

LEAD SHEET

REVELATION - WK 1 IT IS NOT MEANT TO SCARE YOU OCTOBER 2, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL: **WORSHIP WITH YOUR LIFE**

If you want to know God better, give back to Him!

GETTING STARTED

I don't know how much you know about Revelation, but as we start this study, I thought we'd start with a little quiz.

Ten Questions about Revelation:

1. Who wrote Revelation? (*The Apostle John.*)
2. What island is he on as he writes? (*Patmos.*)
3. When Jesus first appears, what items are in His right hand and what is coming out of His mouth? (*Seven stars in His right hand and a sharp, two-edged sword is coming out of his mouth.*)
4. There are four beasts around the throne in John's vision. What are they like? (*The beasts are like a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle.*)
5. How many seals were on or across the "book" that God held ready to be opened? (*There are seven seals.*)
6. How many witnesses were sealed as servants for God? (*144,000.*)
7. What does John do with the little book that was given to him by the angel? (*He eats it.*)

8. Where were those whose names were not written in the "Book of Life" cast? (*The Lake of Fire.*)

9. What is the name of the city that descends as a bride prepared for her husband? (*The New Jerusalem.*)

10. What were the gates in the new city made from? (*Each gate was made from one large pearl.*)

Most of us don't know much about Revelation. Some of what we think we know about the book is incorrect as its not biblically sound, but based rather on pop culture ideas about the End Times. As we start this study, it is important to come to the text with humility, understanding that what we know (or think we know) might not be accurate. Today, we are going to start at the very beginning of Revelation.

DIGGING IN

Read Revelation 1:1-20

Before we get through the first chapter of Revelation, there is already plenty to unpack regarding the book of Revelation. Understanding how the book begins is essential to understanding the rest of the book. This is not meant to be a brainteaser, and it is certainly not meant to scare you away from studying the book.

Today's lesson will set the stage for the entire lesson series. We will also discover more about the man who wrote Revelation and the reason he wrote it.

Introducing Revelation

Re-read Revelation 1:1-3

Discussion Questions:

1. From whom is this revelation received? (*Jesus Christ.*)
2. Why is this revelation proclaimed, according to verse 2? (*Because there are things that must soon take place.*)

3. How is this revelation shared with us? (*Via an angel who reveals it to John, who then writes it down.*)

4. What is promised to those who read it, hear it, and take to heart what is written in the book? (*A blessing.*)

Re-read Revelation 1:4-8

Discussion Questions:

1. Who is the original intended audience of this letter? (*“The seven churches of the province of Asia.”*)

2. Jesus is attributed with several qualities in this in this introduction. What are some of them? (*Him who is, was, and is to come; a Faithful Witness; Firstborn from the dead; Ruler of the kings of the earth; and He loves us, freed us by His blood, and made us to be a kingdom and to serve His God and Father.*)

3. What do these attributes tell the original audience (and us) about the trustworthiness of these words? (*Jesus has the authority and the right to share them, He is faithful, etc.*)

Here are three things we know from the passages we just read:

1. These words are straight from the Lord.

2. They are addressed specifically to a group of churches in Asia (modern day Turkey) that we’ll learn much more about in a couple weeks.

3. The contents of this letter describe events that “must soon take place.”

Now that we know some of the basics of this letter, let’s learn more about the man who wrote the words.

Introducing John

Re-read Revelation 1:9-10

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is John located? (The island of Patmos.)
2. Why is he there? (Because "of the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus.")

We can rightly assume that the John listed, as the author of this book (even though he doesn't say so) is John, the son of Zebedee, mentioned in the Gospels. That's the same John who travelled with Jesus, stood at the cross with Jesus' mother, was persecuted for preaching in the book of Acts, and was also the author of the Gospels of John, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John.

Discussion Questions (Continued):

3. John says he's on the island because of the Word of God. What does that mean? (*Most scholars believe John is exiled on the island for preaching about Jesus.*)

John is banished to Patmos (a mining island) because he spoke up against the Roman Empire by speaking of Christ and His Kingdom, which was against the law. With that backdrop in mind, let's re-read the first revelation he gets from the Lord.

Re-read Revelation 1:10-20

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the voice like that John hears in verse 10? (*It is like a trumpet.*)
2. What does the voice command him to do? (*Write down what he sees and send it to the seven churches.*)
3. Where are the seven churches located? (*Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.*)

There are those seven churches again. They are the original intended audience. However, John isn't writing this down seven times and sending each church a copy. He is not sending one email with six carbon copies. He wrote it down once, and they will pass it from place to place.

Conveniently, he lists the cities in order of their geographical position on a major trade route.

Discussion Questions (Continued):

4. The symbols begin in verse 12. What does John see? (*Seven lamp stands, and "someone like the son of man," with glowing features, authoritative clothing, etc. It is Jesus.*)

5. What is John's response? (*He falls at Jesus' feet.*)

6. What is the response from this figure? (*"I am the First and the Last, the Living One."*)

7. What does Jesus tell John to do? (*Write what he has seen.*)

John is the author of Revelation. He receives these words straight from Jesus. These words were originally intended for the seven churches previously discussed. Although John has been persecuted, he cannot be silenced, and the rest of the book is going to unpack the revelation Jesus gave him.

MAKING IT REAL

For Revelation to make sense, we need to understand how to read it. We'll talk more about the structure next week—John wrote it in a way to highlight a certain event intentionally—but this week there are a few things to keep in mind as we get started.

1. Read it Through the Lens of the Original Intended Audience

While this letter has much information and inspiration for us today, it was written to a first century audience. Based on what you know about the Bible, take a stab at answering these questions:

General Discussion:

- What was the early Church up against in the first century Roman Empire? (They suffered great persecution.)
- How many of the Disciples were killed for preaching? (The best we know from Church history is that all of them but John were murdered for their faith in Christ.)
- What kind of letter do you suppose a persecuted people like this would need? (One of encouragement.)

It is easy to approach Revelation as if it were written just for us. However, even though it applies to us, we were not the original audience. We can't hijack its purpose to fit what we think we need to hear.

Living in a world where you didn't worship the Emperor and the hundreds of other deities meant you were an atheist, Christians were under constant threat of imprisonment, torture, and death. They needed a letter to encourage them, and that is what they got.

2. Read it Understanding that the Events It Talks About Will Soon Take Place

This is a tough one, because most of us think that Revelation contains truth that will happen sometime in the future—the distant future, some of us believe. However, the book of Revelation is not all about the End Times—at least not in the way we may think of it.

Both Revelation 1:1 and 1:3 discuss the events that will soon take place. Some of these events in Revelation may recount things that have already happened, some things that will happen soon, and some things that will happen in

the more distant future. However, all of it is meant to encourage the original audience of things that will soon take place. We can only presume this means continued persecution at the hands of the Romans.

General Discussion:

- If the language about things happening “soon” applies to everything in Revelation, can Revelation solely be a book about the end of time? (*No.*)
- Why do you think people think that Revelation is just about the End Times? (*They don't study the entire book.*)

3. Don't Be Scared

Last of all, as we approach this study of Revelation, I want you to read undaunted. Don't be scared. This is not meant to scare you; it is meant to encourage you! This doesn't mean everything will make perfect sense. This doesn't mean there aren't some terrifying things in this book. We need to be reminded of who is giving us these words.

Re-read Revelation 1:6

Jesus has glory, power, authority, and yet He sends us on a mission to live for Him. He has saved us (verse 5) by His own blood. We don't need to fear. Jesus is for us. In the end, there is no persecution that can stop us, nor is there any judgment to fear so long as we are faithful to Jesus—the giver of these words and the encourager of millions throughout the ages.

Revelation is a book of encouragement for all who will read it.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray for your group as you start this series in Revelation, that they might be encouraged by the Good News that Jesus has saved them and empowers them to stand victorious for Him.