

NOTES

“Apokalypsis, ‘to uncover or reveal’”

By Dick Lennes

(Based on Revelation 1:3-6)

“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.” (verse 3)

This is scary and weird stuff! Movies have been produced, predictions made, people have lived their own life! They thought they broke the code to predict the day and hour of the end coming. Save your energy! That’s not the true message! The last book of the Bible scared and repulsed people who first read it. Christians needed time to see the value of Revelation. The early Church would not include Revelation in its list of books to read during Lent, though John wrote Revelation for that specific purpose, for the letters to seven churches in Asia to be read aloud in church worship. Revelation describes life not as we see it with our eyes, but as God sees it and reveals it to His trembling disciple, John. It is an affirmation of the Lord Jesus Christ in answering the question, “Who is Lord?”

Revelation prophecy is without either words or interpretations, exclusively with symbols and figures. Martin Luther said, “We can profit by this book and make good use of it. It gives us comfort! We can be assured that neither force nor lies, neither wisdom nor holiness, neither tribulation nor suffering shall suppress Christendom, but it will gain the victory at the last. Second for our warning! We can be on guard against the great, perilous, and deadly offense that inflicts itself upon Christendom. Christendom will not be known by its works, but by its faith.”

Lord, gracious God, thank You for Your encouragement and comfort as we study Your Word. You have revealed it to John. Help us to understand that everything is about who we are and who we can be through You. Amen.

**Growing...**

1. How does *Romans* 8:19-23 help explain why John saw “a new heaven *and* a new earth” in *Revelation* 21:1?
2. Compare the descriptions of heaven ahead in *Revelation* 7:15-17 and 21:3-4. How are they similar? What do they add to each other to make a more complete picture of heaven?
3. Can you picture the New Jerusalem in your mind as John describes it? What does it mean to you the most? What promises do you hear reflected in that vision?
4. Amidst this gorgeous vision of the perfection of heaven, why are the sharp warnings in *Revelation* 21:8 and 22:15 still necessary?
5. *Revelation* 22 states five times that Christ is coming soon, but He has yet to appear in glory, even 2,000 years later. How can Christians today understand these calls to watch for Christ’s imminent return? How does *Revelation* inform that understanding?



Serving...Next time you go grocery shopping, buy an extra item or two to put on the shelf.



Growing...

1. What impression of Revelation did you have before this study began? Have you read or study it in the past? If so, what did you think of it?
2. The crucial question in Revelation is “Who is Lord?” What “lords” (other than God) seem to be more powerful than Christ and compete for our devotion?
3. God’s declaration that “I am the Alpha and the Omega” stands at the beginning and end of Revelation like bookends. What do you think that promise tells us?
4. Review the vision of Christ that John saw in *Revelation* 1:12-18. Does this change, enrich or challenge your view of who Jesus is and what He is like?
5. John declared, “Blessed is the one who reads...the prophecy.” What blessings can you gain from this Faith Groups study?



Serving... Invite someone to church this week, and if you’re really serious, you could even offer to pick him or her up!

“Dare to Engage in the Light”

By Janet Meier

(Based on Revelation 21:1-7, 22-26)

“Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.” (verse 7)

As a child, I believed God was in charge of my life and had a plan for me, but I did not know how to have a relationship with Him.

I fumbled through my teen-aged Christian journey, feeling like everyone else knew more about God and His purpose for them than I did about God’s purpose for me. We said our morning prayers; I said nightly prayers - it was family ritual. I knew God’s spiritual arms were outstretched to embrace me, but I was afraid to embrace them.

During college, my spirituality became clearer to me. I explored Bible studies; I visited different churches. I explored how my religious past might connect to my spiritual future. College is a critical time when young adults make intentional decisions about who to be and what relationships are worth their time. It is disheartening to see how many people put their faith aside while they busily create their futures, when it is faith that can guide and light their way.

May God keep his arms open to help us all to see the light, engage in the light, and live in the light. This world needs us together more than ever. It’s meant to be.

Dear Lord, instill in us a continued desire to know you better. Amen.



Sharing...What was your first job? Talk about it.

1. "The Gospel is never for _____, but always for people.
2. _____ churches to be specific:
 - Ephesus,
 - Smyrna,
 - Pergamum,
 - Thyatira,
 - Sardis,
 - Philadelphia,
 - Laodicea.
3. Edict typically includes _____ basic parts:
 - Who is sending the edict?
 - What the sender has heard
 - What the sender wants the recipients to do
4. Eugene Peterson—The three parts are:
 - Affirmation
 - _____
 - Promise
5. Let anyone who has an ear _____ to what the Spirit is saying to the church
6. "Churches are _____ posts."
7. Who is sending the edict? "I am the _____ and the _____," says the I who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.
8. The promise of eternal life, not as a reward, but as the _____ which begun in faith is adequate motivation for he who conquers.
9. Peterson says, "Things are out of order, to be sure, but that's what _____ that are lived in."



Sharing... Tell about a favorite childhood memory.

1. As it turns out, this woman is more a representative of _____, of God.
2. This child is _____ who died and rose again.
3. Do you maintain the _____ that God is still in control?
4. Eugene Peterson says, “Organized behavior is prone to _____. Organized _____ is prone to deceit.
5. The first thing to understand when trying to make sense of it (666) is that it is a _____ number.
6. The second thing to grasp is _____ (Assigning numbers to letters).
7. John is exposing Rome for what she truly is, _____, _____.
8. Most likely, John sees all of this as part of one _____ event.
9. So instead of trying to interpret the times and fit them into the Revelation timeline, _____.
Have _____.
Live _____ and alertly.

“God Can Do What We Can’t”

By Pat May

(Based on Revelation 5:1-10)

Reading the Bible is very humbling, and in truth, it spikes a little fear within me. I re-read chapter 5, verses 1-10, and the complete Revelation by John, I was moved from confusion, to somewhat understanding and back. John focuses on the scroll, its writing on both sides, and the seven seals. The writing on both sides struck me as symbolic of the content of it and the seals as showing its sacredness. John wept with sadness that no one in heaven or on earth or below it was worthy to break the seals, again emphasizing the importance of its contents.

John saw a Lamb at the center of the throne, which, to me, represented Jesus. The Lamb was adorned with seven horns and seven eyes, which symbolizes the seven spirits of God sent to all the earth. The Lamb was able to open the scroll which possibly lay out God's destiny of creation going forward.

By Jesus' sacrifice and death, he has shown the way for all of us to have faith in God.

Gracious God, in our confusion, help us to understand. In our unbelief, help us to believe. Thank you for showing us the way. Amen.

**Growing...**

1. In response to the haunting question in Revelation 6:17, God sealed the 144,000 of them. How has God put His seal on us? What protection does that offer us?
2. Revelation 7 includes visions of the "Church Militant" and the "Church Triumphant." What is the difference between them and why is it a blessing for us to know that?
3. Review the seven praises proclaimed upon God in Revelation 7:12. What do they tell us about the nature and character of God? How do they relate to the disasters described in Revelation 6:1-8?
4. There are also seven blessings (if you combine related phrases) for God's people in Revelation 7:15-17. What do they tell us about the eternal life promised us in Revelation 21:3-4?
5. How have you pictured heaven in your mind? Has this study of Revelation changed your view? If so, in what ways?



Serving... This week, offer to pick up groceries or do something else for your neighbor.



Growing...

1. Try to put yourself in John's place as he saw the door to heaven open. Would you be more excited or reluctant, curious or apprehensive, awe-struck or afraid?
2. Why do you suppose heaven is revealed as being full of singing, but very little is said? (A hint to one possible answer, read John 1:1-3 and Hebrews 1:1-4.)
3. John is told that "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" can open the scroll, but then the Lamb, standing as if it had been slaughtered." How do those paradoxical images fit together? How do they illustrate the heart of the Gospel?
4. Along with "Who is Lord?" another central question in *Revelation* is "Who is worthy of worship?" What examples of false worship do we see in the world today? How do the visions in Revelation 4 and 5 help us and encourage us to engage in true worship?
5. John wept bitterly when he thought no one could open the scroll, yet its contents were unknown at the end of Revelation 5, while all creation praises God. What does this say about the main purpose of Revelation? What promise does it make for our future?



Serving...When making a meal or baking this week, make a little extra and give it to someone you know who lives alone.

Weekly Devotion Session 5 “The Blessed End”

“Imagine That”

By Gail Telecky

(Based on Revelation 7:9-17)

“And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.” (v

Of all the seasons, fall is my favorite. The imagery of this season is beautiful.

Until Bibleopoly, I stayed away from the book of Revelation. A recommended reading of Revelation by Craig Koester was suggested. Dr. Koester states in the book to read with an eye to the imagery, which was echoed by Pastor Scott. In Revelation, John describes his vision and I thought, how often do I wonder what my dreams mean. As I continued to read, I was concerned less with trying to understand every verse and at times simply enjoying what I was able to glean from John’s words describing his vision.

A beautiful hymn, “Ye Servants of God,” paraphrases Revelation 7:10-12 in the first four stanzas. Reading Revelation has left me with the certainty of God’s infinite love and caring for each of us, that we as sinners will never match that love. My image of heaven is beautiful; for imagery of eternity, maybe Revelation gives us a glimpse.

Gracious God, as we enter into fall, may the colors and smells and cool air remind you for your many blessings. Amen.



Sharing...Share a memory about a grandparent.

1. The Lamb of God—with _____ horns and seven eyes.
2. The first four of the _____ seals opened by the lambs.
3. Who is this _____ on the white horse? . . . foreign conquerors, or Christ?
4. "But war," Peterson said, "is evil. It is _____ by Christ! Christ does not ride the red horse—ever!"
5. The fifth seal is broken and with it is revealed the _____, those who were slain for their faith.
6. Appropriately, chapter 6 ends with the cry, "_____ is able to stand?"
7. It's the seventh and it's the final seal—Remember seven is that _____ signifies completion.
8. When the lamb opened the seventh seal, there was _____ in heaven for half an hour.
9. The seals end with _____.
10. But Revelation is not a series of _____ events... Gerhard Krodel says it contains messages that are _____ to remove the reader's sense of security and lead them _____ to God."
11. Eugene Peterson says, "St. John's vision presents Jesus _____ God in a seven-point sermon."