


THE
REVELATION
TO JOHN

Spoiler Alert!

show to his
soon take place. He made
his angel to his servant?
witness to the word of God
of Jesus Christ, even to
blessed is the one who reads
of this prophecy, and blessed
hear, and who keep what is
of us is pear
voice w
right h
came
was
n
th
n
m al



The Book of the Revelation is one that Christians tend to obsess over, or avoid completely. Its symbolism is often linked to current events, or tragic moments.

But did you know that most of the images and phrases in the Revelation come from the Old Testament? The early church considered it one of the most reliable books in the canon because they understood the meanings of the symbols and numbers from their own culture and their awareness of the Old Testament links.

Dr. Bill Brunson and Dr. Kipp McClurg have teamed up again, to produce a seven-episode series helping guide followers of Jesus to find the amazing message of this book. Instead of fear and dread, for those who follow Christ the book was meant to bring hope in the power of God, encouragement to remain faithful in spite of difficulty, and a glimpse into how God is already in control and will continue to be.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OUTLINE	4
EPISODE #1	8
Who, What, Where, When & How?	
EPISODE #2	11
Old Testament and Numerical References	
EPISODE #3	15
Saints on Earth, Saints in Heaven	
EPISODE #4	20
Seven Church of Revelation	
EPISODE #5	25
Three Series of Seven & Amazing Images	
EPISODE #6	30
The End of Evil	
EPISODE #7	33
All New Things	

OUTLINE

One of the difficulties in studying Revelation is the unusual way that it is organized. There are several concepts that can make navigating the book a little easier:

1. There is often a “changing of location” between what is happening with the saints on earth, and what is happening in heaven. John changes scenes often without announcing it.
2. Much of the content is woven into multiple series of seven: a) churches, b) seals, c) trumpets, and d) bowls. But, there are many “interludes” into these series where the scene changes, and then changes back.
3. There is not a linear path for his writings - he weaves images and themes continually. But it is all moving to a certain conclusion.

The following is a way to organize the Revelation to have some road map to what is going on, organized around “scenes” that John is portraying.

SCENE #1 - INTRODUCTION (1:1-8)

- A. Prologue (1:1-3)
- B. Greetings and Doxology (1:4-8)

SCENE #2

JESUS AMONG THE SEVEN CHURCHES (1:9-20)

SCENE #3 - LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES (2-3)

- A. Ephesus (2:1-7)
- B. Smyrna (2:8-11)
- C. Pergamum (2:12-17)
- D. Thyatira (2:18-29)
- E. Sardis (3:1-6)
- F. Philadelphia (3:7-13)
- G. Laodicea (3:14-22)

SCENE #4 - THE THRONE IN HEAVEN (4-5)

- A. The Throne (4)
- B. The Scrolls (5:1-5)
- C. The Lamb who can open the scrolls (5:6-14)

SCENE #5 - THE SEVEN SEALS (6:1- 8:1)

- A. First Seal: White Horse (6:1-2)
- B. Second Seal: The Red Horse (6:3-4)
- C. Third Seal: The Black Horse (6:5-6)
- D. Fourth Seal: Pale Horse (6:7-8)
- E. Fifth Seal: Souls Under the Altar (6:9-11)
- F. Sixth Seal: The Great Earthquake (6:12-17)
 - Interlude - The Sealing of 144,000 (7:1-8)
 - Interlude - The Great Multitude (7:9-17)
- G. Seventh Seal - Silence in Heaven (8:1)

SCENE #6 - THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (8:2-11:19)

- A. Introduction (8:2-5)
- B. First Trumpet: Hail and Fire Mixed with Blood (8:6-7)
- C. Second Trumpet: A Mountain Thrown into the Sea (8:8-9)
- D. Third Trumpet: The Star Wormwood (8:10-11)
- E. Fourth Trumpet: One Third of Sun, Moon & Stars Struck (8:12-13)
- F. Fifth Trumpet: The Plague of Locusts (9:1-12)
- G. Sixth Trumpet: Release of the Four Angels (9:13-21)
 - Interlude - The Angel and the Little Scroll (10)
 - Interlude - The Two Witnesses (11:1-14)
- H. Seventh Trumpet: Judgements and Rewards (11:15-19)

SCENE #7 - THUMBNAIL PORTRAITS (12-14)

- A. The Woman and the Dragon (12)
- B. The Two Beasts (13)
- C. The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)
- D. The Harvest of the Earth (14:6-20)

SCENE #8

THE SEVEN PLAGUES POURED FROM BOWLS (15-16)

- A. Introduction: The Song of Moses and the Seven Angels with the Seven Plagues (15)
- B. First Bowl: Ugly and Painful Sores (16:1-2)
- C. Second Bowl: Sea Turn to Blood (16:3)
- D. Third Bowl: River and Springs of Water Become Blood (16:4-7)
- E. Fourth Bowl: Sun Scorches People with Fire (16:8-9)
- F. Fifth Bowl: Darkness (16:10-11)
- G. Sixth Bowl: Euphrates River Dries Up (16:12-16)
- H. Seventh Bowl: Tremendous Earthquake (16:17-21)

SCENE #9 - THE ENEMY (17:1 - 19:5)

- A. Babylon Described as a Woman and Beast (17)
- B. The Fall of Babylon (18)
- C. Praise for Babylon's Fall (19:1-5)

SCENE #10 - GOD'S TRIUMPH (19:6 - 22:21)

- A. The Wedding of the Lamb (19:6-21)
- B. The Thousand Years (20:1-6)
- C. Satan's Doom (20:7-10)
- D. Great Judgement (20:11-15)
- E. New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem (21:1 - 22:6)

SCENE #11 - CONCLUSION & INSTRUCTIONS (22:1-21)

GENES

EPISODE #1

**Who,
What,
Where,
When, &
How?**

1. What is the typical way that people read Scripture - how do they try to find its meaning? Have you found that people read the Book of the Revelation in a different way than other books in the Bible?

2. Have you experienced people quoting Revelation, assuming it was written for their country, culture, and time? Are you aware of other Christian groups like the Adventist movement who thought in similar ways?

3. How did the fact that Revelation was one of the last books of the Bible make it more accepted by the early church than even other books in the New Testament?

4. John lived a very long life, unlike the other disciples. What persons would John have grieved in their loss, and what major events in Jerusalem and the Roman Empire would he have lived through? What persecutions did John himself experience?

5. What is the English translation of the Greek word "Apocalypse?" How is this word used in a way that is different from its original meaning?

6. What story could your group make up, like the Iron Bowl analogy, using images of animals or common items and themes, that could secretly convey a message that persons from another culture would never understand? How do people in harm's way, criminals, and even parents use "code words" to effectively communicate without being discovered? Why did John use these kinds of methods to communicate to the churches in Asian Minor?

7. What are some of the most unusual interpretations that you have heard based on Revelation, from your childhood or that are currently circulating?

8. Paste the link "<https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/misc/quotes05.cfm>" into a web browser, or look at the footnotes in your study Bible. Where do these suggest that John got most of the images for his writings?

9. The outline on page 4 can be used throughout your study of Revelation. Looking at the outline, what patterns and images do you see that seem interesting or challenging?



EPISODE #2

Old Testament and Numerical References

1. Have you ever known someone so steeped in a specific culture that their language is almost limited to phrases and images from that culture (in the military, or from another country)? How would a person, schooled since a child in the Torah, be able to speak almost directly the words and images of the Old Testament?

2. The study leaders estimate well over 200 similar uses of the Old Testament. What surprises you about this revelation?

3. Look through several of these passages and their counterparts. How are they similar and different?

IMAGE / WORDING	REVELATION PASSAGE	OLD TESTAMENT ALLUSION
Freed by his blood	1:5	Leviticus 17:11
Alpha and Omega	1:8	Isaiah 44:6
Temple Imagery	1:12-13	Zachariah 4:2
Son of Man	1:12-16	Daniel 7:9; Daniel 10: 5-6
River of God (Crystal Sea)	4:6	Ezekiel 1:22
Four Living Creatures	4:6-8	Ezekiel 1:5-9; Isaiah 6: 2-4
Four Horsemen / Judgements of War	6:1-8	Ezekiel 14:21-22
Never Hunger Nor Thirst	7:16	Isaiah 49:10
Golden Censer	8:3	Leviticus 16:12
Hail, Lightning, or Fire Falling	8:7	Exodus 9:23
Sun Darkened	8:12	Exodus 9:23
Wormwood (Bitter Water)	8:11	Jeremiah 9:13-16
Throne Room Measurements	11:1	Ezekiel 41:13
Two Olive Trees / Candlestands	11:4	Zachariah 4:11-14
Water to Blood	11:6	Exodus 7:20
Woman to Give Birth	12:1-4	Micah 4:9-10
Dragons	12:3	Daniel 7:7
Beasts	13:1	Daniel 7:3
Grapes of Wrath	14:10	Isaiah 51:22
Trampling the Winepress	14:18-20	Isaiah 63:3
Megiddo	17:4	Judges 4
Babylon as a Harlot with Wine	17:4	Jeremiah 51:7
Dwelling of God	21:3	Ezekiel 37:27
No More Tears	21:4	Isaiah 25:8
No Gates	21:12	Ezekiel 48:31
River of God, Clear as Crystal	22:1	Zachariah 14:8
God is Light	22:5	Isaiah 60:19

4. Many of the passages read at funerals or services of resurrection will use passages from Revelation. How comforting is it to know that John's use is rooted in passages written thousands of years prior, rooted in a God who is, has been, and always will be?
5. How many places do you see the use of the number 3 in Revelation when you use a web search?
6. Do a search on the number seven across the whole Bible and see if you find uses besides the lamp stands, churches, scrolls, seals, and bowls. Considering the creation in seven days with the seventh day being the Sabbath, how is seven the perfect number? Do you find it coincidental that this video series has seven episodes (when it probably needed twelve...)?
7. Half of seven is 3 and a half, which is "half-perfect" or imperfect. Search to see if you can find uses of 3.5 or 1260 days, all representing an incomplete period of time?
8. What is a trinity of one short of perfect (7)? How is this a picture of evil, close, but not good enough?
9. Twelve refers to the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. $12 \times 12 = 144$. $12 + 12 = 24$. These numbers are found in Chapters 7, 14, and 22, in reference to the church, the elders, and the New Jerusalem. Where can you find instances of this combination of numbers?
10. How do you respond to the assertion that the use of numbers is a way to continue telling the story of God, bringing the old Covenant into the New Covenant?



EPISODE #3

Saints on Earth, Saints in Heaven

1. Search online for a map of Asia Minor (which is now Turkey) to look for the location of the seven churches to whom John wrote, along with the Island of Patmos where John had been exiled. Since John led a community for decades in Ephesus, what relationship do you think John had with these other churches?

2. In 1 Kings 7, detailed descriptions are given of the interior of the temple. In 7:48-49, scripture records, “Solomon also made all the furnishings that were in the Lord’s temple: the golden altar; the golden table on which was the bread of the Presence; 49 the lampstands of pure gold (five on the right and five on the left, in front of the inner sanctuary)...(NIV).

Daniel 7:9 describes the “Son of Man” in this way: “As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze... In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.” (NIV)

Now read Revelation 1:12-20. How do you think it would have made the churches feel to know that, like candelabras in the temple, Jesus is walking among them. Have you ever had a time that you felt that you were alone? Did you ever become aware that you were not by yourself, but that the “Son of Man” was walking among your life? Why do you think that we, as human beings, think that we are the only persons who have suffered our particular life challenge, and that for some reason God has abandoned us?

3. Read the following passages and note how they use multiples of the number twelve to describe saints of God and heaven. What do they seem to symbolize? Skimming through chapters, 4, 7, and 14, what else do you learn about these saints of God?

- a. Revelation 4:4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders.

b. Revelation 7:4 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. 5 From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, 6 from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, 7 from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, 8 from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000. (NIV)

c. Revelation 14:1 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

d. Revelation 21:12b On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (NIV)

4. In Chapters 12 and 13, John uses the images of a dragon and two beasts to symbolize the opposite of the Holy Trinity - the anti-Trinity, per se.

a. Read 12:7-9 and discuss John's portrayal of the Anti-God (Satan, or the Dragon) - "Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (NIV)

b. Read 13:3-4 and discuss John's portrayal of the Anti-Christ (the Beast from the Sea). What similarities, with nuanced differences, does this creature have with Jesus - "One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. 4 People worshiped the dragon because

he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?” (NIV)

c. Read 13:15-17 and discuss John’s portrayal of the Anti-Spirit (the Beast from the Earth). What similarities, with nuanced differences, does this creature have with the Holy Spirit? If the role of the Holy Spirit is to encourage / enable us to follow Christ, what is the role of the anti-Spirit? “15 The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. 16 It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, 17 so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.”(NIV)

d. Consider and discuss the following example. “Adolf Hitler was a person of great fascination embodying the opposite of Christ, very charismatic, but very evil. He enlisted people who did the opposite of the Holy Spirit, by fear he forced and coerced people to do things that were horribly wrong - all carrying out Satanic work.” How have you seen similar leaders push peoples to similar horrific ends?

5. The Mark of the Beast (the Anti-Christ) has been a fascination of humanity since the book was written. Name of God on their forehead in 14:1

a. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. How does this commandment, coming just four verses after the passage regarding the infamous unholy mark, impact its meaning? “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

b. Greek and Hebrew numerology can be used to help give likely interpretations to the number “666” - Beast = 666; Nero = 666. Every generation of Christians tends to assume this is a person living in their day, in their culture. In your lifetime, who has been perceived as the “Anti-Christ?” (Ronald Wilson Reagan had six letters in each of his three names - that was a 1980’s version).

c. How do you respond to the study leader’s words, “There’s always a Nero. There’s always a power out there that wants us to do something different, that wants to pull us away from God...They want us to not to strive for 777, they want us to settle for the 666.” What power have you experienced, trying to pull you away from the perfect toward the not-so-evil-seeming “less than” good that is ultimately evil?

6. Had you been a person trying to follow Jesus, how would the scenes of the 144,000 and the 24 elders around the throne of God made you feel? How would knowing that on this earth, flowing around the lamp stand of your church, Jesus himself was with you? How would you respond to the study leaders in their assertion that one of the key concepts of Revelation is “Be faithful. You are not alone. Even if you lose your life, you join a host of people who will welcome you with open arms.”



EPIISODE #4

**Seven
Churches
of
Revelation**

1. Look at the following diagram of Revelation 2 & 3. Why do you think he chose seven churches - why not eight? What pattern is utilized in his message? What unique names are given to Jesus?

CHURCH	SPEAKER	SITUATION	STRENGTHS/ PREDICT	CONCERNS	PUNISHMENTS
Ephesus 2:1-7	Him who holds 7 stars & walks among candles	Nicolaitans - Victory-Promisers	1. Perseverance 2. Spot & reject fakes 3. Hate Nicolaitans	1. Forsaken first love 2. Have fallen from origin 3. Deep need to repent	Remove lampstand
Smyrna 2:8-11	First & Last; Died & came back to life	Persecuted by Jews poor in money-rich in faithfulness	You will be tested, put in prison 10 days, Be Faithful		None
Pergamum 2:12-17	Him who has the sharp double-edged sword.	Satanic city with history of persecution.	1. Remained true 2. Did not renounce Christ	Listen to doctrines of Balaam & Nicolaitans	Will come & fight with mouth-sword
Thyatira 2:18-29	Son of God whose eyes are like blazing fire & feet like burnished bronze		Have love, faith, service, perseverance, do more now than in past	Tolerate false-prophetess Jezebell who claims to have deep secrets	Intense suffering for those who follow & participate
Sardis 3:1-6	Him who holds the even spirits of God & the seven stars	Reputation of being alive but really dead	Some have not soiled their clothes	1. Are asleep; must awaken 2. Obey & repent	I will come like thief
Philadelphia 3:7-13	Him who is holy & true & holds the key of David	Have little strength but have kept word	1. Will make slanderers acknowledge my love 2. Will keep from trial	None	None
Laodicea 3:14-22	The Amen; faithful & true witness; ruler of God's creation	Neither hot nor cold	None	1. Lukewarm 2. Assume self-sufficiency 3. Poor, blind & naked	Spit out of mouth

2. Ephesus was the city to which John relocated after the persecutions in Jerusalem. He hoped to help share the Gospel and to protect Mary the Mother of Jesus (whom Jesus had given to John to be cared for while he was on the cross). He warns the Christians there of the Nicolaites (founded by Nicolas). Nicholas' history can be found in Acts 6-5b: "They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them." (NIV)

a. St. Jerome considered Nicholas' followers as very dangerous. Why was he deemed so dangerous to the church? Why is it more dangerous for a leader to teach false doctrine than a follower?

b. Read Genesis 2:9 together. What is the significance of being given permission to eat from the tree of life? How would that outcome be different than what happened with Adam and Eve?

c. What do you think God meant that their lamp stand would be removed (no longer a franchise...)? What does it mean for a church to be faithful to God? What allows churches to be authentic followers of God? Have you ever seen a church lose its lamp stand? What caused its demise?

3. To the Church at Smyrna in 2:10-11, what direction is given for them as they seek to stay faithful? What might your emotions have been if you faced this kind of persecution?

4. Pergamum - Read Genesis 1:3 together. How powerful is the voice, the words of God? Why might Jesus remind the people at Pergamum of the power of his double-edged tongue/sword?

a. How had the people of Pergamum been faithful to God in the description in 2:12-17? How had they struggled?

b. Search for "Balaam" in a site like Wikipedia. His story is found in Numbers

22 and, though at times he appears to support Israel, 2 Peter 2:15, Jude 1:11, and Revelation 2:14 warn against him. He was a diviner, always relying on other supernatural powers rather than the power of God. In a city with a history of emperor worship, why might this warning be important?

c. What kind of hidden manna has been given to you in your struggles in life? How would it have, or how does it make you feel, to receive, the white stone, the internal “Yes?” of God?

5. Thyatira - Reading Daniel 10:4-6. How is this vision of the “Son of Man” similar to Jesus description in 2:18?

a. Look over the story of summary of Ahab and Jezebel in I Kings 16: 29-33. Their destruction and attacks on Elijah go through chapter 22. How did the original Jezebel and her husband lead the Children of Israel astray?

b. “Jezebel” in Revelation 2:20 is described as a prophetess who has “deep secrets.” Why do you think human beings always want the “deep secret,” easy answers instead of the truly spiritual, and often difficult answers?

c. When in life have you settled for the “deep secrets”, easy answers when the real issues and answers were much more deeply spiritual? Who, like Jezebel, has led you astray?

6. Sardis - Ray Vanderlaan, who has an excellent series on the seven churches of Revelation, says that Sardis was a city originally built on a hill, that seemed impregnable. But, an enemy discovered the secret passage while watching a soldier climb down and retrieve his fallen helmet. That night, like a thief, the enemies attacked and overtook the city.

a. How might the phrase, “But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you,” in Revelation 3:3 seem especially relevant to this city?

b. Jesus says the church at Sardis has a reputation of being alive but actually being dead. How might a church appear to be alive, but in reality be dead? What can you do to help your church find true life, and true health?

7. Philadelphia seems to be a church that has been through much, but is holding on and being as faithful as possible. Revelation 3:11-12, says, "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 The one who is victorious, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name." (NIV). If you were in a church that had suffered much, or are in one now, but are still being faithful, how would Jesus words make you feel?

8. Laodicea - How does the geography of the water surrounding Laodicea affect the meaning of this passage?

a. How have you understood this passage in the past?

b. How might have you become lukewarm in your life, by having your purpose diluted by other people, objects, hobbies, or values?

c. How have you discovered in your life your sense of purpose in God? How long did it take in life before that sense emerged? What keeps you from being "hot or cold" to be the greatest "you" that God intended?

EPISODE #5

Three Series of Seven & Amazing Images

An outline was given to help understand the swirling method that John uses to organize his book at the beginning of this study guide. This lesson deals with three sets of seven (seals, trumpets, and bowls) that span eleven chapters of the book (with interludes between). The outline will be especially helpful in this lesson and is the underlying structure of the questions below.

1. The Seven Seals (6:1- 8:1)

A. First Seal: White Horse (6:1-2) - Conquering Political Leader

B. Second Seal: The Red Horse (6:3-4) - Red as the Blood of Battle

C. Third Seal: The Black Horse (6:5-6) - Collapse of Economic System and Food Supply

D. Fourth Seal: Pale Horse (6:7-8) - The Chaos of War's Aftermath

i. Ezekiel 14:21-22 says, "For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments—sword and famine and wild beasts and plague—to kill its men and their animals! 22 Yet there will be some survivors—sons and daughters who will be brought out of it. They will come to you, and when you see their conduct and their actions, you will be consoled regarding the disaster I have brought on Jerusalem—every disaster I have brought on it." (NIV) How is this similar to John's description? How is it different?

ii. Where and how in our world do you see the four horsemen at work currently in places like Syria, Afghanistan, and Haiti?

iii. Have you or someone you know ever lived through war and the collapse that follows?

E. Fifth Seal: Souls Under the Altar (6:9-11)

1. Where today are followers of Jesus being persecuted and/or killed?

2. When have Christians in the past asked, "How long oh Lord...?"

F. Sixth Seal: The Great Earthquake (6:12-17)

1. Read Isaiah 24:23, Isaiah 13:13, Joel 2:31, and Isaiah 34:3 and compare them to the descriptions used by John.

2. Had you lived in John's day, what would have been your prayer? Would you have struggled to want to see God punish those who brought such chaos on the earth? How do you struggle with that desire today?

G. Seventh Seal - Silence in Heaven (8:1)

2. The Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)

Looking through the trumpets, compare and contrast John's descriptions from those in the Old Testament where the prophets predicted God's judgment.

A. Introduction (8:2-5)

B. First Trumpet: Hail and Fire Mixed with Blood (8:6-7)

- Joel 2:30; Exodus 9:23, Exodus 7:20

C. Second Trumpet: A Mountain Thrown into the Sea (8:8-9)

D. Third Trumpet: The Star Wormwood (8:10-11)

- Jeremiah 9:15, Deuteronomy 29:18, Jeremiah 9:15,

E. Fourth Trumpet: One Third of Sun, Moon & Stars Struck (8:12-13)

- Exodus 10:21, Ezekiel 32:7

F. Fifth Trumpet: The Plague of Locusts (9:1-12)

- Exodus 10

G. Sixth Trumpet: Release of the Four Angels (9:13-21)

- Psalm 115:4

Interlude - The Angel and the Little Scroll (10) - Ezekiel 2:8

Interlude - The Two Witnesses (11:1-14) - Zechariah 4 - How is John's interpretation different from the original?

H. Seventh Trumpet: Judgements and Rewards (11:15-19) - Daniel 7:14

3. Amazing Images (Chapters 12-14)

A. The Woman and the Dragon (Chapter 12)

i. According 12: 7-9, who is the Dragon?

ii. With the increasing number of people becoming followers of Jesus who were not Jewish in heritage, John begins making a distinction between the People of Israel, and the church. The Woman clothed with the sun is in the process of giving birth to her child, the Christ. How in history have the Jewish people been persecuted, and why?

iii. Revelation 12:17, says, "Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus." (NIV)

Why do you think the Roman Empire saw the followers of Jesus such a threat? How did the followers of Jesus ultimately defeat the Roman Empire?

B. The Two Beasts (Chapters 13)

- i. In the anti-Trinity, who is equivalent of the Dragon, who is the equivalent of the Christ, and who is the equivalent of the Holy Spirit?
- ii. What opposites is John trying to show between good and evil in these parallels?
- iii. Where in world history has the Dragon inspired someone to become messianic in their evil, and then inspire/conspire the ordinary people and underlings to not stand up to the obvious evil?

C. The Lamb and the 144,000 (Chapters 14:1-5)

- i. In Greek, the word for Lamb is “arnion” (the little lamb who has been killed and bleeding but conquered) and the word for beast is “therion,” rhyming words for the competing powers. How is God’s power so beautifully described in the “lamb”?
- ii. If you were to bet on who would lose this match, where would you put your money?

4. The Seven Plagues poured from bowls (15-16)

A. First Bowl: Ugly and Painful Sores (16:1-2)

- Exodus 9:10

B. Second Bowl: Sea Turn to Blood (16:3)

- Exodus 7:19-20

C. Third Bowl: River and Springs of Water Become Blood (16:4-7)

- Exodus 7:19-20

D. Fourth Bowl: Sun Scorches People with Fire (16: 8-9)

E. Fifth Bowl: Darkness (16:10-11)

- Exodus 10:22

F. Sixth Bowl: Euphrates River Dries Up (16:12-16)

i. Isaiah 11:15

ii. How is the Battle of Armageddon different than what is presented in popular culture?

iii. Read the story of the battle that took place in the Valley of Megiddo by Mt. Tabor in Judges 4. With such a decisive win, what foreshadowing do you think John is using for when future battles take place?

G. Seventh Bowl: Tremendous Earthquake (16:17-21)

5. Other Images of Evil

A. Read Revelation 17: 1-6 and Revelation 12:1. This is a comparison between Rome and the church, and good and evil. One is beautiful and clothed with the sun, the other is clothed with “purple and scarlet and glittering with gold.” What is the difference between beauty and glamour?

B. In your experience does evil most often appear as a dragon, or more often like something just less than good, glamorous but not beautiful, 666 instead of 777?

C. Babylon is “code” word for Rome. In Chapter 18, Babylon begins to fall apart as an empire that opposed God. How hard is it to back out of an alliance with an evil person or organization? Have you ever known someone who “owed their soul to the company store” and they paid dearly with their freedom or their spiritual soul?



EPISODE #6

The End of Evil

Revelation Chapters 19 and 20 mark the end of powers of evil, and particularly those ultimately responsible. These passages are the ones that many in our culture obsess over, without the context of the rest of the book.

1. Read together Revelation 19:11-16.

- a. What images does John use to describe the conquering Christ?
- b. What is the significance of his robe being dipped in blood? How is it that the power of God is based on death and resurrection and not on earthly power?
- c. How surprised are you that the defeat of ultimate evil takes place in three verses, 19:19-21?
- d. Do you find it surprising that his only weapon is his double-edged-tongue-sword? Considering all that was created in the universe was created just by God's words, was any other weapon necessary?
- e. Is it comforting and/or energizing that the same Jesus who shed his blood will be coming to bring justice to the universe?
- f. Martin Luther King said, "...the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." How does this passage reinforce this idea? How do you struggle with the lingering injustice until that day comes?

2. Read Revelation 20:1-10 together.

- a. Much is made of the 1,000 year temporary restraint of Satan, and how and where the church will fare in the midst of this transitional time (the Millennium). What is the numerical significance of 1,000?
- b. In Matthew 12:39, Jesus says, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah (that Jesus was in the tomb for three days). Why do you think people read Revelation looking for a sign?"
- c. If we know the end, and we are followers of Jesus, should we have anything to fear? Should we waste our time trying to read into current events and their potential eternal meanings?
- d. What peoples are being persecuted for Christ today? What people groups have been through great persecutions in the past?

3. Consider together verses 20:11-15. These verses talk about final judgment and two books, the Book of our Deeds and the Book of Life.

a. How comforting is it to know that regardless of what is in the book of our deeds, our relationship to God and related forgiveness as recorded in the Book of Life, override our deeds? How much freedom can we experience knowing that forgiveness and relationship with God overrides our sin and shortcomings?

b. Revelation uses the image of burning sulfur as the most horrific existence possible. What, for you, would be a worse punishment?

c. If one believes in Free Will, is it possible for us to reject being with God? Do you believe that God forces people into the Kingdom, or do you think God gives people the opportunity to say “No thank you”?

d. How would it change your outlook on life if you knew that all evil was banished and no longer had power to do destruction?



EPISODE #7

All New Things

1. Revelation 19:1-10 looks forward to the day when all God's children are seated around the heavenly banquet. How is this image included in our communion ritual? Who do you hope to see or sit near at that banquet? What character from the Bible would you like to meet and share a meal with? What saints now gone would you like to see again?

2. How does it make you feel to know that there will be, according to Revelation 21:4, no tears, death, crying or pain?

3. Revelation 21:1 says there will no longer be any sea. In early Jewish history, the people of Israel did not get on boats often, and things typically did not go well (Jonah, Noah, Paul, disciples in storms) when they did. Part of the reason was their cosmology, believing that the firmament above and the water below would collapse into each other again. How would the statement, there was "no more sea" relieve an anxiety forever for someone with that mindset? Some people have lived lives waiting for the "next shoe to drop," always fearing good things because so many bad things have followed the good. How would this verse change our anxiety toward the future of the world?

4. How many sets of numbers 3, 12, and 1,000 are included in the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:15-21? How many precious metals and jewels can you find mentioned? What is the symbolic meaning of this well proportioned and adorned vision?

5. Read Revelation 21:22-27. Why will there be no temple needed in the New Jerusalem? Why no sun or moon to give it light? Why will the gates never be shut? Why no fear of the behavior of other people?

6. Read Revelation 22:1-5. In the new Jerusalem, there will be no serpent to tempt persons to fall. Look and consider the glory of the pieces of Eden present in the new creation:

- The river of the water of life
- On each side of the river stood the tree of life bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.

- And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
- No longer will there be any curse.

7. Would you agree or disagree with this statement: the Book of Revelation is mostly about being faithful, hopeful, and free from the fear of what is to come?

8. How are the spirituals of American slaves similar to the Southern Gospel music of the working class from the twentieth century?

9. How might Revelation inspire you to move from the parts of yourself affected by the curse, to the person that God intended for you to be - the best version of yourself empowered by the Spirit of God?



VESTAVIA HILLS
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH