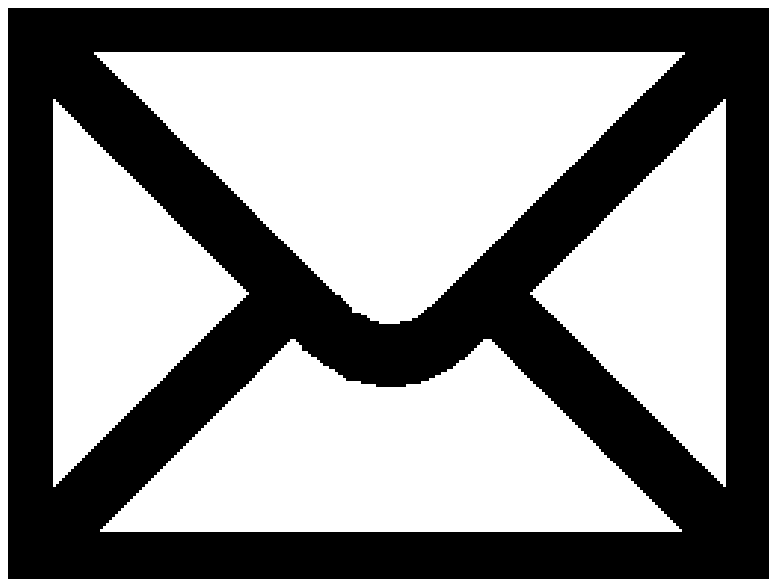


Revelation

Chapters 1 - 5



Revelation 1 - 5

INTEGRATED BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Revelation 1 - 5

How to get best value out of these studies...

Welcome to a new series of New Testament studies in the book of Revelation, chapters 1 to 5.

If you're using these Guides in a Small Group, it is vital that you have done preparatory work **before** you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

If you're doing these studies individually, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with **prayer**, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Understanding Revelation...

Structure...

The book is actually a very long letter designed to be read aloud to the seven churches (1:3-4). The seven short letters within the long letter suggest John must have felt that each church needed to hear Christ's message to the other churches. The book describes two visions; the first to the churches (chs 1-3) the second of the awesome journey God's people must make (chs 4-20) before the New Jerusalem descends upon them (chs 21-22).

There are four episodes within the journey described in chs 4-20. The first describes tyranny (chs 6-7); the second chaos in creation (chs 8-11); the third persecution of believers (chs 12-14); and the fourth the destruction of the earth (chs 15-16). These are four overlapping/concurrent strands of history through which Christ's people must live, commencing from his resurrection (1:5-6), and culminating in his return (1:7).

Content...

There are some popular trends we need to be wary of in understanding Revelation. Despite widespread belief that Armageddon is a major topic in the book, it is only mentioned once (16:16). It is one of many symbols used for the Second Coming of Jesus (16:14). More often the language of battle is employed rather than the depiction of an actual battle.

There is no actual description of Jesus' return – the promise and hope of his coming is there (1:7; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 17 & 20) but no detail about how it will happen. Many of the so-called accompanying events like the destruction of the harlot, the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon followed by the great judgment and coming of the new heaven and earth are held up as the triggers of Jesus' return, yet his return is not even mentioned in these chapters (17-21).

The great end-time battle of God does not lie in the future, but in the past. Revelation leaves us in no doubt: the battle has been fought and won: Jesus is the blood-stained victor (note the past tense references – 3:21; 5:5; 11:15). We access Revelation with the certainty and confidence that Jesus has conquered the twin evils of guilt and death by his own death and resurrection. As a consequence God's kingdom is now a present reality. Without this understanding of what has already taken place we will never understand Revelation.

Prophecy & Symbols...

John wrote to first century churches that were under the dominance and influence of the Roman Empire. Much of the letter employs parallelism between the rule of Caesar/Rome and the rule of God/the heavenly Kingdom.

The godly woman (ch 12 / the bride of Christ (ch 21))	The harlot (ch 17)
The New Jerusalem (chs 21-22)	Babylon the Great (ch 18)
The Lamb slain (5:6, 12; 13:8)	The Beast from the Sea (Roman Emperor)
The worship of God and the Lamb (22:3-4)	Worship of the Beast (13:15-17; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4)
The community of Christ – chastity, truthfulness, endurance (14:4-5)	The community of the Beast – murder, fornication, sorcery, falsehood (21:8; 22:15)

The most urgent challenge by John is that his readers worship God and the redeemer Lamb, not the pseudo and pretentious counterpart, the Roman Emperor, who himself was hailed as a god. Worship was the test of true conviction and loyalty. To worship one was to deny the other. If we say “yes” to God and the Lamb, we must also say “no” to every false alternative.

There are some symbols in the book that help us to understand John’s message: *We must be careful however, not to take them literally.*

Colour white/throne, crown:	conquest & kingly rule
Seven:	God & eternity
Six:	Satan
3 ½ or 42 months (half 7 years):	period of human history cf. God’s eternity
12 & its multiples (24; 144,000):	God’s redeeming of a people (12 tribes & apostles)
10, 1000:	Round figure – great number or long period
lion:	nobility
ox:	strength
eagle:	speed
mankind:	wisdom
lamb:	helplessness
horn:	power
eye:	knowledge
right hand:	authority

The gospel in Revelation...

The book opens with the compelling picture of the sovereign God who has made himself known in the Trinity (1:1-8). The prologue is an extraordinary declaration of God the Father who has sent his son to redeem us, and who speaks by his Spirit so that we may hear and obey and receive the blessings he has given us by his grace.

It is to Jesus Christ that the most attention is given in this book. He has been given the honour of ruling history, and is worshipped as the Father is worshipped (3:21; 5:13). He is first and the last, like his Father (1:8 cf. Ex 3:14) and he is the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9). He is the lion of Judah who has brought about victory through his death, through which has made it possible to enter the Kingdom (5:9). His death rather than solely his divinity bring about Jesus' Lordship. The lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered (5:5) through the cross and defeated all enemies and powers once and for all. John has a very clear framework of the gospel, referring to its focus on Christ throughout the book (1:5; 1:7; 2:5; 2:18; 5:5; 12:5). Unlike many of the other NT books, it speaks little about the life of Christ, focusing instead on Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, rule and coming return. The book offers expressions of worship of the Lamb, which are followed by a response of praise by those who acknowledge Jesus' Lordship (4:8-11). This two beat gospel/worship format occurs regularly throughout the book.

Study 1 **What Must Take Place**
Revelation 1:1-8

1. Who is the author of the Revelation? (v 1)

2. How is the Revelation delivered? (v 1)

3. What does the Revelation concern? (v 1)

4. Who is it for? (vv 3-4)

5. What is the benefit of the Revelation and how is this described? (v 3)

6. What is the timeframe in which the Revelation takes place? (vv 5-7)

7. What authority does the message carry? (v 8)

Study 2 **Who Must Take First Place?**

Revelation 1:9-20

1. If you were seeking to encourage a fellow believer who was 'taking flak' for their faith, what message would you give to encourage them?
2. Why would a book addressed to suffering Christians (v 9) begin with a vision like this?
3. The description of Jesus in vv 12-16 is an extraordinary one. What does it mean for him to be standing among the lampstands?
4. John speaks of 'one like a son of man' (v 13). It is a term Jesus used of himself (Mark 14:62) What does the description signify? (see Daniel 7:9-13)

Study 3 **Forsaken Love**

Revelation 2:1-7

1. How do you measure whether a church is healthy?

Financial Position

Number of Staff

Number of Buildings

Community Activities

Bible Teaching

Modern Facilities

Contemporary Services

Effective Pastoral Care

Number of Members

Number of Services

Welcoming Program

Social Outreach

Large Car Park

Public Reputation

Quality Music

2. Who measures whether a church is healthy?

Denominational Body

Staff

Financial Position

Pastoral Care Team

National Church Life Survey

Treasurer

Gathering Development Teams

Congregation

3. Who is the one qualified to “know” about church health and how is he described in these verses?

2:2

2:8

2:12

2:18

3:1

3:7

3:14

Study 5 Troubling Teaching

Revelation 2:12-17

1. What does it mean for Jesus to speak with a sharp, doubled edged sword?
2. How does Jesus encourage the church in Pergamum? (v 13)
3. What does Jesus 'have against' the church in Pergamum? (v 14-15)
4. What is the antidote for following false teaching? (v 16)
5. How does Jesus respond to false teaching? (v 16)

- iii. In what ways is Jesus tolerant in his warning?

- iv. In what ways is Jesus intolerant in his warning?

- v. How does Jesus encourage the members of the church who have not succumbed to the false teaching?

- vi. What is the reward promised to the enduring believers in Thyatira?

4. Do you think Jesus' judgement is fair?

5. Re-examine the things that try your levels of tolerance. When is it important for God's people to be tolerant, and when is it right to be intolerant?

Study 7 **Neither Hot Nor Cold**

Revelation 3:14-22

1. On a scale of 0 to 38 degrees, what would you say was the current temperature of:
 - your own relationship with God?

 - your small group?

 - your church?

 - your denomination?

2. How does Jesus identify himself to the church? (v 14) Do you think his description bears any particular relevance to the issue he is about to address with the Laodicean church?

3. Compare Jesus' assessment of the church with its self-perception. Even though Jesus "knew their deeds" (v 15), what was at the heart of their problem? (v 17)

4. Jesus continues to use distinctive imagery in his 'counsel' (v 18)? What is his counsel, and why do you think he used such pictures?

5. Jesus calls for earnest repentance. What is the motive he uses to urge this church to take action? (v 19) See also Hebrews 12:7-11.

6. There are at least two promises that result from genuine repentance (vv 21-22). Identify them and when they take effect.

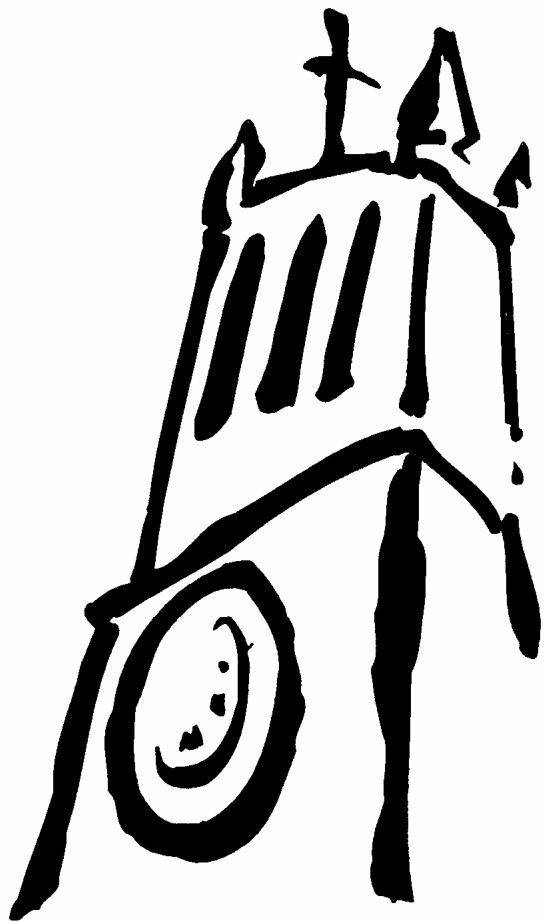
7. In the midst of this discipline what comfort and assurance could the Laodiceans take from Jesus' words?

8. What are the key temptations we face in 21st century Australia that would cause our lives and our churches to be considered luke-warm in Jesus' sight? Identify one and determine what action is required to earnestly repent of such deeds.

7. What is the central reality of the universe according to the revelation John was given? How should we respond to knowing this?

8. How does the nature and purpose of God's power differ from that of Satan?

Notes



Holy Trinity Adelaide
87 North Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000
t: 8213 7300
f: 8212 3611
office@trinity.asn.au
www.trinityadelaide.org.au