



grow. pray. study.

May 17, 2020 “The End of the Book”

Scripture: Revelation 14:12 (NIV), 21:4 (NIV), 22:1-2, 5 (CEB)

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

A hopeful revelation of Jesus

MONDAY 5.18.20 Revelation 1:1-8

John introduced his final book as “a revelation of Jesus Christ.” Revelation focused on both a revelation from Jesus, and a revelation of truths about Jesus. John’s introduction did not suggest fear or foreboding (qualities some people think define Revelation). He greeted the seven churches of Asia (which he quite possibly had pastored), offered praise to Jesus and expressed a hope-filled vision of Jesus’ victorious return to earth.

- The God-given visions in Revelation spoke to the first-century church. We read that, perhaps due to limited literacy (and no printing), John asked one person to read Revelation aloud to the whole church (verse 3). It showed that he was confident the book’s message would make sense and would encourage his fellow Christians when they heard it. How does that tell you from the start that Revelation was more than a hopeless tangle of inexplicable images?
- Pastor Hamilton wrote about verse 4, “It is the same kind of greeting we find in other New Testament letters. Revelation, it turns out, is a lengthy letter (slightly longer than Paul’s letter to the Romans) written to the churches and Christians of what is today central Turkey.” * The letter’s final verse said, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all” (Revelation 22:21). Have you ever read Revelation as a letter focused on helping you better grasp Jesus’ grace and peace? Will you?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, guide me this week as I focus on the parts of Revelation that revealed (and still reveal) you as the one who “loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood.” Amen.

* Hamilton, Adam. *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (p. 281). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

Promises for “those who emerge victorious”

TUESDAY 5.19.20 Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26-29, 3:5-6, 12-13, 21-22

The “letters to the seven churches” in Revelation 2 and 3 either praised or rebuked specific attitudes or behaviors in those churches. We can learn valuable lessons from those warnings and praises. But we too often overlook or brush past the promises made to “those who emerge victorious” in every one of the seven churches. Yet those promises were a key part of Revelation’s overall message of hope.

- In Genesis 2 and 3, the “tree of life” was an image of God’s life-giving power. Humans cut themselves off from that “tree” by choosing to know evil. After Genesis 3 the “tree of life” virtually disappeared from the Bible until Revelation. But Jesus promised the church in Ephesus that he will “allow those who emerge victorious to eat from the tree of life.” How can that promise “whet your appetite” to be a victorious person (cf. [1 John 5:4](#)) who enjoys that restored privilege?

- Hebrews took names seriously as expressing a person's essence. Revelation 2:17's promise of giving those who emerge victorious "a white stone with a new name written on it" echoed God's pledge in [Isaiah 56:5 and 62:2-4](#) to move abandoned, deserted people to being those in whom God delights. In what ways is God already giving you a new, more hope-filled identity? How can you look forward to receiving your "white stone" and "new name" in God's eternal kingdom?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for the assurance that I can emerge victorious, not in my strength but in yours. I'm grateful that, thanks to you, I can depend on having my name on "the scroll of life." Amen.

God and the self-giving Lion/Lamb: source of hope

WEDNESDAY 5.20.20 Revelation 4:1-6, 5:1-14

This glowing picture of the courts of heaven worshipping God spoke powerfully to Christians living in the first-century Roman Empire. "It is said that the current emperor, Domitian, expected worship as 'lord and god.'" * The image that followed must have baffled most Roman officials who worshipped their mighty emperor—who would sing "Worthy is the slaughtered Lamb"? Well, Christians would! They served, as Pastor Hamilton often reminds us, a king who reigned from a cross.

- Calling Jesus "the lion of the tribe of Judah" drew from [Genesis 49:9-10, Isaiah 11:1-10, Jeremiah 33:15](#). (David was from the tribe of Judah). But this strong "lion" also looked like a lamb that was sacrificed (cf. [Exodus 12:3-13, Isaiah 53:7, 1 Corinthians 5:7](#)). How could lion-like power reside in such a "lamb"? How does God's power differ from the human kinds of power we most often see?
- They took up a "new song" (verse 9). That phrase was in many [earlier passages](#). Scholar John Goldingay wrote, "Providing the people a song that they will be able to sing one day is another way of inviting them to live in hope....they're invited to see that they have come this far by faith and can continue in hope, not because their faith or hope is big but because the God they trust and hope in is big." ** Even in these hard, uncertain days, how can your heart join in a new song praising the Lord who gave himself to forgive and save you?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you did what only you could do—you took the worst that hatred and evil could do, absorbed it in yourself and robbed it of the power to ultimately hurt your children. I praise you as the Lion and the Lamb who saved me. Amen.

* Zondervan, NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 288025-288026).

** John Goldingay, *Isaiah for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015, p. 53.

God's redeemed from all ages "out of great hardship"

THURSDAY 5.21.20 Revelation 7:1-17

Will God literally only redeem 144,000 people? No, of course not. "One hundred forty-four thousand: this expression means 'too many to count.' It's 1,000 multiplied by 12 and multiplied again by 12. Twelve recalls the 12 tribes of Israel as well as the 12 apostles." * Verse 9 confirmed that view. It called the same group (the redeemed) "a great crowd that no one could number." Jesus' salvation takes in all those who love and follow God in all ages and all places.

- Most of us are at least vaguely aware that as much as 1/3 of those on earth are at least nominally Christian. But not when John wrote Revelation. "By the end of the first century, Christians likely numbered fewer than 144,000, much less an uncountable multitude....John's vision offered a promise well beyond merely human expectation!" * How does John's vision inspire you to dream about things well beyond merely human expectation that God can do through you and your church?
- Israel used white robes and palm branches (verse 9) in the joyous annual Feast of Tabernacles. Palm branches also were a sign of "victory and rejoicing after war (see [1 Maccabees 13:51](#);

[2 Maccabees 10:7](#))." *** In what ways has God set you free? What spiritual triumphs, personally and in the communities you belong to, do you look forward to as a member of God's family?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when so many parts of life feel hard, I can hardly wait for the promised day when you "will wipe away every tear from [my] eyes." Until then, give me patience and hope. Amen.

* Catherine A. Cory, study note on Revelation 7:4 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 507NT.

** Zondervan, NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook (Kindle Locations 288302-288304). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

*** Catherine A. Cory, study note on Revelation 7:9 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 508NT.

The Lamb's "wedding day"—the end of evil

FRIDAY 5.22.20 Revelation 18:1-4, 11-17, 19:1-9

In 586 B.C., Babylon's army destroyed Solomon's Temple and took God's people into exile. But the prophets said Babylon would also face a day of judgment ([Isaiah 21:8-9](#), [Jeremiah 50:38-39](#), [51:8-9](#)), and it did. In Revelation, "Babylon" symbolized the Roman Empire, which exiled Revelation's writer and persecuted Christians (see [Revelation 1:9](#), [17:5-9](#)). That God and God's Kingdom would in the end outlive the mighty empire that oppressed them filled early Christians with hope.

- Charles Dickens wrote *A Tale of Two Cities*, contrasting London and Paris during the French Revolution. Many Bible students have said that, in a sense, the Bible's story is also a tale of two cities: Babylon symbolizing all forces that oppose God, and Jerusalem God's faithful people. What does it mean for you to be a loyal citizen of "Jerusalem," called to "come out of" (Revelation 18:4) a world that often has many of the qualities of "Babylon"?
- In the vision, many mourned that "such great wealth was destroyed" (18:17). Pastor Hamilton wrote that we're tempted to seek "the trinity of money, sex, and power. But here's the...real point of Revelation: It is not aimed at telling us when the end will happen. It is aimed at telling us that *in the end, none of these gods will be left standing, and that Christians are called to give our hearts and our allegiance only to one God, who is worthy of our praise.*" * The vision asked: would you bemoan losing earthly wealth, or would you sing Hallelujah because you were with Jesus?

Prayer: King Jesus, the greatest compliment I could ever receive is your invitation to your wedding banquet. Teach me, day by day, how to live a life that shows how much I value being your guest eternally. Amen.

* Hamilton, Adam. *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (p. 290). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

The "grand finale" to the Bible's story—a glorious hope

SATURDAY 5.23.20 Revelation 21:1-7, 21:22 - 22:5, 22:16-17

Revelation ended with a glowing, symbol-laden, description of the glory that awaits God's people when God makes our world new. This expanded on Jesus' teaching that, for God's people, the end of the world is about redemption, not fear (see [Luke 21:25-28](#)). Scholar Catherine Cory, like others, noted that "John isn't being transported to an otherworldly place; rather, he's experiencing a new transformed heaven and earth (see [Isaiah 65:17-19](#))." * We need to beware of "getting lost in the weeds" of giant jewels and objects more precious than our minds can imagine. The vision used those objects as symbols to make the point that the greatest reward is that "God's dwelling is here with humankind....God himself will be with them as their God" (21:3).

- As Rome despised (and all too often killed) Christians, John wrote of a splendid future for God's people. He ended the Bible's big story as it began, using images from Genesis 2 to picture the restored (and if anything, better than ever) garden of Paradise. The apostle Paul had said Christians live very differently from those "who don't have any hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). John's vision put that hope into powerful, mind-stretching images. And the exiled seer made it plain that anyone who wishes can choose to be part of that ultimate, life-transforming hope. "Let the one who is thirsty come! Let the one who wishes

receive life-giving water as a gift” (22:17). Have you said yes to that invitation? How can you live every day in the light of that hope?

Prayer: King Jesus, if I wasn't thirsty for your glorious eternal kingdom before, this crisis has left me yearning for the world you will make new. I open my heart and ask you to help me start living now with you as my God. Amen.

* Catherine A. Cory, study note on Revelation 21:1 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 523NT.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Deborah Whaley and family following the death of Mary Jane Thrune (mother), 1/7/2020

Jerry Harnden and family following the death of Deanne Harnden (wife), 2/4/2020

Kathy Ross and family following the death of Rex Galloway (father), 5/5/2020

Edward Harrison and family following the death of Thomas Arrington (grandson), 5/5/2020

Mel Scott and family following the death of Carol Branstetter (aunt), 5/6/2020

Kelly Mages and family following the death of Mason Mages (cousin), 5/7/2020

Shirley Yarick and family following the death of Paul Yarick (husband), 5/8/2020

Danielle Wakefield and family following the death of Matt Wakefield (husband), 5/8/2020

Nancy Southard and family following the death of Robert 'Bobby' Smith (uncle), 5/8/2020

Andrea Ely and family following the death of Bob Ely (father-in-Law), 5/9/2020

Madison Ediger and family following the death of Michelle Ford (mother), 5/10/2020

Brenda Bono and family following the death of Maxine Marks (mother), 5/10/2020

Carol Kelly and family following the death of Don Blim (father), 5/11/2020