

Small Group Study: Revelation 16 – Exposure, Endurance, and End

Big Idea

Revelation 16 is not a prediction of future disasters but a **prophetic unveiling**: exposing the true nature of evil, calling the church to faithful endurance, and assuring us that evil will ultimately collapse under God's justice.

“Revelation teaches the church to see—and once we see rightly, we can live faithfully.”

Opening (5–10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question:

Have you ever trusted something (a system, plan, or institution) that later proved unreliable or broken? What changed your perspective?

Opening Prayer

Scripture Reading (10 minutes)

Read **Revelation 16:1–21** aloud together.

Part 1: EXPOSURE (Rev. 16:1–11)

Key Idea

The bowls reveal—not random destruction—but the **moral exposure of idolatry and corrupt systems**.

“They cursed the God of heaven... and refused to repent.” (Rev. 16:9,11)

“The judgments of Revelation are not arbitrary punishments but the exposure of the consequences of idolatry and injustice.” — Richard Bauckham

Teaching Insight

- The bowls echo the **plagues of Egypt**.
- Just as Pharaoh’s heart was exposed, so too are the **hearts of those aligned with empire**.
- The tragedy is not suffering—it is **stubborn refusal to repent**.

“The deeper problem in Revelation is not suffering but refusal to repent.”

Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you about people’s response to the bowls (vv. 9, 11)?
2. Why do you think people **refuse to repent even when consequences are clear**?
3. What modern “systems” do people trust that may ultimately fail? (e.g., wealth, power, influence)
4. How does this passage challenge where we place our own security?

Group Reflection

The things people trust most—**earth, sea, economy, power structures**—become sources of suffering. What might that reveal about misplaced allegiance in our world today?

Part 2: ENDURANCE (Rev. 16:12–16)

Key Idea

The church is called not to control events but to **remain faithful and spiritually alert**.

“Blessed is the one who stays awake.” (Rev. 16:15)

“The task of the church is not to take over the world but to bear witness to the Lamb in the middle of it.” — Eugene Peterson

Teaching Insight

- The “battle” imagery points to **spiritual deception**, not geopolitical prediction.
- The frog-like spirits symbolize **propaganda, lies, and manipulation**.
- This connects with **Ephesians 6:12**—our battle is not against flesh and blood.

Evil rarely conquers through force alone—it spreads through **distorted truth**.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean practically to “stay awake” spiritually?
2. Where do you see **deception or distorted truth** shaping culture today?
3. How can Christians remain **alert without becoming anxious or fearful**?
4. What does faithful witness look like in a confusing or chaotic world?

Application

- Stay rooted in Scripture
 - Practice discernment
 - Resist panic and polarization
 - Remain a faithful witness to Jesus
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Part 3: END (Rev. 16:17–21)

Key Idea

Evil contains the seeds of its own destruction—its collapse is inevitable.

“It is done!” (Rev. 16:17)

“Babylon represents every empire that builds its greatness on violence and injustice.” — Scot McKnight

Teaching Insight

- The language echoes Jesus’ words: **“It is finished.”**
- Babylon symbolizes **human systems built on arrogance, violence, and exploitation.**
- Armageddon is not about modern war—it represents the **final gathering of evil powers**, already doomed.

“The powers gather for war not simply with weapons but through deception that draws the nations into conflict.” — N. T. Wright

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to know that evil will ultimately collapse?
 2. How does this change how we respond to powerful systems today?
 3. What does it mean to live with confidence in the Lamb's victory now?
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Closing Illustration

The fall of the **Berlin Wall (1989)**:

For decades it looked permanent—immovable, powerful, untouchable. But when pressure mounted, it collapsed almost overnight.

What seemed strong was already cracking.

Connection to Revelation:

- Babylon looks powerful—but it is already falling.
- Evil appears organized—but it is internally unstable.
- The church does not destroy it—it **simply remains faithful**.

“Walls fall. Empires fade. But the kingdom of the Lamb stands forever.”

Final Application (Take-Home Truths)

1. **Do not give your allegiance to systems that cannot last.**
 2. **Do not confuse noise with authority.**
 3. **Stay faithful—even when evil appears strong.**
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