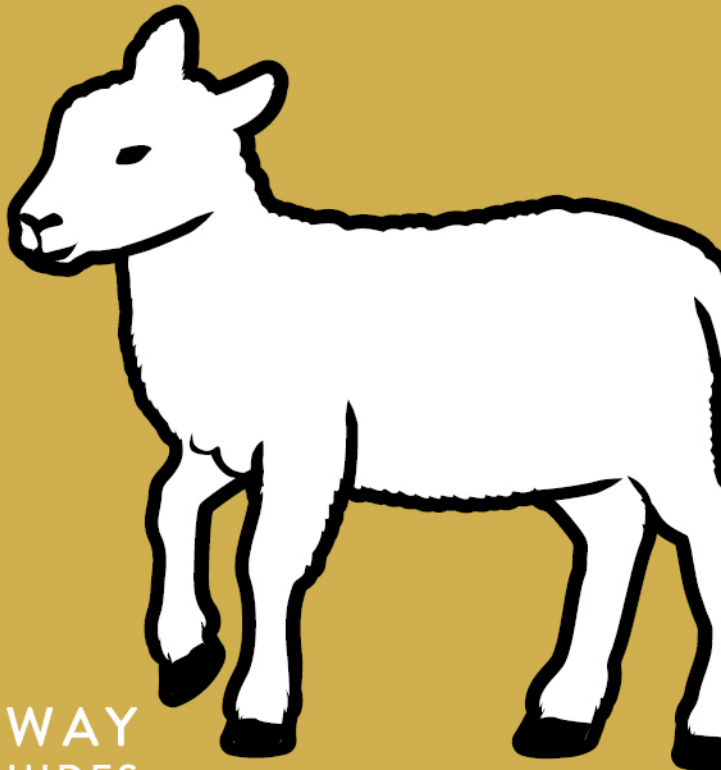


10 STUDIES
+ LEADER NOTES

REVELATION

The Victory of the Lamb



PATHWAY
BIBLE GUIDES



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The Victory of the Lamb

REVELATION

BY DES SMITH

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SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

The Victory of the Lamb

Pathway Bible Guides: Revelation

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Contents

Before you begin.....	3
1: Jesus wins (Revelation 1)	7
2: The letter to the churches (Revelation 2–3)	13
3: The throne room of God (Revelation 4–5)	19
4: The rule of tyrants (Revelation 6:1–8:1)	25
5: The suffering of creation (Revelation 8:2–11:19)	31
6: The persecution of believers (Revelation 12–14)	37
7: The destruction of the earth (Revelation 15–16)	43
8: The end of evil (I) (Revelation 17:1–19:10)	49
9: The end of evil (II) (Revelation 19:11–20:15)	55
10: The new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21–22)	61
For the leader	67

Before you begin

Revelation scares a lot of us.

It's full of strange, vivid images: multi-eyed beasts, angels of destruction, people with swords coming out of their mouths, and dragons. What are we to make of all this? Are these images literal or figurative? And if they're figurative, what do they represent?

It's also quite a violent book. There are lots of plagues being poured out on people, God punishing the wicked, and graphic depictions of the end of the world.

And perhaps most scarily, there's the question of when all this will happen. Is Revelation a chronological description of the end of the world, telling us each of its stages, some of which we can see now? For example, is the beast of the sea in chapter 13 the Soviet Union, or perhaps Napoleon? And should we be trying to look for each of these signs so we can tell what will happen next? Or is Revelation something different to a straight chronology? But if so, what is it?

These are some of the reasons lots of people either avoid Revelation, or dwell on it too much. But in fact, we shouldn't do either, because the book's basic message is clear: Jesus wins. In the end, the lamb who was slain will be victorious over all the enemies of God and his people. This key message of Revelation is communicated in a way that's unfamiliar to us, and there are many historical references that need explaining. But its basic message is an encouraging word for anyone living in a world ruined by evil and wondering if it will ever end: Jesus wins.

That's what we'll unpack over these ten studies.

To get you oriented to the book as a whole, here's how it fits together.

Chapter 1

An introduction to John, Jesus, and the book.

In particular, chapter 1 sets out John's program: "Write therefore **the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this**" (1:19).

John will write:

- *The things that he has seen*—what he has already seen in the lives of the churches under his jurisdiction in Asia Minor (chapters 2–3).
- *Those things that are*—what is currently happening in the throne room of God (chapters 4–5).
- *Those things that are to take place after this*—what will happen between the time of John's writing and the coming of the new creation (chapters 6–22).

The rest of Revelation is John filling out this outline.

Chapters 2–3

The things that he has seen: a letter from Jesus to seven churches in Asia Minor (what we would now call Turkey).

Chapters 4–5

Those things that are: a vision of God and his crucified king, Jesus, and what they are doing now: sitting on their thrones in heaven, having defeated evil on the cross.

Chapters 6–22

Those things that are to take place after this: a vision of life between the time of John's writing and the coming of the new creation in all its fullness. We can break this down into three sections:

Chapters 6–16: Four episodes describing what life will be like during this time:

- 6–7: The rule of tyrants
- 8–11: The suffering of creation

- 12–14: The persecution of believers
- 15–16: The destruction of the earth

These episodes are not in chronological order. That is, Revelation 8–11 doesn't describe what happens *after* Revelation 6–7 (and so on). Rather, they are overlapping descriptions of the same period of time, each describing a different aspect of life before the end of the world.

Chapters 17–20: A description of the final destruction of evil, both earthly and satanic, at the end of the world.

Chapters 21–22: The new creation coming in all its fullness.

If you ever get lost in Revelation, come back to this page to see where you are. Hopefully, like a map, it will help you find your bearings again.

1. Jesus win

REVELATION 1



Getting started

When you think of Revelation, what images come into your head?



Light from the Word

Before you read any book, it's good to know what genre it is. 'Genre' just means a type of book—for example, detective novel, history textbook, or a book of poetry. Knowing a book's genre helps you read it correctly. For example, if you're reading a poem, you'll expect that it might contain lots of images you're not meant to take literally. If you're reading a history textbook, you'll expect to take it much more literally. So, what type of book—what 'genre'—is Revelation?

The opening verse of the book calls it a "revelation", literally, an 'apocalypse'. This plants the book firmly in the 'apocalyptic' genre of writing, which was common in Judaism in the last three centuries BC. Apocalyptic writing usually arose during dark times when evil seemed to be winning, and was written to give its readers hope. It was often deeply symbolic, using coded language to throw potential persecutors off the scent. It was about the certainty that, no matter how bad things seemed, God would eventually win. This is the kind of literature we're dealing with in Revelation.

Read Revelation 1.

1. What do verses 1–3 tell us about Revelation?

2. Who is Revelation written to (vv 4, 11)? What does Revelation 1 tell us about them (vv 5–6, 9)?

3. Who is Revelation written by (vv 1, 4)? What does Revelation 1 tell us about him (vv 2, 4, 9, 10–11)?

4. How does Revelation 1 describe Jesus? Write down everything it says about him.

5. What has Jesus already done about sin and death?

6. What strikes you about John's response to Jesus in verse 17?

Read Daniel 7:1, 9–14. (Daniel also makes heavy use of apocalyptic imagery.)

7. Write or share a brief summary of what Daniel sees.

8. Come back to Revelation 1. What references can you find to Daniel 7? What does this tell us about who Jesus is?

9. What does Revelation 1 tell us the rest of Revelation will be about (vv 1, 11, 19)?



To finish

If Jesus has already freed us from sin and defeated death, how does this help us when we feel guilty or grief-stricken?

If Jesus knows what will happen in the end—if he can tell John to write about things that are “to take place after this” (1:19)—how does this help us when we are worried?



Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks that God is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last—the one who spans all of history and is in charge of it—so we can know that everything will work out in the end.
- Pray that reading Revelation will be a blessing to us and that we will take it to heart.