

Lesson 1: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

REVELATION PROFILE



Genre: *Prophecy, Pastoral Letter, Apocalyptic, and Wisdom Literature*

Author: *John*

Passage: *Revelation 1:1-11*

Where Is It: *The Last Book of the New Testament: 3 John, Jude, **Revelation***

Key Characters: *Jesus Christ, John, the Church, Living Creatures, Satan and the Beasts*

Main Plot: *The book of Revelation claims that God alone is to be followed and worshiped. John encourages and challenges the church to be faithful, even unto death, to our Lord Jesus Christ.*



THE WORD

Revelation 1:1-11



ENGAGE THE WORD

Lesson Overview: Relational Dimension

What—or who—is being revealed? The first few words of the book of Revelation remind us that this is “the revelation from Jesus Christ” (1:1). There have been plenty of conclusions about the contents of the book of Revelation, but before we draw our own, may we pause to be reminded by the Spirit—the same Spirit who enfolded John for his vision—that the most fascinating and mysterious subject of this prophetic book of the end times is the one who says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (22:13).



Wesleyan Snapshot Inspiration

Inspiration comes from the late Latin word, *inspirare*, which means “to breathe or blow into” (*in* – into; *spirare* – breathe).

For those in the Wesleyan-Holiness branch of the church universal, we believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the biblical authors to write down trustworthy words from God. Holy Scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit for those in antiquity, yet the Holy Spirit *lives* and *moves* within our present moment, inspiring us to read Scripture faithfully today. Therefore, the Bible is sufficient and reliable for *all things pertaining to salvation*.

Biblical Commentary

REVELATION 1:1-3

The book of Revelation begins with a declaration from John that this *revelation* is *from* and *by* Jesus Christ himself. This is not something John has created for himself, nor is this a hallucination: rather, what John is about to prophesy to the church is something directly from Jesus Christ. The words that follow are for the edification of the servants of God, the church of Jesus Christ.

Time is an important theme in Revelation. Similar phrases are repeated throughout Revelation and have become a stumbling block to some Christians, who are eager to unravel the mystery of *when* this



THE MAIN IDEA

THE TRIUNE GOD IS THE TRUE RULER AND JUDGE OF ALL CREATION, EVEN THOUGH CHRISTIANS—YOUNG OR OLD—MAY EXPERIENCE TRIALS, SUFFERINGS, TRAGEDIES, OR SINS.

time will come. God—who is transcendent over space and time—cannot be unraveled like created things. From God’s side of eternity, “the time is near” is more of a pastoral encouragement and promise *for the saints* than a temporal prediction.

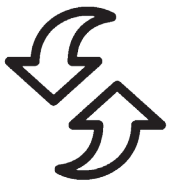
REVELATION 1:4-8

Jesus is declared to be “the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” Jesus came as the faithful witness to the Father in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and he was obedient through trials, temptations, and torture for the sake of witnessing to God. Though he trusted and obeyed all the way to death, the Father is faithful to the Son by making him the first to rise from death itself. Therefore, Jesus is the sovereign ruler over all rulers. In Jesus, we see faithfulness, trust, and victory.

REVELATION 1:9-11

John tells us that he shares with us the persecution, the kingdom, and patient endurance “*in Jesus*.” Christians living during this time assumed that persecution and suffering were part of being a Christian, which is a reality that Christians in North America do not fully understand. Throughout Scripture, the call to *patient endurance through suffering* is paramount, for it is our fidelity to Jesus that expresses our salvation.

“I was in the Spirit” is a phrase that promises the sanctified inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Christians believe that the Bible is *inspired* by the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, the voice that John hears behinds him instructs him to write down what he sees and to send the message to the seven churches at the same time that John was *in the Spirit*. He turns around to see Jesus in wondrous and mysterious glory. In order to see Christ, John needed to be in the presence of the Spirit.



REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

Many have been cautious and afraid of the stories that are told in Revelation, yet this book remains scripture for Christians. As you begin to teach this book to youth, what do you wish for them to get out of our study in Revelation?

What are the goals you have for your youth?



Bible Background

“For the time is near.”

Prophetic language about the end being soon is not unique to Revelation. The Holy Spirit inspired the biblical authors to admonish and encourage people to respond to God’s salvation and judgment that might have come to pass sooner than they might have expected. “The time is near” is more of a pastoral encouragement and promise *for the saints* than a temporal prediction.

WORD STUDY

Revelation

Revelation (Greek: *apokalypsis*): this is where we get our English word “apocalypse.” Revelation means “uncovering, unveiling, or disclosure.”


REFLECT ON YOUR STUDENTS:

What do your youth believe about the age to come, heaven, hell, or the end of time?

Do your students have a sense of taking the future seriously? Why or why not?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

**LESSON
OUTLINE**



Four Observations

1. First and foremost, “revelation” is a christological category throughout the book of Revelation. The first words connect *revelation* with the person and work of Jesus Christ. Without Christ, we would never have received any revelation of who God is and what God has done for us and in us. Jesus Christ is our revelation of God.
2. Our modern eyes will read this book in strange ways, so we ought to be honest about our prejudices and open to the Holy Spirit’s transforming word.
3. God does not want to scare us, but God wants us to trust and talk to God about anything and everything.
4. As Christians in North America, we can take the privilege of living without explicit persecution for granted, and we have brothers and sisters who are suffering for the name of Jesus. We need to continue to pray for them.

Main Idea: *The Triune God is the true ruler and judge of all creation, even though Christians—young or old—may experience trials, sufferings, tragedies, or sins.*

Before You Meet: *Make sure everyone has a copy of Revelation 1:1-11; everyone needs to have the same translation for the “read and respond” time.*

Resources: *Bible, pens/pencils, pieces of paper for icebreaker, copies of handout*

Connect to My Experience:
Welcome
Fact or Fiction Icebreaker
Prayer

Connect to the Word:
Read and Reflect on Revelation 1:1-11
Read and Respond Activity

Connect to My Life and the World:
The Discipline of Praying for Other Christians
The Voice of the Martyrs

Closing:
Encouragement
Prayer



CONNECT TO MY EXPERIENCE

Student Goal: Youth will understand what “revelation” means by getting to know others in the youth group better.

WELCOME YOUR GROUP AND OPEN WITH PRAYER.

Move into the following icebreaker:

FACT OR FICTION?

Ask everyone to write down two facts about themselves that may not be known to everyone else and one fact that isn’t true. Ask one person at a time to read their three things, then instruct everyone to vote for which ones they think are true or false about the person. This is a great way to get to know students and can be used to connect to the concept of revelation.

SAY: Some of us may have known which facts were true or false for some people, but most of us did not know what was true about every person. It was not until the person *revealed* to us what was actually true or false that we finally understood what was true and what was false.



CONNECT TO THE WORD

Student Goal: Youth will enter into the story of Revelation and discover that this book offers hope, encouragement, and victory in Jesus Christ.

READ AND REFLECT ON REVELATION 1:1-11.

SAY: We are going to be listening, studying, and asking questions from this text for our next six sessions. The book of Revelation can be a frightening book to read, but if you pay attention, I promise you will discover something beautiful in this book. This book is about the past, present, and especially the future of our world, our lives, and God. Let's begin!

ASK: If you were in charge of deciding the future of the world, what would you do? Where would you want world history to go? What would be your perfect world?

READ REVELATION 1:1-3. PAUSE FOR A MOMENT. READ IT AGAIN IF NECESSARY.

ASK: In these few verses, what stood out to you? What words caught your attention?

SAY: We read from the very first words that this *revelation*—and revelation means seeing or understanding something that you did not see or understand before—is from and by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ unveils the mystery of the future to us! John also tells us that we are blessed for hearing this book! You will also be blessed if you listen well and do what this book says to do.

READ REVELATION 1:8-11.

SAY: Though Jesus loves us with every fiber of his being, Christians—like John—have gone through serious pain and suffering because they followed Jesus. John was persecuted and was exiled to a place called Patmos, and he wrote this book for the church of Jesus.

ASK: How many of you know what pain is? How many of you have suffered? How many of you have been made fun of because of your Christian faith?

SAY: This book tells us that Christians have been made fun of since the time of Jesus. You are not alone. We are not alone. Jesus himself understands what it feels like to be made fun of.

ASK: Have you ever participated in a responsive reading? Did you know that ancient Christians used to participate in responsive readings?

CREATIVE OPTION: READ AND RESPOND

To mimic what early Christians used to do, lead your students in a “read and respond” time (included as a handout). Early Christians did this reading as part of their Sunday morning worship.

Leader: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits, who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Students: To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen!

Leader: Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen!



CONNECT TO MY LIFE AND THE WORLD

Student Goal: Youth will participate in the prayers of the saints.

SAY: Prayer is a deeply Christian practice, and we develop habits at young ages. Christians have been praying for each other for a long time. We pray for each other. I pray for all of you by name. I encourage you to participate in a life of prayer for other believers. There are many believers in our area and around the world for whom we need to pray. Nazarene missionaries all around the world are witnessing for Jesus Christ, and some are having a hard time living out the gospel because of the context they are in. Let us pray for them.

CREATIVE OPTION: THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS

During this time of prayer, I invite you to utilize all the forms of prayer that you are accustomed to. I also invite you to check out The Voice of the Martyrs website. They are an organization that aims at serving persecuted Christians around the world. Think about what it might look like for your youth group to invest in something like this, whether you write letters to Christians in prison, pray for them, or raise money to donate to similar organizations. Christian youth can participate in radical ways of encouraging others of the faith, and beginning these practices when students are young can encourage them to continue into adulthood.



CLOSING

SAY: The Bible says that Jesus is Lord even though the world we live in does not look like Jesus is Lord at all. We believe and trust that God will make everything right in the future, but for now, we pray and believe against unbelief. God is the Alpha and the Omega, the one who was, who is, and who is to come. Amen.

CLOSE YOUR GATHERING WITH PRAYER.