

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the New Testament
Living the Message 2021-2022
May 2022 Study Guide for Participants and Facilitators

May Question: *Seriously... What's Up with Revelation?*

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

Overview

Are you ready for a Revelation? The final book of the New Testament, The Revelation to John, is well known for its graphic visions of beasts and horsemen, angelic beings of heavenly wonder, hell and blood and fire, a lamb, a lion, stark depictions of judgment, and symbolic language galore. With all its symbolic and graphic content, interpretations of Revelation over the centuries have run the gamut.

Sadly, the book has been and is still often used as a weapon of fear, a tool of greedy exploitation, and a warped commodity for spiritual abuse, promoting theologies which have little to do with the rest of scripture or the story of Jesus in the gospels. At one point, the father of the Reformation, Martin Luther, questioned whether it should have been included in the canon. At the same time, many – Martin Luther included – have seen good news in Revelation's overarching vision of Christ - the slaughtered lamb, victorious over all sin, death, and the powers of evil; and the picture of the new creation in which God "wipes away all tears".

Notably, too, the worship scenes of Revelation provide some of the most well-known, comforting, artistic, and dear passages used almost universally across the ages in the worship practice of the church.

Far be it from perhaps any person to claim to be able to answer all the questions this book conjures, but despite all the difficulty, there is a timeless message of God's care for God's people, especially the downtrodden, exploited, and persecuted. Received as "wake up" or an "unveiling" to give hope, encouragement, and/or confidence in faith, Revelation provides blessing, indeed.

Key Scriptures

Revelation 1:1-4

The revelation of 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, ²who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near. ⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Revelation 21:1-5

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is

among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; ⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.’ ⁵ And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’

Questions for Discussion:

1. Discuss your initial thoughts about Revelation. What do you know about it? What have you heard? Have you ever actually read it all the way through? How has it made you feel?
2. Discuss one or more things you learned from the video presentation. Did you learn anything which helps your reading? If so, what? What questions do you still have?
3. Discuss the word pictures of Revelation. What effect do the images have? Taken as metaphors, what do the metaphors say or reveal? (i.e. Christ as lion and slaughtered lamb, light and dark, beasts, throne rooms, angels)
4. Rather than reading Revelation as a prediction of future literal events, how does it change our interpretation of the book if it is read as an enduring message for all people of all times and places?
5. If prophecy is not prediction, but rather seeking to tell the truth while warning of outcomes if change is not made – what truth about the world, ourselves, and God does Revelation seek to tell? What warnings does it give about how we live? What action does it inspire? What hope does it proclaim?
6. It speaks about the multi-faceted persistence of evil and death in individual and systematic forms of greed, corruption, selfishness, and lust for worldly power. Do we see that present today? What does Revelation inspire in the face of such threats?

Going Deeper into Revelation with Pastor Lose

1. Given the symbolic nature of Revelation, have some symbols spoken more powerfully to you and are some still puzzling today? (You are not alone in that!)
2. Think about your worship experiences, have there been moments that have lifted you up out of the present challenges of the day and given you a sense of hope? When and how?

Closing Prayer

Holy God, Revelation proclaims you as the alpha and omega. We give thanks for your eternal faithfulness. Called to worship before your glorious throne of sacrificial love, continuously turn our hearts to confront the violence and harm we do to each other in this world. Inspire us to look upon the throne of your love, and give us confidence and hope in the face of all sin, death, and evil to remain faithful to you, through the one who was and is and is to come, Jesus the Christ. Amen. Come Lord Jesus.