

The Book of **Revelation**

Bellaire Auditorium Class
Spring 2023



This booklet belongs to:

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

1. March 8 (W) - The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ
2. March 12 (S) - The words of this prophecy
3. March 15 (W) - To the seven churches that are in Asia
4. March 19 (S) - Write what you see in a book
5. March 22 (W) - **CH. 1-3** — The words of Him who holds the seven stars
6. March 26 (S) - **CH. 1-3** — Who walks among the seven golden lampstands
7. March 29 (W) - **CH. 4-5** — A throne stood in heaven
8. April 2 (S) - **CH. 4-5** — I saw a Lamb standing, as though slain
9. April 5 (W) - **CH. 6** — The Lamb opened one of the seven seals
10. April 9 (S) - **CH. 7** — Who are these clothed in white robes?
11. April 12 (W) - **CH. 8** — Seven trumpets were given to them
12. April 16 (S) - **CH. 9** — Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth
13. April 19 (W) - **CH. 10** — Take the scroll and eat it
14. April 23 (S) - **CH. 11** — Authority to my two witnesses
15. April 26 (W) - **CH. 12** — Now war arose in heaven
16. April 30 (S) - **CH. 13** — I saw a beast rising out of the sea
17. May 3 (W) - **CH. 14** — They follow the Lamb wherever He goes
18. May 7 (S) - **CH. 15** — Seven angels with seven plagues
19. May 10 (W) - **CH. 16** — Seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God
20. May 14 (S) - **CH. 17** — The judgment of the great prostitute
21. May 17 (W) - **CH. 18-19** — Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
22. May 21 (S) - **CH. 18-19** — He will tread the winepress of his fury
23. May 24 (W) - **CH. 20** — He seized Satan and bound him
24. May 28 (S) - **CH. 21-22** — I saw a new heaven and a new earth
25. May 31 (W) - **CH. 21-22** — They will reign forever and ever

How to use this booklet

Perhaps no book of the Bible has been more twisted, abused, distorted, and misunderstood than the Revelation. A lot of religious people have made the book an obsession and have wrenched from its pages all kinds of fanciful predictions about current events and the end of the world. Well-meaning Christians have been deceived by many of these bad interpretations and have therefore developed wrong-headed notions about the book and about events that it may or may not refer to. Because of all the racket made of Revelation, many have responded by avoiding the book altogether, certain that a study will only lead to confusion or conflict.

It is my belief that Revelation is not as complicated as we have been led to believe. In fact, the title of the book indicates that it was written not to conceal, confuse, or cover up, but to “reveal” and make things clear and obvious. This doesn't mean that there are not difficult passages, or that there won't be times in our study when the best we can do is say “I don't know.” But my goal this quarter is to demonstrate that Revelation (like the rest of Scripture) has a powerful simplicity that can and will penetrate the depths of our heart and transform the way we see the world—if only we “have ears to hear what the Spirit says.”

To that end, this study booklet is meant to be a tool for your own exploration of and reflection on the the book. A few notes about how to use it:

- Spend time with each worksheet before coming to class.
- Read the assigned text (at least) out loud and slowly.
- The questions are less about getting “the right answer” and more about guiding you in a reflection on the text. Engage in that reflection honestly.
- Activate your imagination to see, hear, and feel what is in the text.
- Don't worry too much about the details of interpretation before coming to class.
- Instead, stick with what is clear, easy to see, and obviously the main point.
- Come ready to challenge and be challenged, to encourage and be encouraged.

There are many ways to study the Book of Revelation. We could deep dive the historical context and look at slide after slide of Roman archeology. We could go through pages of Old Testament cross references that are relevant to Revelation. We could refute false teaching after false teaching that has been created from the book. In this study, we want to see Revelation as a capstone to the unified story of Scripture and appreciate the simple—yet transformational—reality that “God wins.”

#1 - The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ

In-Class Worksheet

- What is the first word of this book, in English and in Greek?
- What does this word mean?
- What are some biblical examples of this phenomenon?
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- How does the Bible do this for us? Why is it so important?
- What is genre? Why does it matter for reading?
- What is the genre of Revelation? What other scriptures fit this category?
- What are the characteristics of this genre?
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- How might understanding genre help us read Revelation rightly?

#2 - The words of this prophecy

Pre-Class Homework

- Why did God send prophets to Israel throughout their history?
- What were the main points of their message?
- How did they speak of the future? For what purpose?
- When does Revelation say the events will take place (1:1,3; 22:6,7,10,12,20)?
- What are we to make of this kind of language?
- Look at these passages: Deuteronomy 32:35-36; Isaiah 13:6,22; Daniel 9:24-27; Haggai 2:6-9 (see Hebrews 12:26-29); Romans 16:20; 2 Peter 3:8. What insight does this provide about the way the Bible describes God's timing?

In-Class Notes

#3 - To the seven churches that are in Asia

Pre-Class Homework

- If reading the New Testament is “reading someone else’s mail,” what does that mean for how we should read and interpret these letters?
- Who wrote the Book of Revelation? What do you remember about him?
- What is currently experiencing while writing this letter? (see 1:9)
- Who was the Book of Revelation written to? (see 1:4, 11)
- Read chapters 2-3. What are some of the things they seem to be experiencing?
- Read this portion of a letter from Pliny, a governor in Roman Asia, to the Roman Emperor Trajan, c.111. What does it suggest about the attitude toward Christianity?

In the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have followed the following procedure: I interrogated them as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished.

In-Class Notes

#4 - Write what you see in a book

Pre-Class Homework

- Think / jot down the significance of these images throughout the Bible:
 - Garden
 - King
 - Sacrifice
 - Light
 - Temple
 - Babylon
 - Jerusalem

- Read aloud / Listen to the whole book of Revelation (in one, two, or three sittings). Use your imagination to see in your mind's eye what is being described.
 - What stood out most vividly in your imagination?

 - What feelings were evoked by the images that you saw?

 - In one (short) sentence: What is the Book of Revelation all about?

 - Where do you see natural breaks, sections, or transitions in the book?

In-Class Notes (Class #4, continued)

#5 - The words of Him who holds the stars (ch.1-3)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 1-3 all at once. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** the vision of Jesus in chapter 1.
 - How does he appear?
 - What feelings does this vision evoke?
 - What stands out about the nature of Jesus?
- What aspect of the vision of Jesus is referenced in each church's address? How do you think that particular aspect fits with the message that Jesus has for that church?
 - Ephesus
 - Smyrna
 - Pergamum
 - Thyatira
 - Sardis
 - Philadelphia
 - Laodicea

In-Class Notes

#6 - Who walks among the lampstands (ch.1-3)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 1-3 (again). Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **Hear** what the Spirit says to the churches.
 - What is the pattern of the address to each church?

 - What is the situation of, message to, and promise for each church?
 - Ephesus

 - Smyrna

 - Pergamum

 - Thyatira

 - Sardis

 - Philadelphia
- With which church does the Bellaire most closely identify? Why?

In-Class Notes

#7 - A throne stood in heaven (ch. 4-5)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 4 & 5. Read it out loud, follow along as you listen, but go slow.
- **See** the vision of heaven.
 - Describe the scene in chapter 4.
 - What are all the auxiliaries (things around God)? How are they described?
 - How is God described?
 - What feeling(s) are evoked from this vision?
 - How does this vision connect to the situation of the churches in Roman Asia?
- **Keep** the words written.
 - How should we view our situation in light of this vision?
 - How should this vision shape our worship?

In-Class Notes

#8 - I saw a Lamb standing, as though slain (ch.4-5)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 4 & 5. Read it out loud, follow along as you listen, but go slow.
- **Watch** the story unfold.
 - What is the drama playing out in Revelation 4 and 5?
 - What is the significance of a sealed scroll? (see Daniel 12:4, 8-9)
 - What does John **hear** in 5:5? What does he **see** in 5:6?
- **See** the vision of the Lamb.
 - How is He described?
 - What feeling(s) are evoked from this vision?
 - How does this vision connect to the situation of the churches in Roman Asia?
- **Keep** the words written.
 - How did Jesus conquer? How do we conquer?
 - What does Jesus deserve from us? What does that look like?

In-Class Notes

#9 - The Lamb opened one of the seven seals (ch.6)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 6-9. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **Watch** the story unfold.
 - How are the events of chapter 6 a continuation of the story from ch. 4-5?
 - Who is causing the events of each seal to take place?
- **See** the opening of the seals.
 - In general, what happens when a seal is broken?
 - What feeling(s) is evoked by the descriptions of each seal?
- **Hear** and **keep** the words written.
 - What are the questions asked in Revelation 6? What are the answers?
 - How would this vision be meaningful to suffering Christians?

In-Class Notes

#10 - Who are these clothed in white robes? (ch.7)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 6-9 (again). Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **Watch** the story unfold.
 - What are the events playing out in chapters 4, 5, and 6?
 - How are the events of chapter 7 a contrast to the previous chapter?
- **See** and hear the servants of God.
 - What does John hear? What does John see?
 - What feelings are evoked by this vision?
 - What does this vision communicate about God's people?
- How is this vision meaningful to the Christians in Roman Asia? To us?

In-Class Notes

#11 - Seven trumpets were given to them (ch.8-9)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 6-9 (again). Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **Watch** the story unfold.
 - Retell the story of the Lamb and the seals from chapters 4-7.
 - What unfolds when the seventh seal is opened?
 - How is the pattern of trumpets similar to the pattern of seals?
- **See** and blowing of the trumpets.
 - What happens when a trumpet is blown?
 - What feeling(s) are evoked by this vision?
 - Who is causing these events to take place on the earth?

In-Class Notes

#12 - **Woe, woe, woe to those on the earth** (ch.8-9)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 6-9 (again). Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** the patterns of God's activity.
 - What is happening in chapters 8-9?
 - What do the events of the trumpets remind you of from the Old Testament?
 - How does mankind respond to the events of the trumpets?
- **Keep** what is written.
 - How would the description of the trumpets be meaningful for John's readers?
 - How does this vision shape our view of world events?
 - How does this vision train our response to disasters?

In-Class Notes

#13 - Take the scroll and eat it (ch.10)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 10. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **Watch** the story unfold.
 - The angel has an open scroll. How does this continue the story from ch. 4-5?
 - If 'sealing' the thunders means 'holding back', what does that say about God's work in the world?
 - What does John do with the scroll? (see Jeremiah 15:16; Ezekiel 2:8 - 3:4)
- **Keep** what is written.
 - What does this tell us about the nature of God's word?

In-Class Notes

#14 - Authority to my two witnesses (ch.11)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 11. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **Watch** the story unfold.
 - What is the goal(s) of God's activity in the world? (see 6:10, 17; 9:20-21; 11:18)
 - What is the role of the two witnesses/olive trees/lampstands in ch.11?
 - What happens to them? Does this sound familiar?
- **Keep** what is written.
 - What is the temple of God in Jesus? How does that help us interpret the temple language and imagery in Revelation 11?
 - If lampstands are churches in Revelation, what does the story of the two witnesses/lampstands tell us about our purpose and role?

In-Class Notes

#15 - Now war arose in heaven (ch.12)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 12. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** the story unfold.
 - What is the basic plot of the events described?
 - What images / scenes stand out in your mind's eye? What feeling(s) is evoked?
 - Does the identification of the dragon (v.9) help make sense of the rest?
- **Keep** what is written.
 - If the woman / children represent the people of God, how would this chapter be meaningful to the Christians in Roman Asia?
 - What comfort is found in this chapter for us?

In-Class Notes

#16 - I saw a beast rising out of the sea (ch.13)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 12-13. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** the patterns of scripture.
 - Review Daniel 7. In general, how does it help us interpret Revelation 13?
 - What's the relationship between dragon and 1st beast and 2nd beast?
 - How does the beast stand as a direct opponent to God/the Lamb?
- **Keep** what is written.
 - Review Revelation 2-3. How does Revelation 13 describe the experience of the Christians in Roman Asia?
 - How does (should) this chapter shape our view of the relationship between Christians and the nation/government?

In-Class Notes

#17 - Follow the Lamb wherever He goes (ch.14)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 12-14. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** and **hear** the vision.
 - Describe the scene of Revelation 14:1-5. How do the sights, sounds, and emotions contrast the scenes of Revelation 12 & 13?
 - How do God / the Lamb stand as victors over the beast / dragon?
- **Watch** the story unfold.
 - How does the angels' work in this chapter compare to their work in the story of the seals (ch.6-8) and trumpets (ch.8-9)?
 - As briefly as possible, summarize the story of Revelation 12-14.
- **Keep** what is written.
 - Pick one description of God's people from ch.14. How do we live it out?

In-Class Notes

#18 - Seven angels with seven plagues (ch.15)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 15-16. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** and **hear** the vision.
 - What is scene being depicted here? What feeling(s) is evoked?
 - Why call this the “Song of Moses” and the Lamb?
- **Keep** what is written.
 - How does (should) this scene shape our attitude toward prayer? Worship?

In-Class Notes

#19 - Seven bowls full of God's wrath (ch.16)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 15-16. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** the patterns of scripture.
 - How are the seven plagues similar to the plagues on Egypt?
 - What is the significance of this parallel?
 - What is the story of "Babylon" in the Bible? Why might Revelation refer to "The Great City" by that name?
- **Keep** what is written.
 - Review Revelation 2-3. What does it mean for the Christians in Roman Asia to "stay awake, keeping his garments on" (16:14)?
 - What does it look like for us to do that as well?

In-Class Notes

#20 - The judgment of the great prostitute (ch.17)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 15-17. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** and **hear** the vision.
 - How is the Great City pictured and described?
 - What is the significance of referring to Babylon as a prostitute?
 - What eventually happens to the prostitute? What does this tell us?
- **Keep** what is written.
 - How does this description add to our understanding of the pressures facing John's original readers?
 - How is the spirit of Babylon, the Great Prostitute alive and well today?

In-Class Notes

#21 - Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great (ch.18-19)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 18-19. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **Hear** the judgment against Babylon.
 - Pick one thing said of Babylon the Great City from ch.18.
 - How does that thing seem impressive to the world?
 - How does God reveal it for the rebelliousness that it is?
- **Keep** what is written.
 - Stick with that same element of Babylon from above. Do you see it in our society / culture as well? How?
 - In the context you've chosen, what does it mean to "come out of her" (18:4)?

In-Class Notes

#22 - He will tread the winepress of fury (ch.18-19)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 18-19. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **Watch** the story unfold.
 - What scene earlier in the book is chapter 19:1-8 most similar to? What is the significance in "repeating" this scene of heavenly worship at this point?
 - Use this chapter and the previous ones to contrast the Bride of the Lamb and the Great Prostitute.
 - What is most striking about the description of the King of kings?
- **Keep** what is written.
 - Why did John's original readers need this description of Jesus?
 - Why do we need this description of Jesus?

In-Class Notes

#23 - He seized Satan and bound him (ch.20)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 20. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **Watch** the story unfold.
 - Don't worry about specifics—what are the basic plot points of what happens to:
 - Satan
 - The people of God
 - Everyone else
- **Keep** what is written.
 - What do you find “difficult to swallow” about the events of Revelation 20?
 - What do you find comforting about this chapter?

In-Class Notes

#24 - I saw a new heavens and a new earth (ch.21)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 21-22. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** and **hear** the vision.
 - Imagine seeing the new heavens and new earth. What stands out?
 - What feeling(s) are evoked by what you see and hear?
 - Describe the contrast between the New Jerusalem and Babylon the Great.
- **Keep** what is written.
 - Review Revelation 2-3. What promises to the churches are pictured in ch.21-22?
 - What is most hopeful/inspiring to you about the description of the holy city?

In-Class Notes

#25 - They will reign forever and ever (ch.22)

Pre-Class Homework

- **Read** Revelation 21-22. Read it out loud or follow along as you listen.
- **See** the patterns of scripture.
 - Explore connections between Revelation 21-22 and Genesis 1-2.
 - Contrast the people of God described here with the people of the world described here and throughout the book.
 - Describe the reversals that happen to God's people by the end of the book.
- **Keep** what is written.
 - In the context of Revelation, what do you think it means in 22:18-19 to "add to" or "take away from" the words of this prophecy?
 - Why do we not always pray, "Come, Lord Jesus"?

In-Class Notes