



Jesus in all His glory!
Revelation 1 – Leaders version

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including the leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

What does the passage say and mean?

90 minutes

Before you start, explain that the word **revelation** means that something has been revealed, i.e. shown or explained.

Read Revelation 1 v 1-3

1. Who is the Revelation from and to? (v1-2)

It's from Jesus (given to him by the Father) to his servants (i.e. Christians) via John (Jesus' disciple and closest friend, who also wrote John's gospel and 3 letters (1, 2 and 3 John)).

2. What does Revelation 1 v 1 tell us about what the rest of the book is about?

The book reveals what must soon take place.

3. What do we learn about those who listen to what Jesus is saying in this prophecy?

They are blessed.

Before you move on, pick up on a couple of points which your group will need to know in order to understand what Revelation means.

1. This book contains prophecy – God is speaking to tell us about future events. When the Bible uses the word 'soon' (e.g. v1), we need to remember that 'With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.' (2 Peter 3 v 8).
2. The Greek word for Revelation is 'Apocalypse'. Apocalyptic is a description of a style of writing. The apocalyptic style is to show events very dramatically and in what we would now maybe call Fantasy. We are not supposed to take all the events in Revelation literally – that is not how they were originally intended – we are supposed to work out what the imagery represents.
3. There is a lot of nonsense out there about what the book of Revelation is all about and maybe

you've heard some of it. These studies are designed to help you to understand what the prophecy and the imagery are about and what they are not about.

4. Read Revelation 1 v 4-9. Who is the Revelation written to?

The seven churches in the province of Asia (named in v11). Explain that these Christians were undergoing persecution for their faith in Jesus and this is the backdrop to the whole book of Revelation.

5. Read Revelation 1 v 4 and Exodus 3 v 13-15. Who is the one 'who is, and who was, and who is to come' in v4? What is the significance of using this cryptic phrase?

It is the Father, the God of Moses and Abraham/Isaac/Jacob. God told Moses that his name is I AM – expressing his unchanging nature, his dependability, his trustworthiness and leading us to worship him. The use of the phrase in Revelation is designed to make us think back to what we know of God from our OT reading and know that he has not changed. The God we read of in the OT is the same as in the NT.

NB The 'seven spirits' probably refers to the Holy Spirit – there is only one Holy Spirit, the number seven is used to indicate the completion/fulness of the Holy Spirit, 'sevenfold' is a better translation than 'seven spirits' (Johnson 2001, p15).

6. As he writes, John seems to break into song in verses 5-7. How is Jesus described and how are believers in him described?

Jesus is described as the faithful witness (to God's glory), the firstborn from the dead (referring to his resurrection) and the ruler of the kings of the earth (referring to his power and authority) who loves us. He is described as coming on the clouds of heaven (the original readers would have understood the reference to Daniel 7 and the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, a claim to divinity). When this happens every eye will see him and everyone will mourn because of him. Believers are freed from our sins by his blood and are a kingdom and priests to serve God the Father.

7. Why do you think God says that everyone will mourn when Jesus comes back?

Because we will recognise our sinfulness before the Holy God and will grieve over it. On that day, everyone will recognise Jesus – every eye will see him – but it will be too late to believe in him. We will be past putting faith in him because we will see him. The time to make a decision to trust and follow Christ is now, not then.

8. Read Revelation 1 v 8. What does this verse teach us about Jesus?

It's a statement of divinity that teaches us that Jesus is eternal and Almighty. Spend some time thinking about the implications of this.

Questions 9-11 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. Write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

9. **SDL** John now tells us about the vision that God gave him. Read v9. Where is John at the time of his vision, and why? How do you think he felt about this?

He's on the Greek island of Patmos because of God's word and the testimony of Jesus, i.e. he's being held prisoner on an island because he won't stop sharing the gospel. He says that the suffering, the kingdom and the endurance are ours – John was not the only one suffering and enduring for the kingdom of God.

Persecution of the church was widespread.

Discuss what John might have felt; Angry? Honoured to suffer for Jesus? Isolated? Let down? Afraid? Etc.

10. **SDL** John turns round to see who is speaking. What does he see in verses 12-13?

He sees seven golden lampstands (don't try to interpret this yet) and someone 'like a son of man' in a long robe with a gold sash around his chest.

Without reading on any further, ask the group to pause for a minute and try to picture this scene. Then ask them who they think this might be. Don't draw any conclusion yet.

11. **SDL** John describes the man further in verses 14-16. What do you think each detail is meant to tell us?

White hair – relates back to Daniel 7 and Jesus being 'the Son of Man' i.e. God (Johnson 1995, p58)

Eyes like blazing fire – all seeing (Bewes 2003, p32)

Feet like bronze in a furnace – in order to trample the wicked (Hendrickson 1966, p56)

Voice like the sound of rushing waters – authority?

Holding seven stars in his right hand – we'll come back to this in Q15

A double edged sword coming out of his mouth – the word of God, as in Ephesians 6 v 17

Face shining like the sun i.e. too brilliant to look at – this is God the Son in his glory

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The description of Jesus in v 14-16 is to help us understand what Jesus is like, not what He *looks* like. Is this the way you think of Jesus? Why?

We tend to think of Jesus in a non-threatening way – a bloke holding a lamb, a teacher sitting on the floor with a listening audience etc. This is a picture of Jesus in all his glory – it's important that we understand who Jesus really is and understand this description of Jesus. If we don't relate to the Jesus we meet in Revelation 1 v 13-16, we haven't really understood him.

12. Read Mark 1 v 19-20 and John 19 v 25-27. How well does John know Jesus?

John is thought to be 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' (John 13 v 23 and 21 v 20), the one who was closest to Jesus. We also see John, James and Peter being invited to various events that the other disciples don't attend – the raising of the synagogue ruler's daughter in Mark 5, the transfiguration in Mark 9 (John has seen Jesus in His glory before!), Gethsemane in Mark 14, etc. John knows Jesus really well.

13. How does John react to Jesus in Revelation 1 v 17 and why?

He falls at his feet as though dead. Jesus tells him not to be afraid, so obviously John was afraid! John recognises that this is Jesus in all his divine glory and recognises the power and authority of the one stood in front of him.

14. How does Jesus describe himself in v18 and what does he mean?

The Living One – He was dead but now he is alive, He is the one who was resurrected from the dead. He holds the keys of death and Hades (hell) – meaning that he has the authority to liberate their prisoners (Johnson 2001, p123).

15. The chapter closes with an explanation of the seven stars and the seven lampstands.

What are the stars and the lampstands? (v20)

The stars are the angels (likely to mean leaders rather than angelic beings) of the seven churches in v11 and the lampstands are the churches. The significance of the lampstand as an image of a church is that a lampstand's function is to cast light into darkness, and that is what a church should be doing too.

16. Why do you think Jesus wants us to know that He is holding the stars and is among the lampstands?

It's presumably an image of Jesus holding the leaders of the churches and being among/with the churches. Ultimately, it's showing us that He is with us all, because He is with us as a church body. It's worth mentioning that, of the 7 churches who receive letters from Jesus in Ch2&3, six will receive a message of warning because of their current behaviour. But Jesus holds the stars of all seven in His hand.

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What is the main thing you have learnt in the study today?

Check out – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.



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A few notes:

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13. How does John react to Jesus in Revelation 1 v 17 and why?

14. How does Jesus describe himself in v18 and what does he mean?

15. The chapter closes with an explanation of the seven stars and the seven lampstands. What are the stars and the lampstands? (v20)

16. Why do you think Jesus wants us to know that He is holding the stars and is among the lampstands?

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