jesus?

## 7. WHO'S SIDE ARE YOU ON?

13.1-18

### **Around the Room**

Share a situation when you've had to take a side.

### **Pray, Read, Discuss**

Does anyone have any 'What does that mean?' questions?

What feelings or impression do you get from the description of the Beast in 13.1-4?

In what way(s) does this description match human powers opposed to God?

In what way(s) is it true that 'everyone' is worshipping the Dragon / Beast, even today?

How much comfort do you take from the idea that evil human power is limited?

If you're a Christian, do you ever feel like there's a 'war' against you? Why / why not?

In what ways can we prepare, individually and together, for the Beast's war against us?



How might verses 13 and 14 influence how we approach claims of miraculous power?

Looking at verse 17, have you experienced any penalty or exclusion because you're a Christian?

In view of Revelation 7.2-8 and 9.4, what's the main message you're taking away from Revelation's two contrasting images of 'the seal of the saints' and 'the mark of the beast'?

## **Around the Room**

What's one thing today's passage is telling you about Jesus?

### **Around the Room**

Share a joyful occasion that you've attended.

### **Pray, Read, Discuss**

Does anyone have any 'What does that mean?' questions?

How does the image of the 'bride' (also cf. Ephesians 5.22-33) affect the way you understand...

a. ... what it means to be a Christian?

b. ... what it means to be the church?

How could it help us to remember that 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'? (verse 10)

List the three titles for Jesus in verses 11-16 and discuss what each one means to you.

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How close is the picture of Jesus in these verses to the way you tend to think of him?

How might you reply to someone who says they don't like the picture of Jesus in these verses?

What difference might it make to remember 'the other supper' (verses 17-21) in everyday life?

How much are you looking forward to seeing Jesus face-to-face? What affects this for you?

## **Around the Room**

What's one thing today's passage is telling you about Jesus?

### **Around the Room**

What's your level of optimism about the future of this world? Why?

### **Pray, Read, Discuss**

Does anyone have any 'What does that mean?' questions?

To what extent do you consider Satan as a factor in everyday life? (cf. James 4.7-8, 1 Peter 5.8-10)

Where do you notice the influence of Satan and his forces...

a. ... in the world?

b. ... in your life?

What are some ways nations / peoples / ourselves can be deceived by Satan? (verse 3)

How might you answer if someone asks you how much people should worry about Satan?

What things in verses 4-6 apply to all Christians? List and discuss them.

Describe the 'last battle' (verses 7-10) in your own words. What impressions does it give you?

How are you feeling about appearing before God's throne? (cf. Romans 14.10-12, 2 Corinthians 5.10)

What are the two books that are opened? How do they relate to the good news about Jesus?

How is the 'story of the world' in this chapter different to other 'stories of the world' we are told?

## **Around the Room**

What's one thing today's passage is telling you about Jesus?

### **Around the Room**

What's an ending to a story (book, movie etc.) that you liked? Why?

### **Pray, Read, Discuss**

Does anyone have any 'What does that mean?' questions?

How does the image of 'a new heaven and a new earth' confirm or challenge your idea of 'heaven'?

What might it mean for us that a city, New Jerusalem, is the 'crown jewel' of the New Creation?

Does hearing that God will 'wipe away every tear' make a difference to your grief or sadness?

In verse 7 we see the word 'conquer' again. What do you think it will mean for us to 'conquer'?

What do we take from yet another warning of judgment in an otherwise joyful passage? (verse 8)

Discuss the areas of sin named in verse 8. Why might they be worth specifically mentioning?

Looking at verses 12 and 13, what does your faith have to do with (a) Israel and (b) Apostles?

Why is the lack of a Temple in the New Jerusalem (verse 22) something we can be excited about?

On what basis do you believe or doubt that the New Jerusalem will be your home?

In what way(s) has the hope in this chapter helped you so far? Could it help you any more?

Do you find yourself praying the prayer at the end of Revelation, 'Come Lord Jesus'? Why / why not?

## **Around the Room**

What's one thing today's passage is telling you about Jesus?