

THE WHOLE BIBLE

REVELATION

This Bible study, one of 66 studies covering the entire Bible, is made up of one-page lessons covering short sections of the book. The electronic format (student's and leader's guides) allows adaptation to individual needs.

Benefits of one-page lessons:

- Hand out only what you need, relative to the length of the class session and how much content you wish to cover. Taken at a steady pace, a page can be covered in about 20 minutes.
- See at a glance all the material that pertains to the section being covered. Use the discussion questions as your basic outline and draw in material from the "Look" and "Apply" sections as you wish.

Suggestions for using these lessons:

- Teach an entire book, or teach just part of a book.
- Use a single lesson sheet for a "19 Minute" style Bible study.
- Use a single lesson sheet as a meeting opener, either as a devotion or a short Bible study.
- Build your own Bible studies. The possibilities are endless. For example:
 - Assemble all the lessons on the penitential psalms, psalms of praise, or David's early years.
 - Assemble sections that deal with predestination, and teach the pertinent passages in their context.
 - Study all references to mountains, cities, nations, etc., pointing out their importance in the lives of God's people.

Note: The appropriate pages in The People's Bible commentary volumes are referenced. However, the authors were given the freedom to develop their own studies, so these lessons are not, in a strict sense, study guides to those volumes.

We pray these lessons will help God's people grow in faith and in service to his kingdom.

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Revelation 1:1-8

John introduces the revelation Jesus gave him

(The People's Bible, Revelation, pages 9-17)

Look

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the rest of the book. The first half of the chapter tells us about the God we worship, his power and love, and salvation in Christ.

Verse 8 *“Alpha and the Omega”*—The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This presents a recurring theme of the book: God and his promises never change.

Discuss

1. Quickly work through the first four verses.
 - Who revealed the content of Revelation? Jesus
 - Who was the source of Revelation? God
 - Who was sent to reveal Revelation to John? an angel
 - Who was to read Revelation? God's servants
 - Who was to write down Revelation? John
 - Why was Revelation given? as a source of blessing to those who read it
 - To whom was Revelation first written? the seven churches in Asia Minor
2. Break verses 4b through 5a into three groups. What does this tell us about our God?

He is constant, never changing. God's Spirit, to whom he has given his church, stands before God's throne. Jesus has given us God's Word, defeated death, and rules over all things.
3. Break down verses 5b and 6. What do these words tell us about Jesus?

He loves us, and he has taken away our sins. We rule with him over all things. We come directly to God through him.
4. On the basis of verse 7, give a short description of why Revelation was written.

Some day God's enemies will see the one they persecuted, and they will mourn as they face his anger. But Christians say: “So shall it be. Let him come!”

Apply

5. Some claim the book of Revelation is so mysterious that no one can truly understand it. React to that idea on the basis of verse 3.

John tells us to take to heart what is written in this book. John could say this only if the book was clear.
6. Some claim that the events of Revelation will happen after the New Testament period has come to an end. React to this idea on the basis of verse 3.

If the events of Revelation were to happen after the New Testament period (the period in which we live), John would have no reason to write to us. He wants us, not people of another time, to take these words to heart.

The introduction lays the foundation for all that follows. John spoke about what God has done for his people in Christ and gave his church certainty in the midst of persecution.

Revelation 1:9-20

John sees Jesus in great glory

(The People's Bible, Revelation, pages 17-24)

Look

Jesus appeared to John. Remember, John was being persecuted for his faith, as many are in the church. Yet, Jesus is with his church (the seven lampstands) and her leaders (the seven stars).

Verse 11 *"The seven churches"*—Seven literal churches in Asia Minor. They are listed in the order in which a messenger would deliver the letters.

Discuss

1. Read Daniel 10:4-6. Here Jesus appeared to Daniel. Compare the vision Daniel saw with the one John saw.

Note the similar details in the clothing and physical characteristics. It is clear that Daniel saw Jesus in his vision. Both times Jesus appeared in order to tell his church what would soon take place. (Note: The details of the vision will be addressed in subsequent verses. You may wish to talk a bit about them here or wait until they come up later, especially in connection with the seven letters.)

2. How did Daniel and John react to the visions? What did Jesus do on both occasions?

Both were deathly afraid of whom they saw. Both times Jesus made it clear that he came to comfort them and to reveal the future of God's church.

3. In verses 17 and 18, Jesus comforts John with some statements about himself. What does each statement mean?

- "the First" Jesus has always existed.
- "the Last" Jesus will exist into eternity.
- "the Living One" Jesus will never die.
- "was dead" Jesus died on the cross.
- "am alive" Jesus rose from the dead.
- "keys of death" Jesus has power over death.
- "keys of . . . Hades" Jesus has power over eternal death.

Apply

4. Look again at question 3. Why do Jesus' words give us strength to stand against everything that threatens us?

Each of these phrases assures us of Jesus' power and love.

5. Pick out the three key words in verse 9. Explain why each word is central in the life of a Christian.

Christians are called to suffer for their faith. This can take on many forms. Yet Christians are safe. They have the kingdom and daily receive God's grace and protection. Therefore, they endure patiently. Ask the class to express some of the ways they are called to endure patiently.

The glorious Jesus appeared to John. Jesus assures his church that he will always be with it.

Revelation 2:1-7

The letter to the church in Ephesus

(*The People's Bible, Revelation, pages 24-29*)

Look

- Verse 1 “*Angel*”—The church’s overseer or elder, what we would call the pastor. In Greek, *angel* means “messenger.” The angels of the church were the men who served as God’s messengers, teaching God’s revealed Word.
- Verse 6 “*Nicolaitans*”—We know very little about the Nicolaitans. From what we read in verses 14 and 15, they seem to have taught sexual license. They may have reasoned that since we are saved by grace and since the body is already corrupt, it is all right to use the body to engage in sin. The church fathers described them as shamelessly self-indulgent.
- Verse 7 “*Paradise*”—A word that reminds us of the perfect Garden of Eden.

Discuss

1. What word of commendation does Jesus give the church members in Ephesus?
The members were serious about holding to the truth. They examined the teachings of so-called apostles and compared their teachings with God’s Word. When they found them to be false, they excluded the false teachers from the congregation. This was good and is something the Lord wants every congregation to do. The church endured hardships, possibly stemming from its faithfulness to God’s Word.
2. What word of criticism does Jesus give the church in Ephesus?
The members were not acting in love, as they had at first. Perhaps they were being faithful to God’s Word but handling church discipline in an unloving way. We can both reject false teachings and show love at the same time. We are able to do this when we are faithful to God’s Word, because we love God and the souls he has bought with his blood. We are able to “hate” (verse 6) falsehood because we know it robs people of eternal life.

Apply

3. What element in the description of Jesus (1:12-16) does Jesus refer to in this letter? How does this fit into the content of the letter to Ephesus? What impact should it have on our church?
Jesus rebukes the Ephesian Christians for their lack of love. He reminds them that he holds their leaders in his hands and that he walks among them. If they do not heed his rebuke, he will remove their lampstand from its place. Whenever a church realizes that Jesus is in its midst and that he continually shows the members his love, they will want to do everything in a spirit of love.
4. Just as each letter looks back to one or two elements of Jesus’ glory, so each letter looks ahead to blessings Jesus will give his faithful. Which blessing is promised in this letter? What does this mean for us?
Adam and Eve and all people were barred from eating from the tree of life, lest they live forever in their sinful state. Someday we will be purified and will again have access to the tree of life, and we will live forever. (See 22:2,14,19.)

The Lord commended the Ephesians for being faithful to his Word, and he rebuked them for their lack of love. He urged them to repent and promises to give his faithful followers access to the tree of life.