

SMALL GROUP GUIDE



THE
GENA
OF THE WORLD

A SERIES ON END TIMES

CIRCLE 01/03: **THE LAMB OF GOD**

Have you ever taken a really good nap? You know, the kind that feels like a time machine into the future. You wake up groggy, foggy, and unaware of what day is on the calendar.

Once, when I was young, I took one of those intense naps. Exhausted from a soccer game, I collapsed onto my bed. Hours passed before I woke up to see darkness outside my window. Scared of missing dinner, I ran downstairs to look for my mother. She wasn't there. I looked for my dad or brother, but they weren't home either. Suddenly, the silence of my house became scary.

I remembered a book I read where everyone disappeared from earth to kick off the apocalypse. A viral book series called "Left Behind" shared the terrifying tale of people who were — well — left behind after the rapture. What is the rapture? This is the moment when Christians are called home before the terrible events of Revelation (Revelation 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). The rapture is an expression of God's mercy, but it still terrified me as a young child trying to make sense of faith.

Back to the story. At that moment, I was convinced that I was left behind to suffer through the final judgment of man. Standing at the kitchen window in my soccer uniform, shock swept over me. What was I going to do? How would I fight in a war? Did I accidentally take the mark of the beast? My mental breakdown was interrupted by a wonderful sight. Like a sign from heaven, I saw my mom's red van pull into the driveway. It turns out it wasn't the end of the world. My mom was just getting groceries.

I know this seems silly. But, as a kid, I was terrified of the end times. The earth's future, as predicted in Revelation, consumed my imagination. To summarize the Book of Revelation, things get really bad before they get really good. When you're reading Revelation, things will seem scary. The end times are marked by chaos and conflict on a universal scale. These visions aren't in scripture to scare us; they're actually there to soothe us.

Introduction to Revelation

The book of Revelation is unlike any other book in the New Testament. Similar to a few Old Testament prophets like Daniel and Ezekiel, Revelation doesn't report on the past. Instead, it foresees the future. Prophetic visions flashed before the eyes of the Apostle John while on the Island of Patmos. He was not there on vacation; he was actually there to die. His time on the island was a form of ancient torture. John was imprisoned on a deserted island due to the extreme persecution that plagued the early church.

The book of Revelation is part of a literary genre called "Apocalypse." Based on an Old English word, *apokaluptein*, this means to "uncover or reveal." It's like the future of humanity is hidden under a sheet, and the Apostle John snatches the fabric in a series of visions to uncover our future.

John's complicated book compiles complex visions of Christ's future victory. These prophecies discuss the imminent battle between God and Satan, good and evil, and heaven and hell. Visions of monsters, beasts, and war pack every page, but they're not solely designed to be deciphered like a prophetic puzzle. Revelation offers us so much more than that. It assures us that victory belongs to Jesus.

Yes, things will get wild. Hell will break loose, and heaven will rise. But after the smoke clears and the battle ends, we win in the end. Satan will be defeated. God's Kingdom will be established. The book of Revelation claims a clear message using complex imagery — Jesus reigns supreme now and forever. It's not about horror; it's about hope.

Throughout our study of Revelation, we will see three powerful visions of Jesus. As we kick off the study, let's explore how John envisions Jesus in chapter five -- as a lion and a lamb. What is the meaning behind these metaphors? Let's explore what John sees.

READ: Revelation 5:5-9

Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and

seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Jesus is the Passover lamb that brings peace (Rev. 5:6)

Jesus is called "lamb" 28 times in the book of Revelation. Why was John so obsessed with seeing Jesus as a lamb? It's simple. Lambs were central to the Jewish faith. It's specifically evident during an event called Passover. This celebration remembered Israel's escape from slavery in Egypt. How did God do it? By sending ten plagues to rock Pharaoh's kingdom. The last and most devastating was when death came upon every household in Egypt except the people who had spread the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their homes (Exodus 12:12–13; 21–23 ; 29- 46). Death did not enter the homes of people who were covered by sacrificial blood.

Passover foreshadowed the True Passover Lamb. This principle is all over scripture. John the Baptist announced Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Peter calls Jesus an "unblemished lamb" (1 Peter 1:19). And Jesus was even killed during the Passover Feast (Mark 14:12–25). While interesting, what does this mean for us? In the same way that judgment passed over the houses in Egypt, death will pass over anyone who is covered by the blood of Jesus.

That's why we must start here. Revelation foretells death and sorrow on a massive scale, but we don't have to worry about it. Why? Because we are protected by the blood of the perfect Lamb. Do not despair; you are safe in your Savior's hands.

Jesus is a roaring lion that brings justice (Rev. 5:5, 5:9)

There is no question that Revelation's words are worrisome. Here is some good news, though. Because of Jesus, you won't have to experience any of it. In chapter five, John sees a vision of a royal court with elders and creatures surrounding Jesus. They all begin to sing, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and

language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). John's language is packed full of parallels. He calls Jesus both a lamb who brings peace and a lion who fights for justice.

All of this imagery reads like a royal banquet. Do you see it? Jesus is surrounded by guard animals and a council. At the center of this scene is a scroll with seven seals on it. Like the sword in the stone or Cinderella's slipper, there is only one person who is worthy to break open the scroll to unleash the judgment in Revelation. It's Jesus. Christ seats Himself on the throne and breaks open the seals. This is a central shift in the story of Revelation. Jesus has gone from Lamb to lion. He's now God's ordained warrior who will bring justice to all humanity.

John's vision gets even more extravagant. He writes, "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice, they were saying, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain" (Revelation 5:10-11). The whole royal court begins to worship Jesus, the one worthy to break the scroll and usher in God's final judgment. Celebration intensifies when thousands of angels join in on the song. Can't you just feel the power jumping off the pages? A legion of angels perform a concert in the heavens with one central theme: Jesus is worthy.

Jesus, the lion and the Lamb, is worthy of praise.

The English word "worship" is derived from Old English *worthscipe*, meaning "worthiness." Simply put, worship means to give something of worth. Our worship is not simply giving worth to "something," but "some One." We are called to *worthscipe* the Almighty, the Lamb, the Lion, and the Supreme King of the Universe — Jesus. When we truly grasp who Christ is, all He has done, and what He's doing in the future, worship is our only natural response.

When everything seems like it's falling apart, worship Jesus. He is worthy and will make things right. When injustice is all over the place, worship Jesus. He is the roaring lion who will ensure justice wins. When it feels like sin is dragging you back in, worship Jesus. He is the Lamb who secured eternity for you. When the words of Revelation

seem frightening, worship Jesus. He has ensured that you will not have to experience the apocalypse.

Most people assume you would kick off a study on Revelation with complex symbols and visions of war. Yes, that is certainly coming, but there is a theme that's far more prevalent — worship. Almost every time John gets a vision of heaven, God's throne, or King Jesus, it's always marked with worship. Revelation is an invitation. Jesus is worthy of your worship. Jesus is worthy to open the scroll. Jesus is worthy of our loudest song. Jesus alone is worthy of praise on a universal scale.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: What is one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q2: Why is Jesus called "The Lamb?"

Q3: Jesus was called "The Lamb" 23 times in Revelation. Why do you think that's significant?

Q4: Why is Jesus called "The Lion?"

Q5: A major theme of Revelation is worship. What does that mean for us today?

Application: How can you find ways to worship Jesus outside of church this week? Commit to worshipping in that way every day this week.

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Daniel 12:1-13

2 Peter 3:8-13

Revelation 1:4-8

Daniel 11:5-4

Ezekiel 20:4-9

Matthew 23:37-39

Daniel 11:32

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present.

Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

CIRCLE 02/03: **THE WARRIOR KING**

What images come to mind when you think of Jesus? We often think of Christ in a pretty passive light. We imagine him cuddling a baby sheep, peacefully washing feet, and encouraging children to gather around while he teaches about faith. All of these are spot on, but here is the amazing thing. Jesus, as a person, is deeply layered. He is both peace-loving and justice-seeking. He is able to forgive and able to fight. He's your personal friend and the Devil's ultimate foe. He made demons tremble and darkness flee.

Jesus is the most multidimensional figure ever to live. We get beautiful snapshots of Jesus bringing hope to a hurting world throughout the gospels. In Revelation, we experience another dimension of Christ. We get to see Jesus as a vigilant warrior who rises up to destroy Satan and obliterate evil. Take a look at one of the final Apocalyptic visions of John in Revelation 19.

Revelation 19:11-16

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.

How does this fit with the conventional perception of Christ? Can you wrap your head around it? Towards the end of Revelation, John looks up to heaven to see Jesus galloping through the clouds on a white stallion with eyes that blaze like fire. He notices a tattoo on his thigh that reads, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." An angelic army marches behind sword-swinging Jesus with weapons, armor, and clear orders to defeat darkness at all costs. His stark white robe is covered in blood, and he wields a razor-sharp sword with Satan's name on it.

This vision may make you a little uncomfortable, but context is important here. Jesus had to come as a warrior because the world was at war. Not just any war, either. Planet earth will find itself in the biggest war of all time. Jesus will charge down from heaven to put a stop to the violence and seal the fate of the Evil One.

The Apostle John uncovers some very unsettling visions throughout most of Revelation. We don't know exactly what they mean (neither did he). Regardless, we should broadly examine what has happened between Revelation 5 and Revelation 19. There is a lot of conflict in those complex chapters. This context will inform our vision of Christ as the Warrior King. Most of these stories follow a central figure — the Antichrist. This figure, pure evil embodied, will stand against everything that God stands for. Take a look at the chaos the Antichrist causes:

- The Antichrist comes to power and institutes the mark of the beast (Rev 13:1, 14-16).
- The Antichrist is killed and raised to life (Rev 13:3-4).
- God appoints two witnesses to perform miracles and preach. The witnesses are murdered by the Antichrist (Rev 11:3-13).
- Plagues ravage earth (Rev 16:1-21). A plague of sores sweeps over the world, water turns into blood, and everything dies. Then earth experiences a severe drought, earthquakes shake and demolish cities, and hailstorms with 100-pound stones fall to the ground.
- The Antichrist assassinates world leaders and moves toward a one-world government (Rev 17:12-13).
- Finally, the Battle of Armageddon breaks out (Rev 16:16-19).

Revelation chapter nineteen introduces us to Jesus the Warrior King. In this powerful passage, Jesus appears as the perfect King appointed to make things right. There are three characteristics that distinguish Jesus from any other ruler.

Jesus is a perfect King (Rev. 19:14)

John made an intentional choice when highlighting Jesus's outfit. Unlike other kings dressed in royal garments, Jesus wore a white robe. This represents his perfection. Jesus reigns as the perfect King, which is extraordinary news for us. Since Jesus is

perfect, that means that He is wholly trustworthy, just, and will always fight for the good of His people.

Do your life circumstances feel like an enemy army is closing in on you? Jesus will defeat them. Do you feel like injustice is all around you? Jesus will make things right. Have difficult experiences wronged you, hurt you, or harmed you? Jesus is the perfect King who will rule with righteousness. Justice is coming.

Jesus is the King of All Kings (Rev. 19:16)

Jesus is supreme over every nation, every ruler, every general, every prime minister, and every governor. No power comes even close to King Jesus. Think of the most powerful person on earth. They may have wealth, influence, and lots of Instagram followers. Jesus is supreme over them.

In the scheme of God's Kingdom, they are just names on the pages of history. Even the mightiest people are pawns in the chess game of God's story. We are blessed to serve the supreme King. No person, position, or regime can even come close. Serve God and God alone.

Jesus is a victorious King. (Rev. 19:19-20)

At the end of Revelation 19, John prophesied a certain victory. Jesus, upon his white horse, waged battle against the Beast and his army. John explained, "the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur" (19:20). What does this mean? I'll sum it up. Jesus wins in the end.

Pastor Max Lucado shared a parable to illustrate this section of scripture. He wrote about a wise general whose army was terrified of their impending battle. They were scared, and they were shaking in their boots. With kindness in his eyes, their general assured them that he had a secret weapon. It wasn't a plane or a grenade. It was a coin.

He told his men of a prophetic coin that would predict their victory. He explained that if it landed on heads, they would win, but if it landed on tails, they would lose. Before

every battle, he'd flip the coin and the soldiers would stare as it flew up into the air and down into his hand. He'd reveal the coin to show that it was heads. The army was going to win.

His troops marched into battle with their heads held high, knowing that victory was certain. After a string of victories, one of the soldiers asked to investigate the magic coin. His eyes grew wide when he saw something stunning. It was double-sided, showing heads on each surface. The outcome of the coin flip was assured, but so was their victory. In Revelation, we see that Jesus has a double-sided coin too. Our victory is certain. There is no possible outcome where we don't come out on top.

That is the gift of Revelation. This amazing book assures our victory. We get to take a look at the final battlefield and know that our leader comes out on top. The darkness may fight dirty and look scary, but we will win in the end. After the battle settles and the smoke lifts, we will see the Warrior King Jesus standing over the rubble — triumphant.

Satan will fall. Jesus will stand victoriously. We are assured of our victory, so march forward. It's a lot easier to face life's battles when we know that our victory is already sealed. There is no fight, struggle, or adversary strong enough to change our guaranteed outcome.

Whatever foes you are facing, I can assure you that you're going to win in the end. Why? Because Jesus is our Warrior King. Don't try to fight your battles alone. Follow closely behind Jesus because He's undefeated, undefeatable, and He will refuse to lose. March forward.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q2: What pictures come to mind when you think of Jesus? How does Revelation 19 fit in with your initial thoughts?

Q3: Jesus is both peace-seeking and justice-serving. Why should that encourage us?

Q4: We live in a world where rulers and leaders fail often. Why is it an important distinction that Jesus is perfect and pure?

Q5: Our victory in Jesus is secured and ensured. What should that mean for us as we face battles in life?

Application: How can you draw closer to Jesus when your life feels like a battle?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Daniel 10:1-21

Daniel 11:1-4

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Ephesians 6:12

Daniel 9:1-27

1 Kings 9:6-9

Ephesians 2:1-5

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present.

Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

CIRCLE 03/03: **THE RESTORER**

After college, I spent some time teaching English in China. It was one of the most formative experiences of my life. It changed me. It wasn't like the kind of change you get from textbooks or documentaries either; it felt like falling in love. The lovely people of that nation captured my heart and won my affection. After that, it was almost like there were two versions of me — pre-China and post-China.

Towards the middle of my teaching contract, we loaded up into a steaming hot bus and began a journey outside the big city. At this point in my short career, I had only experienced major metros that looked like concrete theme parks. I had spent most of my time in Macau, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou. These cities contain tens of millions of people, a few dozen Starbucks, and lightning-fast public metros. Every moment buzzed with electricity and excitement. I wasn't remotely ready for what was ahead of me.

As the skyline disappeared behind us, our bus passed miles upon miles of nothingness. The scenery was just rice fields, dirt roads, and makeshift houses. Even though we were only twenty miles outside the city limits, it looked like another world. Our bus turned towards a sign with an English translation under the Mandarin script. It read, "South China Leprosy Colony."

Stepping off the bus, I was greeted by dozens of people plagued with leprosy. The disease had caused permanent disfiguration of their faces, arms, and legs. However, they all displayed the biggest smiles I've ever seen. Why were they so happy? Due to the dedicated work of some foreign missionaries, the leprosy colony experienced a revival a decade ago. These people knew Jesus, and you could tell.



In that village, I befriended a man named Pong. He was a skilled artist, even though the disease wreaked havoc on his hands and arms. He would tape brushes to his disfigured hands to create some of the most beautiful calligraphy I've ever seen. I asked him to make one of his gorgeous drawings for me to take home to remember him. Being a believer, he asked me which Bible verse I wanted to be translated. I

suggested a verse from Revelation.

With tears falling onto the pages and a smile that illuminated the room, Pong skillfully scripted the verse with beautiful penmanship. I could tell that this verse filled him with joy, hope, and an exhilarating burst of optimism. What verse was it? It was Revelation 21:5.

READ: Revelation 21:3-5a

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." "He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

When Pong wrote these words, he lit up like a firework. The promise of this passage was particularly powerful for him. He was an outcast from society, but Jesus was going to make all things new. He was disfigured, but Jesus was going to heal him. By all sociological standards, he was hopeless, but this verse gave him hope. He laughed with each brushstroke.

Revelation 21:5 is one of the most hope-filled verses in the entire Bible. It's hard to watch things grow old, see lives shattered due to disease, and say goodbye to loved ones. We can't change this reality, but God will. God doesn't just reform situations. He restores situations.

Jesus, at the right time, will make everything new. I will get to play scrabble with my late grandmother. You will be able to share a meal with all your loved ones. There will be no sickness, death, evil, or suffering. Everything is going to be made new. While many people perceive the message of Revelation as horrible, it's actually very hopeful.

In this passage, we see three jaw-dropping truths about our future in New Heaven.

Heaven will come to earth.

“God’s dwelling place has come to His people” (Revelation 21:3). Look at this passage. The "New Heaven" is not in the sky; it's on the ground. It's on earth. God has construction plans to build a utopia right here on our native planet. Look out your window. It's all going to be perfect in God's Future Kingdom. I am not sure what it will look like, but I imagine angels in hardhats building the perfect city in every part of the world. "Heaven Construction, Inc" is going to show up and build perfect cities for you, me, and possibly our pets.

I plan on visiting the new-and-improved city in South China to see my late friend Pong. I cannot wait to see what God, the perfect architect, does with the cities that I have grown to love. Can you imagine a perfect New York, Paris, or Dubai? You can eat a croissant in Paris without worrying about calories. You can scale mount Everest without worrying about exhaustion. You can travel to new lands without any concern for safety, language barriers, or airport security. I don't know about you, but I can't wait. Heaven will be right here on earth, and we get to dwell here for eternity. God promised, "I am making all things new."

There will be no sorrow or pain.

Keep in mind that the world will be a dark and difficult place before this happens. All of our nations will likely be in nuclear rubble. God is going to restore our land and then restore our souls. His restoration project is deeply personal. Just like our cities will be rebuilt and gilded with gold, God will rebuild our lives, homes, families, and hearts.

Pain? It won't exist. Sorrow? Zero. Tears? Not unless you're laughing until you cry. Death? It won't even be possible. All of the pain of your life will be a murky memory when God's Kingdom comes down to earth. God promised, "I am making all things new."

Everything will be made new.

You saw this last point coming, didn't you? It's worth repeating because it's the most awe-inspiring phrase I've ever read. Imagine an elaborate treasure chest crusted in gems. It looks like pirates may have hidden it on an island somewhere with a lot of parrots and sand. Within that ornamental chest is everything you have ever loved.

In New Heaven, you will get to open up that chest and see that everything in there is restored. Envision those people in the picture. They'll be standing right there. Imagine that high school jersey. You will be able to put it on and play a perfect game.

God is going to make all things new, including you. You will get to run without growing weary. You will be able to experience the fullest possible life in perfect unity with God. You will worship every moment of every day because everything God touches overwhelms you with His majesty and glory. God promised, "I am making all things new." The old is gone and the new is here. Everything is going to be new — including you.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q2: Read Revelation 21:3-5. What words or phrases stick out to you about this passage? What is your favorite part?

Q3: If you had a treasure chest to remember all the things and people that matter to you, what would be in there?

Q4: What do you think New Heaven is going to be like? What will be the first thing you'd want to do there?

Q5: How should we respond to John's teaching about New Heaven?

Application: Eternity is a party, so you want your friends and family to be with you. Who can you share the gospel with? Ask for God to give you the strength to tell them about God.

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Psalm 33:18

Romans 15:4

1 Peter 1:13-15

Psalm 26

Romans 5:1-2

Romans 12:12

Hebrews 3:1-6

Do the following with each passage:

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READ – the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT – on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND – to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.