



Bible
BOOK CLUB

August 2020 - Revelation

OPENING PRAYER

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. Amen.

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. Opening Discussion

Revelation has been a part of the life of the church of Jesus in many ways. As a teenager, I experienced several Christian presentations (usual in films) of Revelation as a frightening experience. Looking back, the films often seemed like attempts to “scare us into believing.” Yet as you read the text of Revelation, you will notice that the text of Revelation finds its way frequently into our liturgy as beautiful expressions of comfort and hope. How have you experienced the book of Revelation in your life?

2. Discussion of the book as a whole

- a) From reading the book, how would you describe the order. . .or disorder. . . of the book?
- b) If the structure of the book as whole is hard to describe, what structures or designs did you notice within the book?

3. Discussion of Context(s)

- a) Author: According to the Introduction to the book provided, who is the author of the Book and what does he do?
- b) Original context: Reading the letters to the churches (Rev 1-3) what seems to be the context for the original hearers of the letter? How would you describe the world they are living in? How does that world view Christianity? Keep this context in mind as you consider the text of Revelation.
- c) Our social context: How would you describe your own faith community and how the world/ the government/ the neighbourhood views Christianity?

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BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

4. A “Walk Through” One Section

The sprawling narrative of Revelation is difficult to understand in a short sitting or two (to say the least)! It is probably best to choose one section to look at closely. While you may choose any section, this guide will walk you through a brief commentary and discussion of The Seven Seals (Rev. 4.1-8.5).

Chapter 4: The vision of heaven

Commentary: Note that chapter 4 describes John going from earth to heaven (vs 1). John then describes what he sees in heaven.

Discussion:

- What in this chapter strikes you as odd or strange?
- What parts of this chapter sound familiar to you?

Chapter 5: The scroll

Commentary: In this chapter we are introduced to a scroll *in heaven* sealed with seven seals. A scroll is rolled up with seals that seal off each section of the scroll. The seals of a scroll can only be broken by one who has authority to ‘unroll’ the next section of the scroll.

Discussion:

- Who holds the scroll initially and who appears on the scene that has the authority to open the scroll?
- How does this image of Christ strike you? What might that image mean to Christians?

Chapter 6: The seals are opened

Commentary: Throughout Revelation keep in mind that the eye of the narrative moves from what is happening on earth to what is happening in heaven and back again. *The heavenly view provides the meaning of what is happening on earth.*

Discussion:

- How would you describe what is happening *on earth* as the first four seals are opened *in heaven*?
- What do you see *on earth* as the fifth seal is opened *in heaven*? What instruction is given to them?
- What do you see happening *on earth* when the sixth seal is opened *in heaven*?
- How does the heavenly and earth view aid in understanding the text?

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BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

Chapter 7.1-8.1: The seventh seal

Commentary: Before the seventh seal is opened on earth, the angels are directed to stop the damage to the earth until 'we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.' 12 thousand from the 12 tribes of Israel (144,000 total) are then marked on earth. Most commentators see these as the ones marked 'for martyrdom'. Many will perish. But only the amount that God has set aside. No more.

Discussion:

- As the vision shifts from 144,000 martyrs to *heaven*, what is happening in heaven?
- What does this scene say to people of faith?
- What happens when the seventh seal is finally opened?

5. "What does this mean?"

- a) What do you think the narrative of the seven seals might mean to the churches of that time that are enduring fierce persecution, hanging on for dear life in a world that set out to eliminate the church of Christ?
- b) What do you hear this narrative saying to the churches of our own context? What Word might the narrative say for family or friends or neighbours in the midst of their personal lives? What do you hear the narrative saying to you?
- c) How might God be speaking to you and to our church today through the Book of Revelation as a whole?

CLOSING PRAYER (from Evening Prayer, ELW)

O God. You have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending. By paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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