

# Small Group Bible Study – Revelation 1

**Theme:** *Seeing What Is Really Going On*

**Primary Text:** Revelation 1 (with brief previews of Revelation 2–3)

## Opening (5–10 minutes)

### Icebreaker

- When you hear the word *Revelation*, what images or assumptions come to mind?
- How might those assumptions help—or hinder—our reading?

### Prayer

Invite God to “unveil” what is already present but often unseen.

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## Part 1 – What Kind of Book Is Revelation? (Revelation 1:1–8)

*Apocalyptic, Prophetic, Pastoral*

John gives us the interpretive keys right away. Revelation is not a puzzle to decode but a **reality to perceive**.

### 1. Apocalyptic: An Unveiling

(Read Revelation 1:1–3)

#### Key Insight

- *Apocalypse* means **unveiling**, not catastrophe.
- According to Bauckham and McKnight, Revelation pulls back the curtain to show the **true spiritual and political realities** beneath everyday life.
- This is not secret knowledge for elites—it’s public truth for faithful communities.

#### Discussion

- What does this text say Revelation is meant to *do* rather than merely *inform*?
- What might need “unveiling” in our own cultural or political moment?
- Why do you think John says this book is a “blessing” to hear and keep?

#### Reflect

- How does this challenge fear-based or speculative approaches to Revelation?

## 2. Prophetic: God's Word to the Present

(Read Revelation 1:4–8)

### Key Insight

- Revelation functions like Old Testament prophecy: it speaks God's truth **into a concrete historical moment**.
- McKnight emphasizes that prophecy here is not prediction but **covenant confrontation**—calling God's people back to faithful allegiance.
- Empire (especially Rome) is named for what it truly is, without ever being flattered.

### Discussion

- What words or phrases sound most like Old Testament prophecy?
  - How does John hold together comfort and confrontation?
  - Where do you see tension between loyalty to Christ and loyalty to surrounding “empires” today?
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## 3. Pastoral Letter: Written to Churches Under Pressure

(Read Revelation 1:9–11)

### Key Insight

- Peterson and Johnson stress that Revelation is deeply **pastoral**.
- John is a fellow sufferer, not a distant visionary.
- The goal is not escape but **endurance, faithfulness, and worship**.

### Discussion

- What pressures does John share with his readers?
- How does suffering shape the tone of the book?
- Why do you think worship plays such a central role in forming faithfulness?

## Part 2 – The Vision of Jesus (Revelation 1:12–20)

*Seeing Jesus as He Truly Is*

This is the interpretive center of the whole book. Everything else flows from who Jesus is.

(Read Revelation 1:12–16 aloud slowly)

### The Sevenfold Portrait of Jesus

John presents Jesus using **seven symbolic descriptions**, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Psalms. Seven signals **completeness and perfection**.

1. **Among the lampstands** – Present with His churches
2. **Robe and golden sash** – Priest-king authority
3. **White hair** – Divine wisdom and eternity (Daniel 7)
4. **Eyes like fire** – Penetrating, truthful judgment
5. **Feet like bronze** – Stability and strength
6. **Voice like many waters** – Overwhelming authority
7. **Sharp two-edged sword** – Truth that confronts and heals

### Key Insight

- Bauckham highlights that John applies **Old Testament descriptions of God** directly to Jesus.
- This is not a gentle, manageable Jesus—but the risen Lord who reigns.
- Yet this same Jesus stands *among* the churches, not above them at a distance.

### Discussion

- Which image of Jesus stands out most to you—and why?
- How does this vision correct or deepen common pictures of Jesus?
- Why do you think worship, not strategy, is the first response John records?

(Read Revelation 1:17–18)

## Follow-up

- Why does Jesus say “Do not be afraid” before saying anything else?
  - How does Jesus’ victory over death reframe present suffering?
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## Part 3 – A Preview of the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3)

### *One Lord, Seven Contexts*

End with a brief orienting overview (no deep dive yet).

### Key Insight

- The churches share the same Lord but face **very different challenges**.
- Johnson emphasizes that Jesus knows each church intimately—its context, temptations, and faithfulness.

### Quick Summary

- **Ephesus** – Faithful but loveless
- **Smyrna** – Suffering yet faithful
- **Pergamum** – Compromised by accommodation
- **Thyatira** – Loving but morally compromised
- **Sardis** – Alive in name, dead in reality
- **Philadelphia** – Weak yet obedient
- **Laodicea** – Comfortable, self-sufficient, and blind

### Discussion

- Why do you think Revelation begins with churches rather than global events?
  - Which church feels most familiar to the Western church today?
  - What does this tell us about Jesus’ priorities for His people?
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# Closing Reflection & Prayer

## Final Question

- If Revelation is meant to *form* us through worship, endurance, and hope, what is one posture or practice God may be inviting you into?

## Prayer

Invite the group to pray using Revelation's language:

- Praise for who Jesus is
  - Confession where vision has been clouded
  - Commitment to faithful witness under pressure
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## Take-Home Thought

Revelation does not begin by showing us the future.

It begins by **showing us Jesus**—and once we see Him clearly, everything else looks different.