

Jesus and the Book of Revelation



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *1 Cor. 10:1–11, Rev. 12:1–17, 19:11–15, Eph. 1:20, Rev. 11:19, 1:10–18.*

Memory Text: “To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne” (*Revelation 3:21, NIV*).

Even the quickest reading of the New Testament reveals an important truth: the New Testament is tied directly to the Old. Time and time again the Gospels and the Epistles refer either to events in the Old Testament or quote directly or indirectly from it. In addition, when referring to Himself and His ministry, how often did Jesus talk about how the “Scriptures” need to be “fulfilled” (see *Matt. 26:54, 56; Mark 14:49; John 13:18; 17:12*)?

The same thing can be said for the book of Revelation. Indeed, it’s all but impossible to make sense of the book of Revelation apart from the Old Testament, especially the book of Daniel. This is one reason why we often study both books together.

A crucial aspect of those Old Testament references in Revelation is that, taken together with the rest of the book, they reveal Jesus. Revelation is all about Jesus, about who He is, about what He has done for His people, and about what He will do for us at the end of time. Any focus on last-day events must keep Jesus front and center out of necessity, which is exactly what the book of Revelation does. This week’s lesson looks at Jesus in the book of Revelation.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 21.

The Structure of Revelation

Among the many things that Daniel and Revelation have in common are their two basic divisions: historical and eschatological (dealing with end-time events). Both these concepts are linked intricately in each book. We may view the historical events as precursors or examples (even if on a smaller scale) of grand and global events in the last days. That is, by studying what happened in Old Testament history, we can have insights for what will happen in our days and beyond. This principle, however, is not limited only to Daniel and Revelation.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–11. In these verses how do we see the principle talked about above?

As we found last week, some of the stories in Daniel (*Dan. 3:6, 15, 27; and 6:6–9, 21, 22*) were localized historical incidents that reflect, somewhat, the end-time events depicted in Revelation. By studying these stories, we can get glimpses and insights into some of the things that God’s people will face on a broader scale in the end. Perhaps, though, the most important point is that, regardless of our immediate situation here, we are assured of ultimate deliverance. Whatever else Revelation teaches, it assures the faithful of victory.

Although there are some exceptions, the historical portion of Revelation is chapters 1–11, followed by the end-time chapters 13–22.

Read Revelation 12:1–17. Where should we categorize this chapter—historical or eschatological, and why?

As we can see, this chapter belongs to both categories. Why? Because it talks about historical conflicts—the expulsion of Satan from heaven (*Rev. 12:7–9*), Satan’s attack on Baby Jesus (*Rev. 12:4*), and the persecution of the church in subsequent church history (*Rev. 12:14–16*)—followed by a depiction of the devil’s attack on the end-time remnant (*Rev. 12:17*).

It has been said that one of the lessons we learn from history is that we *never* learn from history. In other words, regardless of when they live, people keep making the same mistakes. With so much history behind us to learn from, how can we avoid doing just that?

Images of Jesus

Read the following texts. Each contains various names and/or descriptions of Jesus, as well as what He has done, is doing, or will do. What do the texts teach us about Jesus?

Rev. 1:5 _____

Rev. 1:18 _____

Rev. 5:8 _____

Rev. 19:11–15 _____

Rev. 21:6 _____

These are only a few of the many texts in Revelation that depict Jesus in various roles and functions. He is the Lamb, which points to His first coming, in which He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (*1 Cor. 5:7*). He was also the One who “was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (*Rev. 1:18*), a clear reference to His death and resurrection from the dead. “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day” (*Luke 24:46, ASV*). Finally, in Revelation 19:11–15, He is depicted in His role at the Second Coming, when He will return to the earth in power and glory and judgment. “‘For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works’” (*Matt. 16:27, NKJV*).

How can we learn to make the life, death, resurrection, and the return of Jesus the central focus of our own existence and the foundation for the moral choices we make?

The Sanctuary Motif in Revelation

Besides being historical and eschatological, Revelation also has another structural layer, one built around the Hebrew sanctuary. This sanctuary motif is not confined to either of the two major divisions but goes through them both.

In the earthly sanctuary one begins in the courtyard, at the altar of burnt offering, where the animals were slain. After the death of the animal, symbolic of the Cross, the priest would enter into the first apartment of the sanctuary, which was a model of what Jesus did in the heavenly sanctuary after His ascension. This is represented by Jesus' walking among the lampstands (*Rev 1:13*).

Read Revelation 4:1, 2. What does the open door represent? Where is this scene located? *See also Acts 2:33; 5:31; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 10:12, 13; Ps. 110:1; Rev. 12:5.*

Soon after His ascension, Christ was inaugurated in the Holy Place of the heavenly temple, through this first open door. When Christ first appears in the book of Revelation, He is standing before the lampstands of the first apartment in the heavenly sanctuary (*see Rev. 1:10–18*).

Read Revelation 11:19. What is the significance of the fact that as the heavenly temple was opened, John could see the ark of His covenant, which sat in the second apartment of the earthly sanctuary (see Lev. 16:12–14)?

The image of the ark of the covenant in the heavenly sanctuary is an indisputable reference to the Most Holy Place, or second apartment. In the book of Revelation, we can see not just Jesus' two-apartment ministry but the crucial and comforting fact that events in heaven and earth are linked. Even amid the trials of history and the last days as depicted in the book of Revelation, we can have the assurance that "all heaven is engaged in the work of preparing a people to stand in the day of the Lord's preparation. The connection of heaven with earth seems very close."—Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 307.

Christ in Revelation: Part One

Everything in Revelation, from the structure to the content, has one purpose: to reveal Jesus Christ.

That's why the opening words of the book are, "The revelation of Jesus Christ" (*Apocalypsis Iesou Christou*). This generally is understood as (1) "the revelation from Jesus Christ" or (2) "the revelation about Jesus Christ" (*Rev. 1:2*). The fact that it is a "revelation" argues against those who believe Revelation is too hard to understand. Why would the Lord have included the book in the Bible if He hadn't meant for it to be understood by those who read it?

Read Revelation 1:1–8. What do these verses teach us about Jesus?

In Revelation, Christ is introduced as "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (*Rev. 1:5, NIV*), and near the end of the book He is described as "KING OF KINGS" (*Rev. 19:16*). The great news here is that amid all the chaos and confusion on earth, we can have the assurance that our loving Lord and Savior has ultimate control.

In Revelation 1:5, we have been given a clear reference to Christ as the Redeemer. "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (*NKJV*). This text points to His atoning death on the cross. He has not only justified us but sanctified us, as well (*1 Cor. 6:11*). It is in texts such as this one that we can find assurance of salvation because they show us that Jesus is the One who washes away our sins. We certainly can't do it ourselves.

Read Revelation 1:7. What does this teach us about Jesus?

Central to the whole Christian faith is the promise of Christ's return "with the clouds." Jesus will come again, a literal return in an event that the whole world will witness—an event that once and for all ends the suffering, chaos, and ruin of this world and ushers in all the promises of eternity.

What does Revelation 1:8 teach us about Jesus? What hope can we find in this verse that can give us comfort amid whatever trials we are facing?

Christ in Revelation: Part Two

Read Revelation 1:10–18. What does Jesus say about Himself there?

When Jesus appears in these verses, He is standing in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. The revelation of Him in this role was so great that John fell at His feet in fear. Jesus, ever comforting, tells him not to be afraid and points to Himself as “the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last” (*Rev. 1:11, NKJV*)—references to His eternal existence as God. Later He talks about His death and resurrection and the hope that His resurrection brings. Jesus also has the keys of “Hades and of Death” (*NKJV*). In other words, Jesus here is saying to John what He said to Martha at the death of her brother, words that John also recorded: “ ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’ ” (*John 11:25, 26, NKJV*).

With Martha and now with John, Jesus points us to the hope of the resurrection, the culmination and climax of the Christian faith. Without this particular hope, what hope is there?

Read Revelation 22:7, 12, 13. What do these verses reveal about Jesus?

“Christ Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Genesis of the Old Testament, and the Revelation of the New. Both meet together in Christ. Adam and God are reconciled by the obedience of the second Adam, who accomplished the work of overcoming the temptations of Satan and redeeming Adam’s disgraceful failure and fall.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1092, 1093. Yes, Jesus is the beginning and the end. He created us in the beginning, and He will re-create us in the end.

From start to finish, as it teaches us about not only history but about end-time events, the book of Revelation is still the *Apocalypsis Iesou Christou*, the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Again, whatever else we may study about final events, Jesus Christ must be the center of it all.

How can we keep Jesus at the center of our lives each and every day?

Further Thought: “In the Revelation are portrayed the deep things of God. The very name given to its inspired pages, ‘the Revelation,’ contradicts the statement that this is a sealed book. A revelation is something revealed. The Lord Himself revealed to His servant the mysteries contained in this book, and He designs that they shall be open to the study of all. Its truths are addressed to those living in the last days of this earth’s history, as well as to those living in the days of John. Some of the scenes depicted in this prophecy are in the past, some are now taking place; some bring to view the close of the great conflict between the powers of darkness and the Prince of heaven, and some reveal the triumphs and joys of the redeemed in the earth made new.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 584.

The texts we looked at this week, in both the beginning and the end of the book, show just how much of Revelation is about Jesus. Even with all the Old Testament references to historical events, the book of Revelation teaches us more about our Lord Jesus. See Revelation 3:14; 5:5, 6; 7:14; and 19:11–16 for even more texts in Revelation about Him. When we put these texts together, we can get a powerful representation of Jesus and what He should mean to us as those who claim to be His followers.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 What does it mean for us that all through the New Testament constant reference is made to the Old Testament? What should it tell us about how central Scripture should be to our faith and how seriously we must take the Word of God? How can we protect ourselves against any and all attempts to lessen the authority of the Scriptures in our personal lives and in the life of the church?
- 2 Skim through the book of Revelation and collect as many other texts as you can that talk specifically about Jesus. In class, read the texts aloud. What else do they reveal to you about the nature, work, power, and character of our Lord? What comfort do you derive from what these texts reveal?
- 3 In a world of death, how can we learn to find hope and comfort in the promise of the resurrection of the dead?

“A Small Woman”

by VANESSA ROCHA

Seventh-day Adventist leaders assigned me to lead evangelistic meetings at an Adventist university during a 2016 outreach effort that resulted in an unprecedented 110,000 baptisms in Rwanda.

The pastor approached me after 173 young people were baptized at the end of my meetings.

“Now that we are friends, I can tell you this,” he said. “When I was told I was going to have an American preacher come to my site, I was very excited. I was expecting a big, strong, tall, white man. But when they presented you, a small woman, as our speaker, I was very disappointed. So, I didn’t expect much. But my dear sister preacher, I’m so sorry for my little faith. You have done a work that none of us has been able to do at this school.”

Truthfully, I don’t have much to offer. But when you have a willing heart, God will do extraordinary things. What made the mission to Rwanda so successful? The answer is simple: Total Member Involvement—having every church member do his or her part in sharing Jesus.

In Rwanda, I saw that local church members made it their personal duty to reach out to their communities. They put aside the idea that evangelism is the pastors’ job alone. Church members had no special training; they simply used their God-given talents to reach those Christ came to save. They realized that Jesus is coming soon and that we as Seventh-day Adventists have a higher calling. They said, “Here am I, Lord, send me.”

I met many Rwandans, young and old, who said, “Vanessa, I have been in the church for so many years and never have I seen the church do something like this. But now I realize I don’t have to wait on the church. It simply starts with one person. It starts with me.”

Young people came to me and said, “I’m not a preacher. I’m not a singer. But I have many friends and a lot of influence. My life will be the sermon. Because of everything I’ve learned during this evangelistic series, I will start giving Bible studies.”

The sincerity of these church members changed Rwanda in much the same way that Jesus and His 12 disciples changed the world in three years. How much more could we do if we took hold of this mission of Total Member Involvement in our local churches? How much sooner would we see Jesus?



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The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Revelation 1:1*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Comprehend the purpose and the structure of the book of Revelation, and understand the central role of Jesus in the history of salvation.

Feel: Draw nearer to and relate to Jesus Christ, who reveals Himself in His Word, in history, and in the personal life of the believer.

Do: Listen to the Word of God and obey His instructions, and place God in the beginning and at the end of all his or her projects.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Central Idea of the Book of Revelation

- A** Why is the last book of the Bible entitled “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”?
- B** How is the book of Revelation related to the book of Daniel?
- C** What can the structure of the book of Revelation teach us?

II. Feel: Jesus in You

- A** Why and how does Jesus help me to draw near to God?
- B** Why should my religion be related to my daily life?
- C** How does the Revelation of Jesus Christ help me to love God?

III. Do: To Hear Is to Obey.

- A** What is the sign that you have understood the Revelation of Jesus Christ?
- B** How do you begin and end your days?
- C** What are your priorities in your projects?

► **Summary:** The book of Revelation is not only interesting and intriguing because it deals with the mysteries of God; it is also concrete and relevant because it concerns your life and the destiny of the world.

Learning Cycle

►STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Revelation 1:3*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The key to the book of Revelation does not depend solely on your ability and your skills to unlock its symbols. It also lies in the way in which you respond to God’s calling in this book to repent and serve the Lord. Conversely, your good intentions to be pious and to please the Lord should be enlightened and guided by your diligent and attentive study of the Word of God.

Just for Teachers: From the outset, the book of Revelation outlines the methodological principles that should characterize any approach to this book. We are urged to “read,” “hear,” and “keep.” Reading is the first and fundamental step. The truth is not found in ourselves; it has to be found in a text that has been inspired by God. It is defined as a “prophecy” to be “heard.”

In Hebrew, the verb “hear” has a double meaning; it first means “understand” (*1 Kings 3:9, Neh. 8:3, Rev. 2:7*), which implies that our intelligence, our intellectual effort, is required. But “hear” also means “obey,” which implies that we should be willing to turn our understanding into actions and respond to God positively. The third verb “keep” reminds us that spiritual life is a continuous and repetitive process: we must maintain, fresh in our minds and hearts, what we have read and heard. Hence, the repetition of this principle at the end of the book (*Rev. 22:7*).

Opening Discussion: Note that the first verb, “read,” is in the singular, while the other two verbs are in the plural: implicit in the grammar is the idea that there is one reader and several listeners. The multiplicity of listeners, included without question in the plural form, suggests that the book of Revelation belongs to a worship context. Thus, we should not read it alone. Discuss with your students what principles and truths this worship, and collective, setting implies.

Questions for Discussion:

- ❶ Why is it important to read the book of Revelation in the company of like-minded seekers of the truth?
- ❷ What skills and emotions does this group reading imply?

►STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: Three fundamental requirements should prepare the students of your class to engage and stay on the right track in deciphering the book of Revelation: (1) the important connection of the book of Revelation with the Old Testament, and in particular, with the book of Daniel; (2) the general structure of the book; and (3) the focus on the Person of Jesus Christ.

Bible Commentary

I. The Most Hebrew Book of the New Testament (*Review Revelation 1:4 and Exodus 3:14 with your class.*)

The book of Revelation could be considered the book of the New Testament closest to the Old Testament. We may count 2,000 allusions to the Old Testament, including 400 explicit references and 90 quotations of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. This book is so anchored in Hebrew that it has been said that it can “barely be understood by anyone who isn’t proficient in Hebrew.” John opens his message to the seven churches with a greeting originating in the God of the Old Testament. The *shalom* comes from “Him who is,” a phrase that defines the God Yahweh, who reveals Himself to Moses at the burning bush (*Exod. 3:14, NKJV*).

But the book that is by far the most present in Revelation is the book of Daniel. The first word of the book, “revelation,” is a keyword of the book of Daniel, where it also introduces his prophetic visions (*Dan. 2:19, 28, 29, 30, 47; 10:1*). The book of Revelation begins the way that Daniel ends, with a blessing, as if Revelation were understood by John to be Daniel’s continuation. The book of Daniel ends with a blessing that is rooted in the waiting that points to “the end of the days” (*Dan. 12:12, 13, NKJV*), and the book of Revelation begins with a blessing that has the same horizon, “for the time is near” (*Rev. 1:3, NKJV*). Even the way John refers to himself to introduce his vision, “I, John” (*Rev. 1:9, NKJV*), echoes Daniel’s technical expression “I, Daniel” that is used in the context of his visions (*Dan. 7:15; 8:15, 27; 9:2; 10:2, 7; 12:5, NKJV*). All these observations in the first verses of the book of Revelation should encourage us to study the book in close connection to the Old Testament and to the book of Daniel.

Consider This: What are the dangers of reading and studying the New Testament without taking into consideration its relationship to the Old Testament? How did the Christian church fail in this area? Why was the book

of Daniel the most popular book of the early Christians? What greeting did the early Christians create from their reading of the book of Daniel?

II. The Illuminating Structure *(Review Revelation 11:19–14:5 with your class.)*

Like the book of Daniel, the book of Revelation is divided into two sections, and like the book of Daniel, the book of Revelation places at its center God’s judgment in the end times and the coming of the Son of man (*Revelation 14; compare with Daniel 7*). The first part of the book of Revelation focuses on the history on earth from the time of John to the coming of Christ, while the second part of the book focuses on the history in heaven from the time of the coming of Christ to the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem.

In addition to this division into two parts, the structure of the book of Revelation relates also to the space and the times of the sanctuary. The space of the sanctuary is suggested by the progression of the apocalyptic vision from the sacrifice of Christ, which evokes the altar (*Rev. 1:5*); to the candlestick, which evokes the first apartment of the sanctuary, the “holy place” (*Rev. 1:10–18*); and then to the ark of the covenant, which evokes the second apartment of the sanctuary, the “most holy place” (*Rev. 11:19*). The times of the sanctuary are suggested by the allusions to the seven Jewish festivals that mark the rhythm of the progression of the vision, from Passover (*Rev. 1:12–20*) to the Feast of Tabernacles (*Rev. 21:1–8*). This multifold structure of the book of Revelation accounts for the rich and meaningful message that is conveyed there.

Consider This: What lessons may we infer from the connection between the sanctuary and the various parts of the book of Revelation? Why is the event of God’s judgment located at the center of the books of Revelation and of Daniel? (Compare with the function of Leviticus 16 at the center of the Pentateuch.)

III. Christ at the Center *(Review Revelation 1:5, 18; 3:21 with your class.)*

Jesus is present everywhere in the book of Revelation. He appears in the beginning to identify the essence of the book, “the Revelation of Jesus Christ” (*Rev. 1:1*), and to trace its very origin “from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead” (*Rev. 1:5, NKJV*). And He appears at the end of the book in the concluding grace (*Rev. 22:20*), in which we hear Him, again, as a witness speaking of His coming and in which we receive His grace in the meantime (*Rev. 22:20, 21*). Inside the book, the various aspects of Jesus Christ’s ministry are referred to, namely, His role

as the Passover lamb, which provides salvation; His survival from death; His role as the One who walks within His church; and His final victory on the white horse as a glorious king (*Rev. 19:11–16*).

Consider This: Why is Jesus Christ central to the book of Revelation? What is the most important symbol that is used in the book of Revelation to represent Jesus Christ?

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: The book of Revelation is full of blood and seems to present God as a vengeful God. How can we reconcile these cruel descriptions with the notion of a good and loving God? Luther rejected the book of Revelation. How might such perceptions of violence have contributed toward his rejection? What important ethical lesson can we learn from the book of Revelation? Why is it important to know that God will judge humankind?

Application Question: Why, and how, should the book of Revelation affect your life?

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: The book of Revelation has often inspired fanaticism, perhaps, because it is read too often in isolation from other parts of the Bible. Why is it not wise to read the book of Revelation by itself? What other books of the Bible should be read along with the book of Revelation?

Activities:

① Ask members of your class to search out the various symbols in the book of Revelation.

② Discuss with them their meaning and their relation to the symbols of the Old Testament.
