



"8 Great Truths: Snapshots from Jesus in the Book of Revelation"



Teacher's Guide

The Message of the Letter of Revelation Lesson 1: June 6, 2010

Opening Events & Prayer

Icebreaker: How many people have seen "The Lord of the Rings?" This was J. R. Tolkien's imagery of the war between good and evil. It also showed how weak people were used for good, but there was always a danger of being overcome by evil. What are some of the scenes that were used to show this heavenly battle that is waged in the spiritual realm?

1. What kind of book is Revelation?

- *Revelation is written in a literary genre called Apocalyptic that involves the use of extremely vivid images drawn from historical context to show God's care for his people living in a world that opposes them. It was given as a blessing to God's people.*

Read Revelation Chapter 1

2. What is John's purpose in writing?

- *John's primary purpose for the book is to encourage Christians to be confident to live as Citizens of the New Jerusalem in a Fallen Babylon World. This has led to such titles for commentaries as Tom Friskney's Strength For Victory. In essence John's main point in the book is a call to radical discipleship in the face of trial and tribulation. He is telling us that no matter how bad the evil seems around us and how powerful the Fallen Babylon World **SEEMS**, the true reality is that Christians can overcome and conquer.*
- *Here is the point to remember and be excited about. God is ultimately still on his throne, reigning in power, ready to bring this creation to a victorious close. To put it in simple movie imagery terms, it's as if John is saying, "Hang on, keep fighting the battle, the cavalry's coming." In the end, despite all the fantastic imagery, John is encouraging Christians in every age to remain faithful to the calling of Jesus Christ. There is ONE dominate message in the book of Revelation. We are encouraged to be excited about the future regardless of the present because Jesus has already won and nothing can change that fact. Those who are faithful to the end will reign with Jesus forever and ever!*

3. We are to be "Citizens of New Jerusalem living in a Fallen Babylon World." What do you think that statement means?

- *Heaven is on earth right now. The church is the New Jerusalem that is situated right in the middle of a Babylon, the fallen culture that inhabits the world we live in. Our citizenship is not here on earth, but in heaven. We are to live for our Lord right here, right now! We must stick out from the world around us. The images people have of us must be in stark contrast to those of the world around us.*

4. Chapter one: An Overarching Image Revelation Chapter 1:1-20



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- Note that the images presented in Revelation 1, and Revelation in general, are drawn from Old Testament texts and history. Additionally, the images of Revelation 1 are reused by Jesus as He addresses the churches.

5. Who all is involved? - v. 1-3

- Chapter one introduces us to John, the writer. This is John the Apostle, brother of James, and referred to as the disciple whom Jesus loved.
- It is the revelation of Jesus Christ given by the Father for his servants and given by him to John through an angel or messenger, but sometimes Jesus speaks directly to him.
- The reader, the hearer and those who hear and take to heart what is said will receive a blessing.

6. What could that blessing possibly be?

- The knowledge that their hope is real because Jesus' Christ is seen as overcoming evil and establishing His kingdom forever. Satan, death, evil itself is destroyed. This is a historical snapshot of all of human history! Evil loses forever! Those who follow Christ as Lord win forever and ever! It's worth anything we will face on this earth to be faithful as that event unfolds.

7. To whom is John sending this greeting? – v.4-8 (To the 7 churches of Asia)

8. Who is really the source of the letter as described by John?

- Him who was, is, is to come
- From the seven spirits or Sevenfold Spirit -- ultimately this is the Holy Spirit
- From Jesus Christ
- The Faithful witness/martyr
- Firstborn from the dead
- King of Kings

9. He dedicates the letter to the one who does and has done what?

- The One who loves us
- The One who freed us by his blood
- The One who made us a kingdom and priests to serve the Father

10. What is a Doxology? - A spontaneous outburst of praise – What is John's Doxology?

- To him be power and glory forever
- We will see him coming in power to judge and those "of the earth", i.e. those who are not citizens of New Jerusalem saved by Jesus, will mourn because their judgment is at hand.

11. How does Jesus describe Himself?

- Alpha and Omega; He who was and is and is to come; The Almighty



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12. John's introduction to himself and how the vision that he attempts to describe in the book came about v. 9 – 10 Where is John?

- *He was on the Isle of Patmos - legend has it he was exiled here due to his forceful proclamation of the gospel*

13. What is his relationship to those he is writing to in Asia Minor?

- *He is their brother*
- *He is their partner in:*
 - *The suffering*
 - *The Kingdom*
 - *The Patient endurance*
 - *These items are linked in Jesus. If you are in the kingdom, by Jesus, you will suffer at the hands of the Fallen Babylon world and this calls for patient endurance*
 - *The term suffering is interchangeable with the terms tribulation and great tribulation.*
 - *In the Spirit, likely this means he was praying, on the Lord's day*
 - *He hears a Loud voice like a trumpet*

14. What does the voice say? v. 11

- *Write this down*
- *Throughout the book John is alternately told to either write things down or not to*
- *Send what is written to the churches*
- *All 7 churches would have received the entire book probably being read to them, whether or not there were additional written copies given to them is unknown*

15. What did John see when he heard turned to look at the voice? v. 12 - 16

- *7 Golden Lamp stands*
- *Surrounded by the lamp stands he sees*
- *One like a Son of man*
 - *a person who resembles a man in form*
 - *Wearing a white robe with a golden sash*
 - *He has white hair*
 - *He has eyes like fire*
 - *He has feet like burnished bronze*
 - *He has a voice like the ocean's roar*
- *This One*
 - *Is holding seven stars in his hand*
 - *Has a sharp two-edged sword protruding from his mouth*
 - *Face shining like the brightest mid-day sun you ever saw*
 - *He is rather a frightening figure and reminiscent of who Daniel saw in his visions in Daniel 7*
 - *The link to Daniel is primarily a link to that era of history and the images to be drawn from it. Recall that Daniel was exiled to the earthly Babylon and experienced all the*

evil that that kingdom represented to Jews. They had never been the same since. They had worshipped in a Temple that no longer contained the Ark of the Covenant and no longer held the presence of God.

- *The Babylonian captivity was probably the darkest period, emotionally, in Israel's history. They were never the same again. This is why Babylon was such a powerful and appropriate image for John's use in Revelation as a representation of the outworking of Satan's kingdom in contrast to the outworking of God's kingdom in the church, Christians, the New Jerusalem.*

16. What was John's response? - v. 17-20

- *John fell at his feet as though dead*
- *This is a position of complete reverence, but also biblically, a man could not see God and live because of his holiness.*
- *John is comforted by the extension of the right hand*

17. What is Jesus' initial message?

- *Don't be afraid -- Your life will not be required of you*
- *I AM the first and Last and the living one - Recall that God's name given to Moses was Yahweh, "I AM", in other words he is the God who had always lived, God eternal.*
- *The one who died and is alive forevermore - This is clearly Jesus the one who died and rose for the forgiveness of men*
- *He holds the keys to death and Hades - he has the power and authority over death and ultimate judgment*
- *Write both what you see, what is going on now and what will go on in the future.*
- *Jesus the stars and the lamp stands*
- *The stars are the angels, better messengers (see below) of the Churches*
- *The lamp stands are the churches he is about to address*

18. Introduction to the 7 Seven Churches

- *The Focused - Churches faithfully serving laser focused on the kingdom*
- *The Faded - Churches whose light has faded away and is in danger of going out*
- *The Fuzzy - Churches who lost their focus and whose standing is uncertain*

19. The Letters as snapshots of a greater vision

- *The letters represent close-up images of how a local church trying to live as citizens of New Jerusalem in a Fallen Babylon world.*
- *Chapters 4-22 are almost like the camera pulling back to reveal the greater, global, even universal nature of the conflict in which Christians and churches are taking part.*
- *Whether we recognize it or not we are born into a world at war where the forces of God wage war through the church against the forces of Satan and the world.*

20. Structural Considerations for all the letters. Who is the "angel" does the typical transliteration confuse the issue?



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- *Messengers* is a better translation. They were representatives of the churches before God as in the tradition of the synagogue, the one who prayed publically before God on behalf of the gathered worshippers. With this they would have been familiar. (occurs first in 2:1)
- All letters are to be heard by "the churches" plural in 2:7.
- The letters were to be read by John's representative or perhaps the messenger of the church, see Rev. 1:3
- "To he who overcomes" - better to him who is conquering, as Christ spoke of the church conquering the gates of hell or himself conquering death and hades, it is present tense continuing action in 2:7
- When tribulation or great tribulation is mentioned, recognize it is not some future period as John says in 1:9 "I, John, your brother and partner in the **tribulation** and the **kingdom** and the **patient endurance**"
The Holy Bible : English standard version. 2001 (Re 1:9). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

21. Peering Deeper:

- Are there genre's of literature that we have today that parallel the apocalyptic nature of Revelation's style? Is there other literature of this kind in the Bible?
- If you had a vision like John's how difficult would it be for you to convey it to others through words? If you thought words insufficient, what media would you use and why?
- Why is it appropriate that stars represent the messengers of the churches?
- Arguing over Revelation defeats the very purpose of the book. If you were to summarize the main idea of Revelations, what would it be? (Jesus wins! It is a done deal! Nothing in history can change what God has accomplished!)
- If time permits, write your own “DOXOLOGY” to God and share it with the class.