

Small Group Guide

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

The Church at Brook Hills

David Platt

August 5, 2012

Revelation 1:1–8

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

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Revelation 1:1-8

What is the book of Revelation?

- A series of apocalyptic visions...
 - Predominant use of symbols and numbers.
- Filled with prophetic pronouncements...
 - The kingdom of God has come and will soon be consummated.
- Written as a congregational letter.
 - From God in Christ through an angel to His servant for the church.

When will these prophecies be fulfilled?

- Four different interpretations...
 - Preterist: They were fulfilled in the first few centuries of Christianity.

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- Historicist: They have been and are being fulfilled in the course of Western Christian history.
- Futurist: They are largely unfulfilled (Chapters 4-22 are still awaiting fulfillment in the future).
- Idealist: They are fulfilled symbolically throughout the history of the church.
- Three millennial views...
 - Premillennialism: Jesus will return before the millennium.
 - Postmillennialism: Jesus will return after the millennium.
 - Amillennialism: The millennium is the present church age, and there is no other future millennium to come (before or after Jesus' return).
- Two important contexts...
 - Specific historical context
 - Overall biblical context
- One significant reminder...
 - This book was not written to create confusion for the Christian, cause division in the church, or promote speculation about the coming of Christ.

Why was it written?

- To give unshakeable hope to suffering Christians.
- To encourage unwavering holiness in a seductive culture.
 - Filled with promises of blessing for the faithful.
 - Filled with warnings of judgment for those who are falling away.
- To refute deception in the church.
- To fuel mission among the nations.

How is all of that accomplished?

- Through a grand portrait of God's greatness.
 - He is sovereign over all history.
 - He is supreme above all things.
- Through glorious pictures of God's gospel.
 - Look to the past...Jesus is the conquering Savior who redeems.
 - Look to the present...Jesus is the cosmic Lord who rules.
 - Look to the future...Jesus is the coming King who will reign forever.
 - Feel His affection for you.
 - Experience His liberation of you.
 - Realize your position in him.
 - We're not just people under his rule; we're participants in his reign.
 - We not only have access to God; we're also now ambassadors of God.
 - Give your adoration to him.
 - Live with anticipation of him.
 - Humbly wail over your sin.
 - Patiently wait for his return.

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Message Summary

Dr. Platt introduced the book of Revelation today. It is a congregational letter that is both apocalyptic and prophetic in nature.

When interpreting this book or any Scripture, we consider the specific historical context in which it was written, as well as the overall biblical context. The timing of the fulfillment of prophecies in Revelation has long been debated. There are four primary interpretations regarding timing: preterist, historicist, futurist, and idealist. Each has strengths and weaknesses. There are also three views on the nature of the millennium. These differences should not divide us as Christ followers.

The book of Revelation was not written to create confusion, cause division, or promote speculation. It was written to give unshakable hope to suffering Christians, encourage unwavering holiness in a seductive culture, refute deception in the church, and fuel mission among the nations. As we marvel at God's greatness and see the glorious pictures of His gospel in this book, we can live in present obedience to the Lord of the universe, Jesus Christ, knowing that He loves us and is coming for us.

Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- How does reading Daniel 2 (especially verses 28–30 and 44) help us understand Revelation 1:1–3? What category or categories of biblical writing would the book of Revelation fall into? Why should the majority of this book not be interpreted literally?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the four primary interpretations of the book of Revelation? Which do you think has the strongest case? Why should differences in interpretation regarding these matters not divide us?
- Why is context critical for biblical interpretation? What issues create the context for interpreting the book of Revelation?
- What types of questions sometimes distract Christians when studying the book of Revelation? What should be our focus when studying this book?
- How do you think the book of Revelation gives hope to suffering Christians? What types of suffering might Christians have experienced in the first century? How might Christians suffer now? Do you think the book of Revelation can give hope to suffering Christians in any country during any time period? Why?
- How do God's promises of blessing and warnings of judgment encourage unwavering holiness in a seductive culture? What temptations did first-century believers face? What temptations do you face in your context? How are the challenges different and how are they similar?
- Why do you think the book of Revelation ends not with a vision of heaven but with a calling to remain faithful? What does it say about the purpose of the book?
- Why and how should the message of God's greatness combined with glorious pictures of His gospel fuel mission to our neighbors and the nations? (Read Revelation 1:7–8.)
- Is Jesus now ruling and reigning or is His kingdom only coming in the future? Why is the wording of Revelation 1:4 and 8 significant? How can His eternal sovereignty comfort us in trial and encourage us in good times?
- Is the book of Revelation a story of two equal and opposing forces? Why not? How should the truth of God's supremacy affect how we interpret and react to events and situations in the world? in our lives?
- Read Revelation 1:5–6. Who is the focus of the book of Revelation? How do you think studying this book will enable you to feel the affection of Christ for you? What has Jesus done for us? What is He doing now? What will He do for us in the future?
- As Christians, we are free and forgiven. We are participants in the reign of Christ. He has made us His ambassadors. How should these truths impact our daily lives?
- Jesus is coming back. How should His certain return affect our attitude toward the things of this world? our sin? our mission to the nations? Read Daniel 7:13

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Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church.

Weekly Prayer Focus ...

- **Pray for Our Lives:** *On this Sunday, we will begin a study of the book of Revelation. We will see that the main purpose of this book is to exhort believers from the first-century to the twenty-first century to exalt Christ as the sovereign Lord over history and His church and the supreme victor over all the enemies of God and His people. Specifically, we will see how the introductory verses set the stage for the rest of this book as John gives us a heavenly perspective on redemptive history in order to compel us to faithfully follow the Lord of history. Pray for God to help us to look beyond the temporary to the eternal. Pray for God to give us a heavenly perspective, through His Word, to compel us to trust and follow Him. Pray for God to encourage us with the hope that one day, all will be made right.*
- **Pray for Our City:** *This week we are praying for New Community Baptist Church in Gate City, Donnie Chapman, pastor. We are also praying for the Christian Service Mission, which is a ministry that serves local churches by connecting resources with needs and serves whole communities as a community development catalyst for Christ-followers. They are still serving alongside churches to aid families and communities affected by the tornado disasters in April of 2011 and January of 2012.*
- **Pray for Our World:** *This week we are praying for Brook Hills field partners Paul and Megan P. serving in South Asia. Paul and Megan serve among an unreached people in India. Their main goal is to engage Muslim men and women with the gospel through English and leadership training. Paul and Megan have received short-term and mid-term teams from Brook Hills. To know more information about Paul and Megan, read their blog at ourdozenbeautifulfeet.blogspot.com.*