

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

*“I, John, your brother and companion in the **suffering** and **kingdom** and **patient endurance** that are ours in **Jesus...**”*



Seven Studies in the New Testament Book of Revelation

Kenmore Presbyterian Church

## An Introduction to these Bible Studies

This series in Revelation is written to be used in Growth Group, and to complement what we look at in church on Sundays.

1	Revelation 1:1-11
2	Revelation 1:9-3:22
3	Revelation 4-5
4	Revelation 6-11
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6	Revelation 19-20
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### A note on the origin of these studies

Mitchelton Presbyterian Church studied Revelation back in 2004. These studies were originally written with the MPC ones open – and a liberal dose of cutting and pasting (with permission of course).

### If you would like to go deeper

The following may be helpful, perhaps in this order.

1. Graeme Goldsworthy *The Gospel in Revelation*. Published in *The Goldsworthy Trilogy*. Paternoster 1988.
2. Michael Wilcock *The Message of Revelation*. In the Bible Speaks Today series. Inter-Varsity Press, 1975.
3. Paul Barnett, *Apocalypse Now and Then: Reading Revelation Today*. Aquila Press, 1989.

# Study 1: Introductions

## Growth Group is more than a Bible Study

We call our mid-week groups 'Growth Groups' as a way of reminding ourselves that we aim to grow - both in maturity as followers of Jesus and in number. Growth Groups are central to what makes our church *work*. We like to think in terms of **growing in Growth Group** and **serving on Sunday**. Of course that is over-simplified, but it can help us stay focussed.

While Bible Study is the core of our Growth Group meetings, we want to ensure they are more than *just* a Bible Study. We aim to care for each other, pray together, find ways to serve one another, and encourage each other to share the truth about Jesus with others. In other words, Growth Groups are about fellowship, service, sharing, praying, learning and challenging.

## Praying Together

Pray about some of the things you have already discussed since arriving at Growth Group. Share any other concerns and also pray for: KPC Kids and Youth Group.

## An Introduction to Revelation

There are some daunting images in the pages of Revelation which have generated much speculation. As a consequence Christians may find ourselves either a little nervous of reading it, or completely put-off. However, the truth is, **reading Revelation ought to be a blessing to us** (1:3).

We will start by reading a little in order to get a feel for the book of Revelation.



### Read Revelation 1:1-3

1. Who does verse one say Revelation is about?
2. Where did this prophecy originate, and who wrote it down?
3. How do you think Revelation can be a blessing to us?

## What's in a name?

“Revelation” is the English translation of the Greek title “Apokalypsis.” It’s easy to link that name to our word “apocalypse,” which is usually taken to mean a “disaster” or “catastrophe.” The Greek word doesn’t mean those things. “Apocalypse” actually means “unveiling.” It means “**laying bare the truth**” and “revealing what was hidden.”

The first verse of the book tells us we are reading the **revelation of Jesus**. The truth revealed is that no matter how big the opposition, **Jesus and his people will win in the end**. If that is all you get from “the unveiling,” then the book has done its job.

## The name and the genre

The name of this book also signals the genre of what we are reading. ‘**Apocalyptic**’ is the label given to a style of writing that uses fantastic images and symbolism. There are other examples of apocalyptic writing in the Bible – the book of Daniel is one. There are examples of non-biblical apocalyptic writing as well (from around 200BC and 100AD) where the authors attributed their work to dead heroes (e.g. Enoch and Ezra). They wrote in a way that was intended to encourage the Jews in a time of trial - by declaring what would happen in the future, or explaining the events of the present using spiritual imagery.

Revelation introduces itself as this **style** of writing, but it is different in at least three ways. Firstly, rather than being attributed to a long dead hero, it is attributed to John, a disciple of Jesus. You’ll notice too, that John is writing what an angel shows him to write. Behind the angel is Jesus, and behind Jesus is God the Father (Revelation 1:1-3). Secondly, the imagery in Revelation does not show us anything unexpected. It’s a reshaping and repackaging and reapplying of what we can read in the rest of the Bible. Thirdly, not only is Revelation apocalyptic, it is also prophetic (e.g. 1:3, 22:7). Not prophetic in predicting the future but prophetic in an Old Testament sense. Old Testament prophets spoke God’s word to the Israelites, and called them back to God. Revelation calls us to repent and turn back to God.

We’ll return to the style of Revelation once we have covered the first few chapters.

## Approaches to reading Revelation

There are four main “schools of thought” in interpreting the book of Revelation.

### a. It’s all in the PAST... *preterist*

The idea is that the events in Revelation **happened in the time frame of the Roman Empire**, and should be read with that historical context in mind. In other words, the letter was written to Christians in the 1st Century Roman Empire, and we need to first try to understand how *they* would have understood it.

John says a number of times that the things in his vision will **SOON** take place - in the lifespan of his readers. However, it seems clear that the “Revelation” extends all the way to the final judgement, so there is at least *some* future focus!

### b. It’s all in the FUTURE... *futurist*

This view holds that the events in the book of Revelation were **going to happen in the far distant future** (from the point of view of the original readers.) So, Revelation is talking about events that are still to come, including times like “the tribulation” and

“the millennium.” This view can fail to recognise that Revelation had real meaning and significance for the people it was originally addressed to.

**c. A Roadmap of ALL HISTORY.... *historicist***

This approach sees the book of revelation as describing the key events of history **from the death of Jesus to his future return**, and that Revelation is a “timetable” by which we can interpret “signs of the times.” In other words, world events TODAY are described in Revelation.

This view is speculative, and again, can fail to give the letter any significance for the original readers.

**d. A Matter of PRINCIPLE... *idealist***

This view says Revelation isn't talking about time - it is talking about a **pattern of events or trends that will be repeated throughout history**, as an encouragement to God's people of all times who face persecution. It is a “timeless” message.

While most popular books on Revelation use approach b. or c., these studies take a combination of views a. and d. **John's vision was first and foremost a message for Christians facing persecution in the early Roman Empire and has application for Christians of all times.**

**Testing the theory...**

If Revelation is a combination of *preterist* and *idealist*, then we would expect to find historical links that anchor this book into real events. We would also expect to find application for us today. So let's have another look at Revelation chapter 1.



**Read Revelation 1:4-11**

4. Who was first intended to read Revelation (v4, 11)?
5. Why is John on Patmos (v9)?
6. What does John share in common with those to whom he is writing?

**So, what do you think?**

7. How is Revelation anchored into historical events?
8. Are there any hints of ‘timeless’ truths?

## Finding Application on the way through Revelation

The first three chapters of Revelation serve to anchor the book into its historical setting. John is writing what he has been shown in a vision on the Island of Patmos. He writes to seven representative churches in Asia. In fact, chapters two and three contain a highly stylistic 'letter' to the seven churches mentioned in chapter one. Even a superficial reading of the seven parts of this letter is enough to reveal that the main point of application is for the readers to 'overcome'. A closer look at the content shows us that these Christians are, or will soon, undergo suffering.

We can filter all of what we read in subsequent chapters through these messages to the seven churches. **That is, the whole book is written to encourage and inspire Christians to patiently endure as we wait for Jesus to return.**

*"I, John, your brother and companion in the **suffering** and **kingdom** and **patient endurance** that are ours in Jesus..." Revelation 1:9 (NIV)*

9. Discuss how you are feeling about looking at Revelation over the next few weeks?

## Prayer

Have one or two people pray for what you have discussed, and for our time looking at Revelation in the next few weeks.

# Study 2: To Him Who Overcomes

## Praying Together

Pray for some of the things you have already discussed since arriving at Growth Group. Share any other concerns and also pray for: NightChurch and Morning Church. Pray that we would grow together in maturity and in number.

## Revelation 1:9-3:22

Welcome to the “easy bit” of the Book of Revelation. It's straightforward, and in plain language - a letter to seven churches of Asia Minor; or at least, **seven specific introductions to the one big letter that makes up the whole of the book**.

The seven churches are in an area where John had spent much of his long ministry. They are ‘representative’ - that is, John could have picked any number of churches, but he has chosen these ones. **What he says to them can be applied to others as well.**

We're not going to focus on particular details, instead we'll be looking for patterns. We'll also notice how these introductions fit into the structure of the book as a whole.

## Discussion Questions

Read Revelation 1:9-3:22 carefully - perhaps one reader could read the opening section in chapter 1, then others could take turns reading the message to each church.

1. Who are the seven messages from? Note the details of the description, and compare the “Son of Man” in John's vision with Daniel 7:9-14.

What do you notice about the messages to each church? What are the similarities?

What are the differences, and why?



**Seven Churches in Asia Minor**

Adapted from page 1 of *Apocalypse Now and Then* by Paul Barnett (Aquila Press, 1989)

Have you ever known a kid from humble circumstances who has risen to impressive career heights? Maybe they come back to visit the old neighbourhood in a new luxury car? That's nothing compared to Jesus. John's vision, which he is told to write down and share with the seven churches, is from the ruling "Son of Man" who Daniel foresaw hundreds of years before. The identity of this Son of Man is none other than the once-crucified Jesus of Nazareth! John and the churches should rightly be in awe of his words.

2. John sees Jesus standing among seven lampstands. What are we told that they represent? What does it mean that Jesus is standing among them? (And is it a good thing, or a bad thing?)

### OPTIONAL

3. You'll notice an interesting pattern between the vision in chapter 1 and the letter to the seven churches. Each message starts with a reminder of the vision of Jesus. Complete this list ...

2:1..... 1:16 *Holding seven stars*

2:8 .....

2:12.....

2:18.....

3:1.....

3:7.....

3:14.....

4. What different types of opposition are being faced by the churches?

5. Which churches are NOT criticised? What is it that they have done right?

6. What are the key criticisms Jesus has of each of the churches?

Which criticisms do you think could be the biggest danger to us as a church?

7. All the messages conclude in a similar way. Who is it that will receive the promises in each case? (See 2:7,11,17,26 and 3:5, 12, 21)



8. What do you think it means to “overcome.”? Look at 2:25,26, 3:8, and 17:14. Can you see a connection with 13:10?
9. THINK ABOUT IT...what other views of “overcoming” are popular both in the church and the world? Why are they so attractive?
10. Look at 3:21. How did Jesus “overcome and sit down with his Father?” In what way is this a reassurance for us?
11. Look at the promises at the end of each letter. Each of them are picked up in the final chapters of the book. For homework, you may like to compare 2:7 with 22:14-15, 2:11 with 20:6,14, 2:17 with 19:12-maybe you can find the others yourself.

## Conclusion

The seven messages we have just looked at are closely tied with the structure of the book as a whole. There are links **back** to the vision of the majestic Jesus in chapter 1 and **ahead** to the promised future in Chapter 21 and 22. The combined message to the churches is simple: **the victory has been won by the Son of Man, so press on!** Your heavenly future is secure.

**Everything we go on to read will expand, explain and illustrate this message.** We will be shown glimpses of what the early Christians must overcome.<sup>1</sup> And from there we can join the dots and understand how we too must overcome.<sup>2</sup>

Looking back over these seven messages, here is a review of the key points (you may like to discuss a few of these):

- If you have zeal but no love, recover your love. (How are we doing with this?)
- If you are faithful but fearful, endure suffering for the crown of life that awaits. (Will we?)
- If you're seduced by false teaching and immorality, repent. (What are we prepared to tolerate? Where should we draw the line?)
- If you're lazy, asleep or dead in your faith, wake up! (How do we urge members of our church family in this direction?)
- If you're feeling weak and weary in your faith... remember it will be worth it! Keep trusting! (Are you?)
- If your obedience is lukewarm and you are complacent, turn back and find your wealth in Jesus. (Are we a little too complacent?)

## Prayer

Have one or two people pray for what you have discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> *Preterist* reading – page 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Idealist* reading – page 4.

# Study 3: Worthy of Worship

## Praying Together

Pray for some of the things you have already discussed since arriving at Growth Group. Share any other concerns and also pray for: friends and family who need to know Jesus.

## Revelation 4-5

1. Read the text box below. Assuming the reconstruction is accurate, discuss the implications for Christians living in Asia at the time.



Temple for Dometian in Ephesus.

<http://www.ephesus.us/ephesus/templeofdomitian.htm>

“The situation for Christians in Asia had worsened. The cult of Caesar worship had its origins in that province. For more than a century temples for Rome and the emperor had been constructed. There is archaeological evidence that Roman governors had increasingly participated in rituals for local deities, with a view to tying these more closely to Rome. A great temple for Domitian had been built in Ephesus, next to which was an eight metre high statue of the emperor. According to Suetonius, the Emperor Domitian had decided that he should be called “Lord and God” (*Domitian 13*). As reports came to John on Patmos, he probably discerned that in a very short time, life for Christians would become very painful indeed. Already Antipas had been killed in Pergamum, ‘where Satan’s throne is’ (2:13)”

Paul Barnett *Apocalypse Now and Then*, p. 30.

One of the dangers in reading Revelation is to focus on the details, without seeing the “big picture.” When you visit an art gallery, it’s important to stand back and take in the overall impression of a painting. It’s the same here, though the images are painted with words!



### Read Revelation 4

2. Stand back two metres! **What's the big picture this chapter presents us with?**

Where does the doorway lead?

In a sentence, what scene is this chapter describing?

What impression do you get of the one who sits on the throne?

Without knowing exactly what the “living creatures” represent, what are they doing?

## Roman Emperors 27 BC – 117 AD

27 BC-14 AD



**Augustus**  
Possibly  
assassinated  
– poisoning

14-37 AD



**Tiberius**  
Possibly  
assassinated  
– suffocation

37-41 AD



**Caligula**  
Assassinated  
by his  
bodyguards

41-54 AD



**Claudius**  
Poisoned by  
his wife

54-68 AD



**Nero**  
Committed  
suicide  
under duress

68-69 AD



**Galba**  
Murdered by  
Otho

69-69 AD



**Otho**  
Committed  
suicide.

69-69 AD



**Vitellius**  
Murdered

69-79 AD



**Vespasian**  
Peaceful  
death

79-81 AD



**Titus**  
Peaceful  
death

81-96 AD



**Domitian**  
Assassinated

96-98 AD



**Nerva**  
Peaceful  
death

98-117 AD



**Trajan**  
Peaceful  
death



If you were to pick a summary verse for chapter 4, you might choose verse 11. God is worthy to receive glory, honour and power. He is worthy of our praise and our worship. This is a truth that the churches in Asia needed to hear more than anything else. And so do we! Go back and **re-read Revelation 3:21**. Where is Jesus, and what is he doing? **Now read Revelation 5.**

- Step back from the details and **try to gain a sense of the majesty, and surprise, of the picture** the vision is painting.

Look at the throne. What do you see there?

What incredible clash of imagery do you see in verses 5 and 6?

Can you explain this?

What makes the lamb worthy to open the scroll? (We'll see later that the scroll represents God's judgement)

How many times does the chapter mention that the lamb was "slain"? What is the significance of this?

What three things has the blood of the lamb achieved? What is this imagery referring to in "real" terms?

Read the "heavenly hymn" in verses 12-14, and compare it to the similar section in chapter 4. Why is even the similar "form" of words in these two chapters incredible in itself?

Why is Jesus "worthy of worship?"

### Think about it

- If you were a believer in the days of John and you knew that the next knock on the door could be the Roman authorities asking you to renounce Christ and worship Caesar as God, how would these two chapters help you?
- How do the lessons of this passage apply to us today?

## Praying Together

Have one or two people pray for what you have discussed.

# Study 4: Who Will Stand?

## Praying Together

Pray for some of the things you have already discussed since arriving at Growth Group. Share any other concerns and also pray once again for: friends and family who need to know Jesus.

## Handy Hints for Revelation Readers

Before we read our way deeper into Revelation, let's take a step back and set some ground-rules for reading Apocalyptic literature – because that is what Revelation is.

- I. Remember the **original writer** and his situation. John, the disciple, writing from 'prison' on the island of Patmos - confined because of his faithful testimony to Jesus.
- II. Remember the **original readers** and their situation. Revelation is aimed at Christian communities around present day Turkey, as they face the threat of persecution and death for their faith. What is said to them echoes through to our context too.
- III. **Know your enemy.** In Revelation the people of God face huge opposition. There are fearsome "beasts" with multiple heads, horns and crowns. Behind them, "pulling the strings," is Satan himself. But Satan has been defeated already by Christ. Watch the battles play out in John's visions - and see who wins.<sup>3</sup>
- IV. **Reading Symbols.** The general rule is, **if we really need to know the meaning of a symbol, it will be explained in the text!** At other times, there are some simple "rules" we can keep in mind. Here are some examples:
  - a. **Symbols Explained in the text**  
For example the lampstands in 1:12 represent the churches. We are told so in 1:20. Similarly, the elders around the throne are wearing white linen (4:4). If you read ahead in 19:1-8 you discover 'white' is associated with victory, purity, and righteousness. So, back in 4:4 the elders are clothed in righteousness.
  - b. **Number Rules**  
There are seven churches (1:4,11) seven spirits (1:4) and later - seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven signs. The number seven is used to denote **completeness** and **perfection**. There are lots of other numbers, like "12" and its multiples, "1000", and ½. All of them should be read with symbolic meaning in mind.
  - c. **Colour codes**  
You'll notice "colour codes" on the way through Revelation. Most of them are familiar. White is "pure". Gold is usually "royal." Keep an eye out for them.
- V. **Get the big picture, and don't sweat on the details.** **The fact is, you can make sense of the book without having to decode anything!** Because Revelation is a vision, it's packed with word pictures and the best thing to do with any picture is stand back and

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<sup>3</sup> So how do Christ's people win? See Rev 12:11 - They overcame Satan by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony!

look at it. Look at the big picture rather than trying to decode every brush stroke. Time after time, one big picture is totally clear. God wins. And evil, whatever its form, is overthrown. As commentator Vern Poythress says,

*“Revelation is a picture book, not a puzzle book. Don’t become preoccupied with isolated details. Rather become engrossed in the overall story. Praise the Lord. Cheer for the saints. Detest the beast. Long for the final victory.”*



## Revelation 6-8: Seven Seals

With all that in mind read Revelation Chapter 6



1. What does the opening of each of the first four seals represent?
2. The opening of the fifth seal reveals “souls under the altar” in 6:9. Why have they been slain? And what happens to them?
3. When the sixth seal is opened, what happens to the mighty Kings and Princes along with everyone else?
4. What application or relevance do you think first century Christians may have found when they read about the opening of the fifth and sixth seals?

You will notice that there is a pause, before the opening of the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1-2). Let’s read what happens in this interlude. **Read Revelation Chapter 7:1-8:5**

5. What “reassurance” is there in 7:3

This chapter is rich in symbolic language. There’s the famous crowd of 144,000 – which seem to represent the perfect number of faithful Jewish Christians. However, as Gentile Christians we can identify with the other crowd – dressed in white.

6. Who is the “multitude” and what are they doing?

How are their clothes “made white”?

7. Again, what reassurance is there in this vision for Christians undergoing suffering?

What about for us?



#### A SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 6-7

“The four riders on different horses are doing their work here and now. We live in a world where might is right, where people kill each other, where many are starving, and death reigns. This is how life is... right now. We empathise with the cries of the souls beneath the altar: how long O Lord, before you bring judgement on this wrongdoing? When the sixth seal is finally opened, and “the great day of wrath” has finally come, how wonderful it will be to wear the white robe washed in the blood of the lamb - part of the great multitude from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages!”

*Greg Clarke, “The Vision Statement”*

## Revelation 8-11: Seven Trumpets

Well, that’s the seven seals... the opening of the seventh seal brings silence in heaven – at which point seven trumpets are introduced (8:2).

The account of the sounding of the trumpets is similar to the opening of the seals. For example the sounding of each trumpet in the throne room of God initiates waves of judgement on the earth. Just as with the opening of the seventh seal - there is a pause before the sounding of the seventh trumpet in 11:15.

So once again we notice the structured way in which Revelation is written. From chapter 6 to chapter 16, the Revelation unfolds in a series of “sevens”. First, the seven seals on the scroll are opened. Then there are seven trumpets. Later there are seven bowls of God’s wrath. All three sequences of seven speak about God’s judgement (in fact it is possible to view the whole of Revelation as a series of seven sevens - consider the outline on the next page).

Readers who take the “all of history” or “all in the future” view of Revelation assume these events (associated with the seals, the trumpets etc) unfold **one after the other** throughout history, or are about to happen. They try to identify particular points with events in world history – for example, World War II, the US attack on Iraq, and events in the Soviet Union.

Other commentators suggest that the three sequences of seven are **parallel descriptions of life in the world under God’s judgement**. In other words – **viewing the same things from different “camera-angles”**. And so each series of seven events refer to the “nature of things” between now and God’s final victory? **This is the approach these studies adopt**. Turn on the



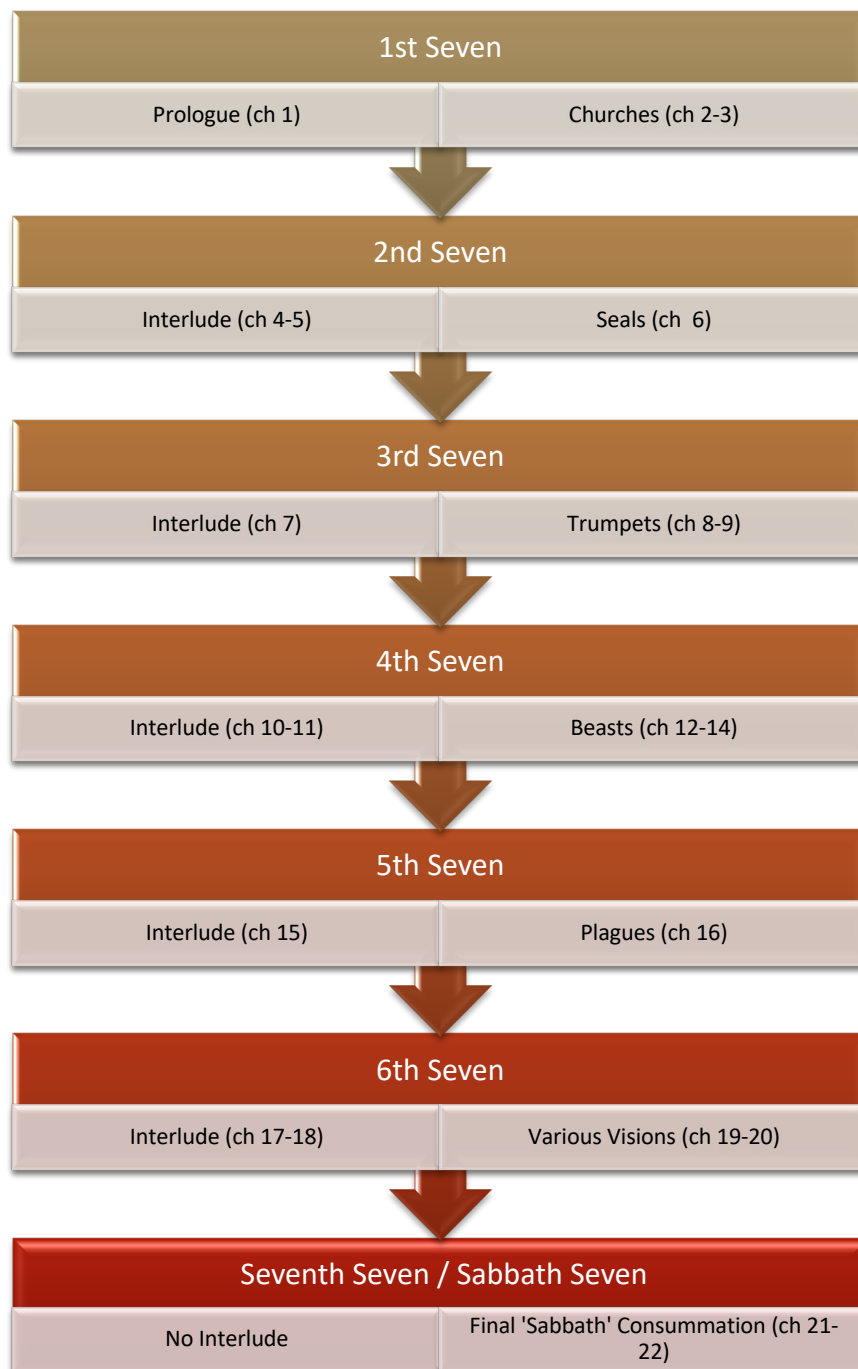
TV, and there's no doubt that the calamities John speaks about are part of our world - military conquests, wars, famines, and disasters. That is part of human existence as we wait for a better heavenly place.

It is Christians living in this real world that John is writing to encourage – urging us to patiently endure, and overcome.

## Who will stand?

Re-read Revelation 7:13-17 and have one or two people pray for what you have discussed.

### The Shape of Revelation



This diagram is adapted from page 209 of Graeme Goldsworthy's *Goldsworthy Trilogy*.

# Study 5: Exodus Again

## Praying Together

Pray for some of the things you have already discussed since arriving. Share other concerns and also pray for: missionaries we support as a Church.

## Revelation 15-16

As we've seen, Revelation is both highly **structured**, and full of **imagery**, and that is no less true of the passages we are looking at now.

A lot of the **images** come **straight out of the Old Testament**. They recall events surrounding the nation of Israel's Exodus from Egypt. If John's first readers understand how their own hard times can be compared with the tribulations of Israel in the Exodus, they will understand how their future hope also matches the future hope of God's people in the past.

Meanwhile, the **structure** of these chapters recall the opening of the seven seals and the sounding of the seven trumpets in earlier chapters. Here we meet "seven bowls" of God's anger, waiting to be poured out on his enemies. Like the seals and the trumpets, the bowls of wrath take us right to the "end point" of history. In other words, we are viewing the same events from another angle.

### For starters

1. There are a number of superstitions and legends about the way Satan can be overpowered. Can you think of any?

What attitude do you think most "superstitious" people have towards Satan?

### Read Revelation 15-16

2. In verse 2, we meet "those who had been victorious over the beast and over the number of his name." The Beast is Satan's representative on earth. How do you think God's people defeat him?

Compare your answer with 12:11, then 2:10 and 3:10.

3. "They sang the song of Moses..." (v3) Look back at the song of Moses in Exodus 15. When did Moses and the people of Israel sing it? How does the situation the Israelites had come from compare with the experience of first century Christians? How does it compare with our experience today? (Take a look at 1 Peter 2:11)



4. Why do you think the “temple” in verse 5 is now described as “the tabernacle of testimony.” (Think about John's emphasis on “testimony” right through Revelation.)

5. There are many other links with the Exodus story. Compare:-

Rev 16:2

Ex 9:8-12

Rev 16:2-3

Ex 7:20-21

Rev 16:10

Ex 10:21

Rev 16:12

Ex 14

Rev 16:13

Ex 8:2ff

Rev 16:21

Ex 9:13ff

*Interesting point: Compare Ex 13:9,16 with Rev 13:16 and 14:1*

What do all these links suggest to you? What “promise” is there in the passage for Christians “in exile” in a hostile world, like the seven churches John is writing to?

Are you ever fearful about future persecution for your faith? How should you change your mindset in the light of this passage?

6. How do people respond to God's punishments? (chapter 16) How does this attitude compare with that of Pharaoh? (See Ex 9:27-35 for a good example.)

**Think about it...**

What is true repentance? See if you can write a definition.

7. The prospect of **Armageddon** worries many Christians, and is the subject of many books. The name comes from the Hebrew words “Har” (Mountain) “of Megiddo.” Historically, it was a famous battle ground - Judges 5:19 records details. What happens this time when the kings and powers of this earth come to do battle with God? Compare the results in Judges 5:19 with the results here in Rev. 16:16-18.
8. What do WE have to fear from Armageddon? Why?
9. What image is being presented in the final verses of chapter 16? What message does this have for us as we live in a godless world today? What should we be doing?

### Prayer

Have one or two people pray for what you have discussed



# Study 6: The Bride and the Lamb

## Praying Together

Pray for some of the things you have already discussed since arriving. Share any other concerns and also pray for: friends and family who need to know Jesus.

## Revelation 19-20

We are rapidly approaching the end of Revelation. This is John's last look into heaven (19:11) before seeing the new heaven and new earth (21:1ff). Here we meet a bride and groom – but they are far from 'ordinary'.



### Meet the Bride

Read Revelation 19:1-10 - a tale of two very different women.\*

1. What points of contrast are there between the woman in verse 2 and the woman in verses 7-8?
2. What is the future of the first woman?
3. Who is this bride? (What can you deduce about her identity from verse 8?)

From the angel's words in verse 10, what extra description do we get of these people? (Assume they are among the "brothers" described)

Looking ahead to 21:1-2, how is the bride FURTHER described?



The bride of Christ is the new Jerusalem - those who have held to the testimony about Jesus against all the odds. But there are some loose ends to tie up.

### Meet the Groom

Read Rev 19:11-21.

4. Who is this dashing figure on the white horse?

#### \*Who is this first Woman?

Could it be that the prostitute of Revelation 17:1 is actually meant to call to mind Jerusalem? That is, un-faithful Israel. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea make the point that Israel has acted like a prostitute, so there is precedent.

As early as 2:9 we were introduced to 'pretend' Jews who are a 'synagogue of Satan'. Perhaps 11:8 can be read as another allusion to Jerusalem – equating her with Sodom and Egypt. With that background coming into chapter 17 we might argue John saw a vision of Jerusalem riding on the back of Rome (17:9-10 assuming the seven hills call to mind Rome). Unfaithful Jerusalem busies herself with killing the saints and prophets (c.f. Luke 11:47-53) – but she is destined to fall at the judgement of God / the Lamb.

This then sets us up for the contrast as we meet the bride in 19:8 and then the new Jerusalem in chapter 21.

Check out these parallel verses to confirm your identification...

Description	
19:11	3:14
19:12	1:14
19:15	1:16
19:16	1:5

5. How is the groom armed?

Compare this with Ephesians 6:17, Heb 4:12, and Rev 2:12 and 16.

6. Read Rev 19:21. Penetrating beneath the symbolism, how is Christ going to strike down the nations?

### Winning the Nations

It's all over for the Beast and his false-prophet sidekick. Now it's time to deal with Satan. Read Revelation 20:1-6. Entire Christian denominations have been formed over views of the "millennium" mentioned here. Usually, they've lost sight of the symbolism in Revelation.

7. Retell the events of these six verses. What happens to Satan?

What can "bound" Satan no longer do?

Read Mark 3:20-27. How does Jesus describe Satan in verse 27?

What does this allow? What would this mean in concrete language?

Read Rev 20:7-15, and think it through. Satan, cast down and bound in Revelation 20 is unable to deceive the nations. Meanwhile, the Christ-figure in John's vision gallops around with his powerful Word, liberating people from Satan's bondage by the gospel. He is "robbing Satan's house" by setting free the nations to hear his Word. All of this happens for the period symbolically called "the thousand years" - a long, long time. A perfect amount of time. **It's the time we live in now!** At the end of the era, there's God's judgement on Satan, on death and on those who prefer Satan's rule. People will be judged according to what they have done - but saved simply by being written in the "Lamb's Book of Life." Responding to the word of Christ is a matter of life and death!

## The Millennium

There are traditionally three positions.

**Post-Millennial** – Jesus will return after a 1,000 year period where the gospel has flourished.

**Pre-Millennial** – Jesus will return from heaven and reign with the saints for 1,000 years on earth.

**A-millennial** – there is no literal 1,000 year reign. Christ reigns through the gospel from the cross to the new creation.

8. If this our era, what should we expect the sword of Christ's word to achieve?
9. Read Eph. 6:10-20. What part are you taking in the battle? What are your fears?

## Prayer

Have one or two people pray for what you have discussed.

# Study 7: A Summary

## Praying Together

Pray for some of the things you have shared since arriving today.

## Revelation – an overview

### The end...

Revelation 21 and 22 are a great way for the Bible to finish! Not only do these chapters bring John's message to the seven churches to a fitting close, picking up many of the themes and promises from chapters 2 and 3; they also reflect the themes and concerns that have developed through the whole Bible.

The "new heavens and the new earth" are like Eden all over again, there's the great river and the tree of life. But now the curse is removed, and God's people live under his perfect rule forever. God's blessing to Abraham is fulfilled as "all the nations" take part in the great heavenly city - God dwells with them in person as he has long promised to do.

That's what we're looking forward to, and it's no surprise that the book concludes with a chorus of voices calling for Christ to come back and put all things right - "Come, Lord Jesus!"

### Read Revelation chapters 21-22



1. As you read, stop and note down **themes** and **ideas** that you remember from earlier chapters.

## And Back to the Beginning

You may not have read the beginning of Revelation since we last looked at it six weeks ago. So let's refresh our memories.



### Read Revelation 1:1-11

- a. Who does verse one say Revelation is about? Is it really?
- b. How do you think Revelation can be a blessing to us?
- c. Who was first intended to read Revelation (v4, 11)?
- d. What does John share in common with those to whom he is writing (v9)?

Discuss how you think the original recipients might have felt as they read and discussed Revelation.

## Think about it all...

Flick through Revelation and your notes/studies (perhaps individually or in pairs). Note down things that you have learned or been reminded of.

*What do you think of 'apocalyptic' literature?*

*If someone asked you what Revelation is about – how would you answer?*

**Pick one or two verses that might form the basis for a prayer, and try writing one.**

## The last word...

Share some of your thoughts with the group.

## Prayer

Have one or two people pray for what you have discussed. See if anyone is willing to pray the prayer they just wrote.