

Jesus Unveiled

September 13, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Revelation 1:1-8

Session Outline

1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1-2)
2. Blessed Are Those Who Hear (Revelation 1:3)
3. To The Seven Churches in Asia (Revelation 1:4-8)

Theological Theme

The Almighty triune God always has been and always will be.

Call to Action

Take time this week to reflect once more on the eternal nature of Christ and His kingdom.

Leader Guide

Jesus Unveiled

Introduction

The 1993 movie “The Sandlot” features a group of neighborhood kids who really love baseball. Their fun adventures lead to memorable shenanigans and lifelong friendship, but they land themselves in hot water when they accidentally lose something very valuable.

When the boys need a baseball to strike up a game, Smalls, the new kid in town who still has a lot to learn about baseball, offers to get one from home. The problem? The ball he snags (which belongs to his stepdad, and he absolutely does not have permission to use) is autographed by the legendary Babe Ruth.

Disaster strikes when Smalls hits the ball over the fence in a sandlot homer . . . right into The Beast’s backyard.

The Beast, a huge English Mastiff, has a reputation in the neighborhood. The kids believed he’d eat anything that dared to cross over the fence (kids included). When the boys find out that the lost ball was signed by Babe Ruth, they put their heads together to rescue it (and their friend, who was surely destined to be grounded for the rest of his life).

Afraid of both the dog and his owner, instead of knocking on the door and asking for help, they launch a series of wild ball rescue missions. After vacuums and ropes and pots and buckets all fail, one of the boys, Benny, steps up. He laces up a pair of PF Flyers (guaranteed to make a kid run faster) and hops the dreaded fence. When The Beast finds Benny in his backyard, the dog chases Benny (and the ball) throughout town. But eventually, the boys find out the Beast isn’t actually vicious or scary. He’s harmless and friendly and so is his owner.¹

Like the boys in the movie, sometimes we build things up in our minds in a way that makes them seem unapproachable when they actually aren’t. One place we can do this is in reading the Bible and specifically when it comes to the book of Revelation. This book can feel mystical and confusing and we may avoid studying it, but the truth is we don’t have to be scared. Over the next ten weeks, we will be digging in to learn God’s wisdom from this book.

? What has been your experience with the book of Revelation?

? What are some questions about this book you'd like to learn more about?

Session Summary

In this first chapter of Revelation, we'll meet the author and the audience of the letter, and take hope in the Almighty and eternal nature of our God.

As we approach Revelation, let's be okay with what we understand and what we don't. You won't understand everything, and that's okay. Our understanding of Scripture comes from the Holy Spirit, not from our own ability, and He gives us understanding little by little. Ask God to help you understand. He has something to teach you, and you can be sure it's going to be good.

Christian believers everywhere faced strong persecution, and John wrote to encourage them with the assurance they still remained in God's presence. He greeted them with the typical greeting of "grace and peace." However, John said the source of these qualities was "One who is, who was, and who is coming." The three tenses identified to the first-century readers that this Person was God.

In threatening times Christians can take heart that God is always with them. No matter how desperate the times appeared, John knew that God transcended time and stood ready to reassure those who follow Him. John described believers as Jesus' "servants" or "slaves" (v. 1), and also as "priests" (v. 6). John also identified Jesus in three ways: (1) the faithful witness, a reference to Jesus' ministry as a prophet; (2) the firstborn from the dead, a phrase referring to his death and resurrection; and (3) the ruler of the kings of the earth. With these descriptions, John encourages us to imitate Jesus's faithfulness, have hope in eternity, and remember that God's eternal kingdom is bigger than anything we face in this world.

1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1-2)

? What do these verses say the purpose of this revelation is?

? Who is it the revelation of? How should that shape our approach to this book?

To the Seven Churches

Written to "the seven churches" of the Roman province of Asia, John's work is a "revelation" of "what must soon take place." Given to John by Jesus Christ, it is a message committed by God to the Lord to show to His "servants." John wrote his prophecy in the form of a letter, beginning with a greeting of grace and peace from each person of the triune God. The theme of John's work is clear: the Lord God, the Almighty One Himself, has guaranteed the final vindication of the crucified Jesus before all the earth. The victory of Christ is assured. His people will rejoice in their final deliverance, but those who have rejected Him will mourn His coming, for it will mean judgment for them.

Revelation was written by the apostle John (v. 1), who was one of the Twelve (Matthew 4:21-22; John 13:23). Jesus's redemptive work on the cross happened around AD 33,² and Revelation was written in the mid-90s,³ around 60 years after Jesus ascended into heaven. Many scholars believe that the church saw persecution and pressure to conform to idol worship at the hands of the tyrannical Roman emperor Titus Flavius Domitian (AD 81-96⁴).⁵ Church tradition holds that Domitian exiled the apostle John to the Greek island of Patmos (a penal colony of Rome) because of his faith, and this is where the book of Revelation was written.

Revelation is apocalyptic literature, a genre that heavily uses symbolism to reveal things about God's actions and future judgment. The very first word of the book in the original Greek text is "apokalupsis," the Greek word from which we get the English word "apocalypse." When we hear this term, it might call up visions of fire and catastrophe from epic blockbuster movies, but the Greek here simply means "to uncover, unveil, or reveal."⁶

This is the whole point of the book: to reveal. Yet, we don't approach this book as those trying to decode the events of the end times. We approach this book as worshipers seeking to know our Savior more.

The primary point of this revelation is featured in the very first verse: the resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ. He is both revealing and being revealed. The victorious Jesus is central to the action in Revelation.

God sent an angel to show John "what must soon take place" (v. 1). John's faithful testimony of Jesus Christ is what landed him at Patmos in the first place (Revelation 1:9).



What has been revealed to you about Jesus? What is our role in revealing Him to more people?

2. Blessed Are Those Who Hear (Revelation 1:3)



How are we blessed according to this verse?



What near time was John referring to in this verse?

We are still awaiting the complete fulfillment of the events referenced in the book of Revelation, so "the time is near" doesn't mean that these events would come to pass soon as we might expect. Jesus is coming back, and while Revelation has tempted many an individual to guess when this might take place, the truth is that we do not and will not know.

"Now concerning that day and hour no one knows—neither the angels of heaven nor the Son—except the Father alone." —Matthew 24:36

Spending too much time speculating on this timing which God has made clear is not ours to know is not useful and may even distract us from God's purposes for us in the present. Our response should be to live faithful, obedient lives now, recognizing we aren't guaranteed tomorrow.

This verse pronounces a blessing on the one who receive the words of this book and those who “keep what is written in it” (v. 3). Taking in God’s Word carries a blessing, and so does obedience. This verse should give us a sense of urgency. We don’t know how much time we have on the earth and should take the words of the Bible seriously.



How would you live differently if you truly believed Jesus could return at any time?

This verse is one of seven blessing statements found in Revelation. Seven is a number of perfection (of fullness and completeness) in the Bible, and we’ll see this number repeated throughout our study of Revelation.⁷

3. To The Seven Churches in Asia (Revelation 1:4-8)



What does this passage indicate about the purpose of this letter?



What can we learn about Jesus from these verses?

These verses indicate the sender and the intended recipients of this letter: “the seven churches in Asia” (v. 4). “Asia” here identifies the Roman province where bodies of believers had been planted and growing since Jesus’s ascension.⁸ We’ll learn more about these specific churches in our study next week as they are all addressed by name in chapters 2 and 3.

In this passage, John reminded the (perhaps persecuted) readers of the work and person of the victorious Christ. God is eternal. He has always existed and will always exist (“the one who is, who was, and who is to come,” v. 4). The seven spirits John references in verse 4 may refer to the seven angels he referred to later in the book of Revelation (1:20; 8:2) or possibly to the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2).

John described Jesus as prophet (“the faithful witness”), priest (“the firstborn from the dead”; firstborn being a title of honor) and king (“ruler of the kings of the earth”; Jesus is the King of kings) in verse 5.⁹ Jesus will exert the authority he referenced in Matthew 28:18 at His second coming.¹⁰

Continuing, John said Jesus loves the church (note the present tense here: Jesus loves us actively and presently, not in the past tense). Jesus offers the gift of salvation, freedom and forgiveness for our sins, through His redemptive work on the cross (“has set us free from our sins by his blood” v. 5). Note that the setting free John described isn’t automatic. We are saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus. We must first to believe. Jesus also “made us a kingdom” (v. 6). And we were chosen to be “priests” (v. 5), serving God in the world where we find ourselves (1 Peter 2:9).

The next verses feature a compilation from Old Testament texts, some of the almost 300 Old Testament references in the book of Revelation. It is vital to keep in mind what God had already revealed in the Old Testament, as we seek to interpret this prophetic book.¹¹

*"I continued watching in the night visions,
and suddenly one like a son of man
was coming with the clouds of heaven.
He approached the Ancient of Days
and was escorted before him."*

—Daniel 7:13

Looking Ahead

Read the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 (don't skip the footnotes!) before you meet next week.

"Then I will pour out a spirit, of grace and prayer on the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem, and they will look at me whom they pierced. They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly for him as one weeps for a firstborn." —Zechariah 12:10

This event that Daniel described would be witnessed by the whole world (Daniel 7:14), and "those who pierced him" (v. 7) will mourn. Matthew 24:30 used the same Biblical references, so John was likely echoing a teaching of Jesus.¹²

Our text today ends with an important reminder of God's character. He is "the Alpha and the Omega" (the beginning and end of the Greek alphabet, v. 8). He was in the beginning, and He will always be. He is eternal, able to do all things, and almighty. This is true even in times of persecution, when everything feels off. God remains almighty and on His throne. There is great hope in this.



How does it give you hope to remember God is eternal and over all things?

Conclusion

This letter to a persecuted church is one of great hope. John wanted the churches in Asia to know that though Christ had died for their sins, He lived and would one day return to set things right in their troubled world. He also reminded them of God's eternal nature and His great power, a power no one can ultimately resist. John's assurance that everything would work out in the end was rooted in faith in the One who loves us and has set us free from our sins.

Though the original audience lived under Roman oppression, Jesus had already won. He loves us and sets us free when we accept the gift of salvation. He has established His kingdom, and He is coming back to reign. The eternal God is Almighty, even when worldly powers make us feel helpless. The seven churches took hope in the Almighty nature of God, and we can, too.



What stands out to you from this first week of our study on Revelation?



What does today's passage teach us about Jesus and His relationship with us?



Who can you share with about the love of Jesus?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for giving understanding of His Word. Ask for His help as we further study the book of Revelation. Ask Him to teach your group what He wants you to learn and for help accepting the things you don't understand.

Memory Verse

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." —Revelation 1:8

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in Revelation* by Daniel Akin
- *Be Victorious* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Revelation for You* by Tim Chester



Historical Context of Revelation

Purpose

Much of the book of Revelation focuses on events at the end of the age (eschatology), more so than any other book in the Bible. But it also focuses on practical choices that believers and unbelievers must make in the course of their lives that have far-reaching consequences at the end.

Author

The traditional view holds that the author of Revelation is the apostle John, who wrote the Fourth Gospel and the three letters of John. Evidences for this view include the following. (1) The writer referred to himself as “John” (1:4, 9; 22:8). (2) He had personal relationships with the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4, 11; 2–3). (3) His circumstances at the time of writing (1:9) matched those of John the apostle (who was placed in Asia Minor from about AD 70 to 100 by reliable historical sources from the second century AD). (4) The saturation of the book with Old Testament imagery and echoes implies a Jewish writer, like John, operating in overwhelmingly Gentile Asia Minor.

Setting

The initial audience that received the book of Revelation was a group of seven local churches in southwest Asia Minor (1:11; 2–3). Some of these congregations were experiencing persecution (2:9–10, 13), probably under the Roman emperor Domitian (ruled AD 81–96). Others had doctrinal and practical problems (2:6, 13–15, 20–23). Also behind these surface problems was the backdrop of unseen but powerful spiritual warfare (2:10, 14, 24; 3:9).

Special Features

The resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ revealed himself to the apostle John, who had been imprisoned “on the island called Patmos” (1:9). Christ’s twofold purpose was: (1) to “unveil” a spiritual diagnosis for seven of the churches in Asia Minor with which John was familiar (chaps. 2–3), and (2) to reveal to John a series of visions setting forth events and factors related to the end times (chaps. 4–22).

Extended Commentary

Revelation 1:1-8

1:1 Revelation, which means “unveiling,” translates the Greek word *apokalupsis*. Its use here indicates that the book of Revelation is apocalyptic literature, like Daniel in the OT. The revelation of Jesus Christ could mean the unveiling about Jesus, the unveiling by him, or both. His servants refers to all Christians.

1:2 Standing true to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ caused John to be exiled to the island of Patmos (v. 9). Christians have been persecuted throughout church history for their fidelity to Christ. Only by failing to stand do we escape persecution.

1:1, 3 Must soon take place and the time is near have been used by critics to claim that Revelation’s prophecies have failed since they have not been fulfilled. However, Christ’s imminent return does not carry with it a timetable but communicates a sense of urgency that is an integral part of the NT message as expressed by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles. Christ’s first coming marked the time when history entered its last phase before eternity. Paul expressed the urgency this entails: “See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!” (2Co 6:2).

1:3 The reading of this prophecy carries with it a promise of blessing. The reading in view is not just mental. The reader must also keep (i.e., “take to heart” and apply) what is written. This is the first of seven significant “blessing” statements or beatitudes in the book of Revelation (14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). Seven, the number of perfection, will recur throughout this book.

1:4 The naming of the author and audience, plus a characteristic greeting (grace and peace), indicate that Revelation has similar form as other NT letters. It is not some exotic, otherworldly work that cannot readily be understood. The one who is, who was, and who is to come (v. 8) means that God not only exists now, but always has existed and always will. The seven spirits before his throne may refer to: (1) “the angels of the seven churches” (v. 20; chaps. 2–3), (2) other angels seen in the book (e.g., 8:2), or (3) the fullness of the Holy Spirit described in Is 11:2.

1:5–6 Jesus is the faithful witness. The firstborn from the dead looks back to his resurrection, the guarantee of the future resurrection of all believers and unbelievers (20:4–5; 1Co 15:20, 23). Though Christ has all the authority to be universal ruler now (Mt 28:18), he will not fully exert it until his second coming (Rv 19:11–21). Set us free from our sins by his blood does not mean we are automatically saved by Christ’s death on the cross, as if all humanity is saved regardless of their beliefs. Revelation stresses the need for repentance (9:20–21) and a faith-response to the gospel (14:6–7). The wording here may mean that believers are already a kingdom and priests in this lifetime (1Pt 2:9).

1:7 This collage of Scripture from Dn 7:13 and Zch 12:10 expresses the theme for Revelation. The reference to mourn is sometimes understood as the response of those for whom it is too late to be saved. But the context of Zch 12:10 indicates the mourning will be true saving repentance, even for those who pierced him (i.e., the Jews; see notes at 7:4–8; 11:13).

1:8 Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, emphasizing that God is the beginning and the end. On the one who is ... and who is to come, see note at v. 4.¹³

References

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