



UNIT: DIFFICULT NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

LESSON 3 | THE BOOK OF REVELATION

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That the Book of Revelation was written to encourage all believers that even though they will face trials and tribulations, God is with them to the end of time and beyond.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: Read the Book of Revelation with a newfound understanding of why it was written and what it is trying to communicate.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Revelation 1:1-10, 4:1-8, 6:15-17, 7:9-14, 21:1-4, 22:13, Daniel 7:9-12, Romans 8:18 & 24-25, Philippians 3:8-11.

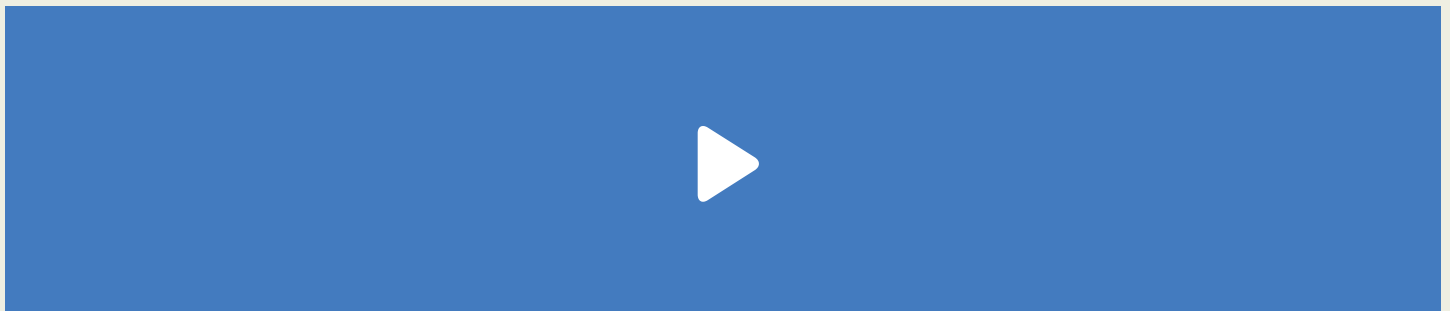
ANCHOR STATEMENT: The Book of Revelation reminds all believers of God's promise to dwell with His people eternally and offers comfort to all believers. From the beginning to the end and beyond, God is with His people.

OVERVIEW:

While we may not understand every detail of the Book of Revelation, we are able to understand its overarching message: God holds our future, He is there for His people, and He holds the victory over sin and death. By helping students understand the context of Revelation, they will grow in their ability to read and digest its truth for their life today.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Anchored* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the *Bible Background* to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Revelation

- *Author:* The writer of Revelation identifies himself as John four times. Scholars agree that it is most likely John the Apostle, son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' most beloved disciples.
- *Time frame:* Revelation was written toward the end of John's life somewhere between 90 and 95 AD.
- *Purpose:* The purpose of Revelation was to reveal the fullness of Christ's identity and to provide hope for suffering Believers at the time who were encountering grave persecution and suffering. Today, it provides us hope for what is to come, as well as a stark warning of the battle that rages until Christ returns.

Daniel

- *Author:* Daniel wrote this book while in exile (Babylon)
- *Time frame:* Daniel was written around or about 165 B.C.
- *Purpose:* The book of Daniel is written as a prophecy for God's people. Although in the middle of exile, God's people would eventually be delivered just as Daniel (and his friends) were delivered.

Romans

- *Author:* Paul is the author of Romans.
- *Time frame:* Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- *Purpose:* Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. In addition, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, it was essential that a level playing field be given to all Believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

Philippians

- *Author:* The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians. Of course, we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.
- *Time frame:* Philippians was one of the last letters Paul wrote before he was martyred, sometime around A.D. 62.
- *Purpose:* Philippians was written to Paul's close friends at the Philippian church, thanking them for their kindness and prayers while he was in prison. And he was encouraging them not to lose their faith because of his persecution.

THE SETTING

The Book of Revelation is unique in the New Testament. The Gospels look back at Jesus' life on earth; letters often encourage believers in the present, but the Book of Revelation looks at past, present, and future. Written in apocalyptic style, this book draws back the curtain that separates physical and spiritual realities, allowing both John and the reader to experience God's battle against evil, even to the end of the age.

THE MAIN POINT

The truths, hope, and purpose we find in the Book of Revelation can fill us with passion for Jesus. Although it has been given a strange reputation, this book is not meant to strike fear in the hearts of believers. Revelation is more than the 'end times.' It is about a God Who is over all time. As students get to know this often misunderstood book, they will be able to interact with it better and receive God's promises to His people that no matter what comes, He is in control, and He will be with us.

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible Study section called *The Main Event*; and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* This lead in activity is to help the leader gauge their group's knowledge of Revelation.
- *Set-Up:* Depending on your preference, below are questions that you can ask aloud. You may want to have individual pieces of paper to write on, plus some writing utensils so you can review answers later.

FIRST, explain to students that you are going to begin this lesson by finding out what all they have heard about the Book of Revelation. Follow the prompt of questions below, and take a quick inventory of where your students are at:

- **Let's start with something simple: Is the Book of Revelation in the Old Testament or the New Testament?**
 - *Answer:* The New Testament. Give your students some encouragement on this one if they all get it right. It may seem silly, but you want to try and lighten the mood! This is a scary topic for some, and we want to create a safe space for learning.
- **What feelings do you have when you think about the Book of Revelation?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Who wrote the Book of Revelation?**
 - *Answer:* John
- **What is the Book of Revelation about?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Make sure that students know Revelation isn't just about "the end of the world," as they may have been led to believe. There are several things included within the book, such as greetings to the seven churches!
- **How do you think the Book of Revelation is meant to be used by Christians today?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Let students struggle here- don't give them an answer.

THEN, say something like:

- **There are a lot of people who believe the only reason we should read the Book of Revelation is if we are trying to prove that the End of the World is upon us. But what if I told you that this book is actually a book of great hope for Christians? While there are a lot of things in it that are terrifying and strange, the underlying message is that God is with us and for us to the end of time and beyond!**

FINALLY, if there are no questions, transition into the Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* To help students see the bigger picture of the Book of Revelation.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, explain to your students that we will establish the context of the Book of Revelation. And to do that, we are going to begin by looking at what the book says about itself.

Read or have a student read Revelation 1:1-10.

THEN, walk students through the following questions. Refer to the Bible Background information above to give hints. **Ask:**

- **Who is the writer of this book?**

o *Answer:* John (Refer to Bible Background Details)

- **Who is John writing to? Who does he say is his audience?**

o *Answer:* It says that John was writing to the seven churches in Asia, but the prologue also gives an ambiguous “whoever reads these words.” This means that the Church at large can also benefit from reading Revelation.

- **When was Revelation written?**

o *Answers will vary.* Odds are, students don’t know this. Ask them to give their best guess.

Say something like:

- **The date that Revelation was written is actually quite important, and we’ll get into why in just a minute. But I do have some unfortunate news. Biblical scholars have been arguing between two answers to this question for years! We have reason to believe that Revelation was either written in 95-96 A.D. or 68-69 A.D.**

Explain to students that, like other books in the Bible, we only have copies of Revelation. And these copies were obviously made after the original letter- sometimes decades after. For this reason, we can’t point to the exact year that it was written. This leaves us with two options. We can turn to different Church History sources, which state that it was written 95-96 A.D. Or, we can look at context clues within the book. What was going on at the time this was written? Can we gather any clues about what John might have been talking about? **Ask students:**

- **Ok historians: Can anyone tell me what important events and things were going on around 70 A.D.?**

o *Answer:* The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by Rome.

- **What are the implications of John writing an ‘end of the world’ style book a year before the Temple is destroyed, as opposed to it being written 25 years after?**

o *Answers will vary.* If students have caught on, they might point out that some of what John is talking about might be more immediate prophecies that were filled a year or two after they were made.

- **How can the difference in dates help us decipher parts of Revelation?**

o *Answer:* When it comes to the prophetic portions of Revelation, some of it could have already been fulfilled/not fulfilled, depending on when it was written.

NEXT, explain to students that contextually, it would be easier if the book of Revelation was written just before the Temple was destroyed in Jerusalem, but it’s really hard to ignore the voices in Church History who maintain that it was written later. As we learn more about Revelation, these two options are helpful to keep in mind. **Explain to students that we must also take into account the genre of Revelation when reading it.**

- **The genre of Revelation is less of a mystery. Actually, it fits into three categories of genre, each of which helps us understand what John is communicating. The first genre will not be surprising at all, because we have read Revelation 1:4. John was writing an epistle- or more commonly called “a letter.” John was not writing a journal entry or a novel. Revelation was written to real people in real churches.**

Explain to students that the second genre is Prophetic. **Ask students:**

- **Can anyone name a prophet from the Old Testament?**

o *Answers will vary.* (Examples: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Joel, Amos, Hosea)

- **And what did prophets do in the Old Testament?**

o *Answer:* Prophets had two main roles: Warning God’s people against God’s response to their behavior and imparting God’s promise of His faithfulness (particularly in the coming of Christ.)

THEN, say something like:

- **Just like the Old Testament prophets, John was tasked with warning God's people about the dangers of not following God as well as imparting God's promises of His faithfulness. And just like the Old Testament prophets, these promises center around God coming to live alongside His people. We call this the 'Return of Christ.'**

Read or have a student read Revelation 21:1-4. **Ask students:**

- **What is this passage promising?**
 - *Answer:* That God will return to dwell with His people. He will remove death once and for all!

Explain to students that this is one of the most hope-filled passages in the entire book of Revelation. It's a great example of John's prophetic writing as well. But there is one more genre we are still missing. **Say something like:**

- **When you heard that we were going to talk about Revelation, you might have gotten excited because you know that you can't talk about Revelation without talking about the word 'apocalypse.' An apocalypse is often defined as the complete and final destruction of the world. In books and movies, we see this event played out as an unimaginable catastrophe. But did you know that 'apocalyptic' was also a style of writing in the early first century as well?. In fact, Revelation is not the only book in the Bible that fits into the apocalyptic genre!**

THEN, read or have a student read Daniel 7:9-12. **Say something like:**

- **In this passage, Daniel is describing a time when Jesus, referred to as the Ancient of Days, will take an eternal throne and rule over the final judgment. Keep in mind that Daniel is writing this hundreds of years before the time of Jesus. However, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Daniel was given a special view of the 'end times.' As you read, you might have noticed that there were beasts and fire and language that kind of sounded like it was coming from a really good fantasy novel. These are hallmarks of apocalyptic literature.**

Read or have a student read Revelation 4:1-8. Then **ask:**

- **What are some similarities you see between this passage and what we read in Daniel?**
 - *Answers will vary.* (Examples: Thrones, Beasts, etc.)

Say something like:

- **Hopefully, all of this is giving you a good picture of Revelation and making it less scary. The reason that Revelation has been given its own lesson in our Difficult New Testament Passages unit is that it has been given a pretty weird reputation. Odds are, you have been told by someone that Revelation is a 'road map to the end times' right before they've pulled out their phone to show you a random headline that 'was predicted in Revelation.' Let's just get one thing out of the way before we dive into a few more passages in Revelation: this book is not meant to scare you. It's not a book that is filled with dark ancient secrets or biblical codes that you are supposed to decipher. In fact, if all you take from Revelation is that you need to find a storm shelter and stock it full of food, then you've completely missed the point!**

Read or have a student read Revelation 6:15-17. **Ask:**

- **Why did the people in this passage hide?**
 - *Answer:* Because they were scared of Jesus. They didn't want to face God.

Say something like:

- **When we read on in Revelation, we see that this fear and hiding is only for those who have rejected God.**

We tend to think of the apocalypse as a horrible thing, but that's only true for those who reject Jesus and cling to the power they have in this world. For believers in Christ, the destruction of this world and all the sin within it means the formation of a new one that is a perfect and holy dwelling place! It's exciting and something that we look forward to because when Christ returns, it will be for eternity.

Read or have a student read Revelation 7:9-14. **Say something like:**

- Do you see the great contrast between those who have trusted God and those who have not? For a believer, the return of Christ is something that brings us in from all over the world, and from all across time. Jesus' return is a celebration for us and an opportunity to worship! Simply put, the closer the world seems to the 'end,' the more we are focused on worshipping and celebrating Jesus! One of the ways that John describes the multitude of people worshipping Jesus is that they had all been through tribulations. Tribulation is a word that essentially means trials, such as oppression, distress, or affliction.

Read or have a student read Romans 8:18 and 8:24-25. **Ask:**

- How can these passages in Revelation and Romans comfort us when we face trials and tribulations here on Earth?
 - *Answers will vary.* Make sure students see that these things are temporary and nothing compared to the joy we will receive when Christ returns.

NEXT, **say something like:**

- All followers of Christ will face tribulations. But that is why Revelation is a book of hope for us! Over the past 2,000 years, there have been many believers who could likely start their testimony with, "You think you had it bad? I had to deal with (blank)." Revelation wasn't written only to the generation of believers that immediately precede the return of Christ, but to ALL believers. All of us share in the trials of Jesus. But that isn't the only thing we share with Him!

Read or have a student read Philippians 3:8-11. **Ask students:**

- How does this impact your view of Revelation?
 - *Answers will vary.*

Explain to students that Revelation is a reminder to believers that no matter what we face, even if it's the end of the world, God will ALWAYS be with us. Read or have a student read Revelation 22:13. **Say something like:**

- Even though it would be fun to go through all of Revelation, we don't have the time today. But if you walk away with one key verse, let it be Revelation 22:13. In this verse, Jesus proclaims that He is the Alpha and Omega. He is the beginning AND the end. In other words, there is not a single moment that God isn't present in your life. In the good days or the bad, God is with His people- to infinity and beyond, as Buzz Lightyear would say. And while not every moment in your life is a sign of the end times, one thing has been true for the last 2,000 years. The world is fallen. And while the world around you is in chaos, and the people who cling to the world are hiding behind rocks and trying to avoid the end, you know that the end of the world is only the beginning of something much better!

THEN, remind students of their Anchored Statement:

THE BOOK OF REVELATION REMINDS ALL BELIEVERS OF GOD'S PROMISE TO DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE ETERNALLY AND OFFERS COMFORT TO ALL BELIEVERS. FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END AND BEYOND, GOD IS WITH HIS PEOPLE.

FINALLY, ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to the Last Word portion of your lesson.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To empower students to live each day with the passion, hope, and purpose we can find in Jesus.
- *Set-Up:* A posterboard and marker for every 2-4 students you have in attendance, as well as an example posterboard to display up front (details below).

FIRST, explain to students that as you begin to wrap up your lesson, you want to give them an opportunity to reflect on how Revelation and its message of God being with us always impacts their daily lives. **Say something like:**

- **A big truth we see throughout the book of Revelation is that all believers will face trials and tribulations but that God is in control, above all things. When we let these truths live in our hearts, it transforms how we see our world every day. We are going to practice together how we can carry the hope of Jesus into our everyday circumstances and struggles.**

THEN, instruct students to divide into groups of 2-4, and for each group to gather a poster board and a marker. Have them divide the poster board into three equal columns. Have them title the first column “Everyday Struggle,” the second column “Responding Without Hope,” and the third column “Responding With Hope In Jesus.” (*Leader Tip: To save time, you could prep these posterboards ahead of time*).

Display an example like the following:

EVERYDAY STRUGGLE	RESPONDING WITH HOPE	RESPONDING WITH HOPE IN JESUS
Making a bad grade.	I'll never be good at school or amount to anything.	God has a plan and purpose for my life. This is just one grade! I've got the God who comforts on my side.
A friend betrays you by sharing a secret.	Ignoring this friend for the rest of your life and not trusting others.	Jesus was betrayed and He responded with forgiveness. Because Jesus loves and forgives me, I can ask God to help me forgive this friend and show them His love.
Fear of the future.	Fearing anything and everything outside your control, and avoid trying anything new, talking to anyone new, and ultimately avoid life in general.	Trusting God is in control of everything, including my future, and resting in the peace of His love for me. God did not give me a spirit of fear, but one of love for Him!

NEXT, instruct students to spend some time filling in their own poster boards. Depending on time, you can have a few students share when they are done or simply share within their groups. Then, **say something like:**

- **When we see that Jesus holds victory over everything, even the end of the world, we can rejoice because we know that He can help us overcome everyday struggles and circumstances. Now that you have a good foundation of Revelation, I hope that you will be excited to read it on your own, not as a ‘road map to the end times,’ but as a joyous reminder that Jesus is coming back to join His people. And when He does, it’s going to be AWESOME!**

FINALLY, if there are no more questions, close the lesson in prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.