

Worship, Watch, and Warn

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The Revelation of Jesus Christ

This inductive Bible study is designed for individual, small group, or classroom use. A leader's guide with full lesson plans and the answers to the Bible study questions is available from Regular Baptist Press. Order RBP0056 online at www.regularbaptistpress.org, e-mail orders@rbpstore.org, call toll-free 1-800-727-4440, or contact your distributor.

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The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

WORSHIP, WATCH, AND WARN: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Adult Bible Study Book

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Preface

The book of Revelation is a fascinating look into the future, which is filled with both sobering and joyous times. Our responses to the book could be many, but we can summarize them in three words: *Worship, Watch, and Warn*. Worship Christ as He is revealed in the book. Watch for His coming by serving Him. Warn the lost of God's impending judgment.

As you study this book you will sense the Holy Spirit directing you to respond in these three ways. That is what God intended. John even included a message to the reader in the opening verses of the book. He tells us that the person who reads the book and keeps those things written in it will be blessed (Rev. 1:3).

So approach this study with more than an interest in learning how to navigate through the complicated passages in Revelation. Prepare your heart to respond to the Spirit. Let God's Word work in your heart. Impress upon yourself that the book of Revelation is a necessary study for a proper development of the spiritual life (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Lesson 1

The Vision of Christ

The revelation of Jesus Christ demands we worship Him, watch for His coming, and warn the lost of coming judgment.

Revelation 1

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:18).

Benjamin Franklin is well known to Americans as a student of electricity and an inventor. His inventions include the lightening rod, the Franklin stove, and even bifocal glasses. What his autobiography (*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*) makes clear—and what might surprise many Americans today—is that Franklin did not patent his inventions. He believed that “as we enjoy great advantages from the inventions of others, we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by any invention of ours; and this we should do freely and generously.”

Getting Started

1. What is something you could reveal about yourself that others would be surprised to learn?

2. How might people react to your revelation?

3. How might your life be different if God hadn't given us the book of Revelation as a way to learn more about Christ?

The book of Revelation reveals Christ to us. We should respond to Christ's revelation of Himself by worshiping Him, watching for His return, and warning the lost of coming judgment.

Searching the Scriptures

Revelation 1 provides a fitting introduction to the entire book. It contains the key to the three major divisions (1:19), and it explains the reason the book was written (1:9–11).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The opening words of verse 1 give the true title of this writing: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." He is both its source and its subject. It came from Him (22:16) and manifests Him. The translation "revelation" is based upon a word transliterated as "apocalypse." It means "to uncover, to unveil, or to lay bare." It thus stresses a disclosure for the purpose of understanding, not a covering up in secrecy.

The cover of this study has a curtain being pulled back. That is the idea of Revelation. A curtain is pulled back in a sense so we can better understand Christ, including His plans for the future.

4. Why is it important to know that the book of Revelation is Christ's revelation of Himself?

5. How should knowing this affect the way you read the book?

Sequence of Transmission

The sequence of transmission is clearly presented in verses 1–3. The content of the book of Revelation was given to Christ by God the Father within the redemptive program. Christ then sent His angel to John (1:1; 22:16). The means of communication to John is indicated by the verb “signified” (1:1), a reference to symbolic visions that manifest spiritual significance.

The purpose of the revelatory sequence was “to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1). God has sovereignly determined the end of this time-space universe and the means to that end (Dan. 2:21; Eph. 1:11). He also has chosen to reveal these truths to His servants, people such as John and the keepers of the book (cf. Amos 3:7).

6. Why could we say that Christ’s revelation of His judgment on the lost demonstrates His grace?

Blessings of Revelation

Revelation is the only book of Scripture that begins with a direct promise of blessing for the actual reading of its contents. In fact, seven special blessings recorded within its pages. “He that readeth” (note the singular) refers to that individual who actually read the original manuscript in each church; whereas “they that hear” (plural) are the members of the churches who heard the oral reading. In application, all believers today have the individual and corporate privilege and blessing to read, to hear, and to keep the spiritual content of the book.

7. What does this blessing imply about the possibility of understanding the book of Revelation?

Greetings

In his greeting John addressed seven churches of the Roman province of Asia (1:4) that were probably founded as the result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. He passed along greetings from the Trinity.

God the Father is described as the One "which is, and which was, and which is to come" (Rev. 1:4). These three aspects of time show His timelessness or His eternal nature.

God the Spirit is designated as "the seven Spirits". This unique title probably refers to His sevenfold or total perfection.

God the Son, Jesus Christ, is identified in three ways (1:5). He is "the faithful witness." Christ perfectly revealed God in what He said, did, and was. He is also "the first begotten of the dead." Christ demonstrated His priestly function in His sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection. He became the first to receive an immortal, incorruptible resurrection body. And Christ is "the prince of the kings of the earth." He is the sovereign Who will assert His kingly prerogatives when He returns to the earth.

8. What do these identifications of Christ mean to you? Choose one word for each of the three identifications.

What Christ Has Done

John dedicated the book to Christ because of His spiritual accomplishments, His future glory, and His present sovereignty.

Christ loved us so much that He died for us (Rev. 1:5). Although John's emphasis here is upon the sacrificial act manifested at Calvary, that type of love goes on forever (Rom. 8:35–39).

Christ "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5b). The spiritual washing of regeneration removed the guilt, penalty, and actual sins so that the child of God is spiritually clean before God. The means of cleansing is the shed blood of Christ.

Christ has constituted believers as "kings" (Rev. 1:6). Not only are

they in the spiritual kingdom of God, but also they will rule over the earthly kingdom when Christ returns to the earth to establish that theocracy.

Christ has also made His own to become priests (1:6). They are a holy and royal priesthood.

As a response to what Christ has done, believers should render glory and dominion to Him (1:6). To glorify Christ is to acknowledge Him to be what He is and to manifest in one's personal life those spiritual qualities that correspond to Him.

9. Read Revelation 1:5b, 6. How does what Christ has done impact your life?

What Christ Will Do

Verse seven refers to Christ's future return to earth after the Tribulation. The verse does not refer to the rapture of the Church before the Tribulation. Christ will be seen by both the living saved and the living unsaved when He descends to the earth. The two major groups of humanity will also see Him. The nation of Israel is seen as those "which pierced him" (cf. John 19:34–37; 20:25, 27). The Gentile nations, the other major people group, are included in the phrase "all kindreds of the earth."

Who Christ Is

Verse eight includes descriptions of Who Christ is. He is the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8). These two names stand for the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. Christ is the sum total—the beginning and completion—of all that could be said or written about the essence of God.

Christ is also eternal and self-existent, qualities seen in the titles "the beginning and the ending" and "which is, and which was, and which is to come" (1:8).

Christ's title "the Almighty" points to His sovereignty (1:8). He can

work in and through the activities of men and nations, both good and evil, to accomplish His ultimate purpose—the glorification of God and the blessing of His people.

10. What does this dedication of the book to Christ remind you about the completeness of His work?

John's Condition

Although John was a revered apostle, he simply named himself as his readers' brother in the family of God. He was also their companion in tribulation, in the Kingdom, and in the patience of Jesus Christ (1:9).

John described his banishment to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea by the emperor Domitian (1:9). John stated two reasons for his exile—his commitment to the truth of the Word of God and his witness for Christ.

11. Read Revelation 1:9. How well was John doing at worshiping, watching, and warning?

John set forth his prophetic experience. He literally “came to be in the Spirit” (1:10). This later occurred when John was caught up into Heaven (4:2). In this vehicle of Spirit control, John could be transported into future time and space to see and to receive special revelation.

Vision of Christ

John heard the voice of Christ, a sound as loud and clear as a trumpet (1:10). Christ commanded John to “write” and to “send.” The book of Revelation is the written record of what John was about to see. The apostle then was to send the finished volume to the seven churches of Asia.

John turned around to see the person Who had just spoken to him.

He first saw the seven golden candlesticks or lampstands, but subsequently he perceived Christ in the midst of them (1:12).

In typology, the Jewish lampstand prefigured the Messiah, the light of His people (John 1:4). The seven golden candlesticks that John saw symbolize the seven local churches of Asia. The vision thus represented Christ, in all of His moral and resurrection glory, about to pronounce a spiritual evaluation of the churches over which He is the authoritative head.

The Description

12. Read Revelation 1:13–16. Which description of Christ in this passage is most striking to you?

Christ often referred to Himself as the Son of Man. This title designated His humanity and His redemptive, Messianic function. His full-length garment resembles the type worn by the Old Testament priest-judge (Exod. 28:2). The high priest had golden thread within his girdle, but the breastplate of Christ is solid gold. It probably symbolizes His worth and royalty.

The whiteness of His head and hairs seems to portray His eternity, purity, wisdom, and deity (1:14). The eyes of fire speak of perfect discernment.

The feet of brass possibly represent Christ's pure, righteous judgment (1:15). He is no respecter of persons or churches. The voice of many waters depicts the authority and power of His spoken word.

In Christ's right hand are seven stars (1:16). The seven stars are later identified as "the angels of the seven churches" (1:20). The Greek word for "angels" literally means "messengers." Some view these stars as the guardian angels of the churches. Since angels minister to individual believers, it is possible that they could attend the activities of believers joined together in local churches. Others regard the stars as the human messengers, even the pastors of the churches.

The two-edged sword out of Christ's mouth portrays His Word, which applies both to the saved and the unsaved (1:16). With it, He can chastise His own people (2:12, 16) or smite the wicked nations at Armageddon (19:15, 21).

The shining of Christ's countenance as the sun represents the glory of His deity (1:16). Isaiah saw this glory even before God the Son became incarnate (Isa. 6:1–8).

13. Which of the descriptions of Christ in Revelation 1:12–16 might believers today need to be reminded of the most?

14. Which description do you need to be reminded of the most?

The Response

John's response to the sight of Christ was dramatic. He fell at Christ's feet as if he was dead (1:17).

15. Read Revelation 1:17a. Why would John fall at Christ's feet as if he was dead?

16. Do you think your response would be any different? Explain.

Our mortal finiteness and our falling short of Christ's glory overwhelm us in His presence. Christ ministered to John by touching the

apostle and by speaking to him regarding His titles.

The self-revelation of the Savior through the titles shows His relationships to time and eternity and to death and life.

17. Read Revelation 1:17b, 18. Why would Christ's titles in these verses be particularly encouraging to John?

The title "the first and the last" indicates Christ's deity (1:17). He is Jehovah God. The next title, "and was dead" affirms His humanity (1:18). Christ took to Himself a complete humanity through the virgin conception and birth. As a divine-human person, He experienced death on the cross but then overcame death through His resurrection.

Through His death and resurrection, He destroyed Satan. He has the keys, the authority, over those who are in Hades (Hell) and over death. Hades is the place where the soul of the unsaved goes at death, and death is the realm of the body. At the Great White Throne Judgment, Christ will call the unsaved out of death and Hell to appear before Him (Rev. 20:11–15).

The Command to Write

Revelation 1:19 is the key to the major divisions of the book. John had just seen the vision of Christ (Rev. 1). Christ would later show John "the things which must be hereafter" (4:1—22:5). Thus, "the things which are" must be the seven letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2; 3).

From this opening chapter we know how John came to write down the prophecies contained in this Book. We know its structure and that it reveals things yet to come. In its revelation of Jesus Christ and its unfolding of events yet future it is a source of special comfort and guidance in these days that precede His return.

18. Record key phrases from Revelation 1 that call you to worship Christ, watch for His coming, or warn the unsaved of coming judgment.

Making It Personal

19. What one or two impressions about Christ does Revelation 1 leave in your mind?

20. What changes should those impressions make in your life?

21. What specific responses should you make in light of the revelation of Christ in Revelation 1?

22. Memorize Revelation 1:18.