

Revelation

LESSON

1

■ A Study of Revelation 1

DAY ONE

Word of God

Read Revelation 1, concentrating on verses 1-3.

1. What is the main content of Revelation (verse 1)?
2. What are the two things to which John testifies?
3. In the Old Testament God promises us revelation. Read the following scriptures and tell what is to be revealed.

Isaiah 56:1

Daniel 2:28 and 47
4. John began each of his writings, which became books in the New Testament, with statements about how the Word of God was revealed in Jesus Christ. Summarize these scriptures.

John 1:1

1 John 1:1-2

Revelation 1:1

5. We are also promised a future revelation beyond prophecies of the Old Testament and Jesus Christ in the flesh of the New Testament. Record the following passages that testify to this.

Matthew 10:26

2 Thessalonians 1:7

1 Peter 1:13

6. From each of the following scriptures, give a phrase to describe the Word of God.

Colossians 1:25-27

Hebrews 4:12-13

MEMORY CHALLENGE

Psalm 103:1

*Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless His holy name.*

7. According to Revelation 1:3, what are the three ways to be blessed?

In the Old Testament, each Hebrew book was named in accordance with its opening words. This is also true of Revelation, which is the revelation of or about Jesus Christ. One good definition of “revelation” would be “disclosure of fact.” This book gives us a word picture of what will happen in the future, with Jesus Christ as the focus.

The process by which God makes known through visions the events of the final days on earth is called “apocalypticism.” These are not dreams, but revelations of God. As we see in the Old Testament Book of Daniel, the revelation is generally brought by an angel to a seer as prophecy for the community of believers.

In Revelation 1:1 we are promised that this book is the divine disclosure of Jesus Christ. When He comes to claim His kingdom on earth, He will do so in power, glory, and triumph. Christ is the fulfillment once again of God’s promises and His Word. *He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God* (Revelation 19:13).

According to Revelation 1:3, the ones who read, hear, and heed the Word of God in the prophecy of Revelation are promised a blessing. Some commentators believe “read” means to read aloud in a group or worship service. Reading the Word of God is always a blessing. However, the Word must not simply be read, but must be heard in such a way that it causes us to obey or heed. James 1:23-24 tells us, *If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.*

In the Greek language “blessed” means “happy,” but in Hebrew it means bowing down before God and finding the right pathway amid many false pathways. It would mean the discovery of meaning and significance in the face of chaos or confusion. This was true of the Psalms and Proverbs, which often speak of our paths holding difficulties, problems, doubts, and hardships. But in spite of our circumstances, we can put our trust in Almighty God, who has everything under control and whose Word is always true.

C. S. Lewis wrote a wonderful series of stories for children titled *The Chronicles of Narnia*. One of the books, *The Horse and His Boy*, is the story of a young man named Shasta who is to warn the king of Narnia about an upcoming attack by the Tashians. His horse, Bree, is a wonderful aid to him, but on one nighttime occasion, Shasta has to ride a different horse, and the mountain path is treacherous. The horse refuses to obey his commands, and Shasta

is overcome with fear. He begins to feel a presence beside him, although he can see nothing. When he attempts to learn the identity of the presence, the reply is simply “Tell me your sorrows.” So Shasta complains that he is cold, tired, and hungry and that the task given him is too difficult. He laments about the long and dangerous journey, how lions have chased him, and that his childhood was unhappy. The answer given by the presence, who is Aslan the lion and the symbolic representation of Jesus Christ in C. S. Lewis’s stories, is “I do not call you unfortunate.” Why? Shasta is enduring hardship, but he is blessed, for he is on the correct path. He has Aslan beside him to comfort and guide him, as well as the promise of reaching his destination. Aslan never guaranteed Shasta that the assignment would be easy. He simply promised that if he stayed on the right road, he would accomplish it and, in the process, be blessed.

So blessed is the person who discerns the right path or the will of God and therefore derives the meaning of life in this way. Undoubtedly, the right road is the Word of God. *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (Psalm 119:105). As we study His Word in Revelation and choose to hear and heed, we, too, will be blessed.

DAY TWO

Witness

Read Revelation 1:4-6.

- If we understood Revelation 1:4-6 as describing the Trinity, which verses would describe whom?
 Father:
 Son:
 Holy Spirit:
- Christ is described in three functions in verse 5. List these, and match them to the appropriate scripture.

a.	Colossians 1:18
b.	Psalm 89:27
c.	John 8:18
- List the three things Christ has done for us as described in Revelation 1:5-6.
- Give a title to the five things Christ witnessed to in His ministry by filling in the blank for each of the following scriptures.

Jesus witnessed to the	
Nature of _____	Ephesians 2:3
Need for _____	2 Chronicles 12:6
Nearness of _____	2 Peter 3:7
News of _____	Luke 2:30 ¹
- Was this witness of Jesus always believed? Answer by summarizing John 3:11.
- Jesus Christ bore witness of God's truth. Summarize the following scriptures.

John 14:6

John 18:37
- God bore witness that He sent Christ. Summarize John 5:31-32, 37.

The Greek word for "witness" is translated "martyr," which could indicate verification or validation. Certainly a witness speaks from firsthand knowledge. This is what Jesus did, for He came to bear witness of the truth of God. In His witness, He revealed the name of God, the nature of sin and wrath, the need for righteousness, the nearness of judgment, and the news of salvation. Jesus Christ's witness was always and ever faithful to God.

These verses start with the typical greeting involving grace and peace, followed by an elaborate description of the Source of grace and peace, which includes the Trinity, a threefold description of Christ, and three characteristics of the salvation of Christ. This information is being sent to the seven churches in ancient Asia, which is not the same as present-day Asia. These seven churches basically represent all the good and bad churches throughout the ages. The churches are called to be a part of the kingdom of God, which in the New Testament is not territorial but a kingdom of relationship. *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel* (Mark 1:15). All believers are then called to be priests in the sense of offering spiritual sacrifices and praise to God. Revelation 1:4-5 refers to the fact that Jesus is known to individual believers. In verses 5-6, we see that Jesus is known to the Body of Christ. In verse 7, it is revealed that Jesus will be known to the world.

Matthew 24:14 tells us, *This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.* Christ is the faithful witness, but we must remember that as we are to imitate Christ, we also are to become faithful witnesses. In this first chapter of Revelation, as His witnesses we are described as servants in verse 1 and blessed in verse 3. In verse 5 we're the beloved. In verse 5 we're also set free. Finally, in verse 6 we are commissioned to represent the kingship of God in the world as His priests and citizens. If we are faithful, we are promised that we will witness the return of the High King to establish His kingdom on earth.

What does being a faithful witness to Christ and God's kingdom mean to you? Are you taking seriously the fact that Christ will return to claim His rightful place as head of the kingdom of God on earth? Or are you living your life selfishly instead of witnessing of the truth of Christ to a sinful and dying world? At the close of this day's lesson, take several minutes to humble yourself before the Faithful Witness, and open your heart to what He may want to say to you.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

In a Bible concordance or dictionary look up the word "bless," and define it here.

DAY THREE

Who Is, Who Was, Who Is to Come

Read Revelation 1:7-8.

1. What will happen when Christ comes with the clouds (verse 7)?
2. How does Christ describe himself in verse 8?
3. Throughout the Bible, God reveals himself and His Son through the term "I Am." Look up each of the following scriptures, and record the part that refers to "I Am."
 - Exodus 3:6
 - John 6:35
 - John 8:12
 - John 10:11
 - John 11:25
 - John 14:6
 - John 15:5
 - Revelation 21:6
4. What did God mean when He spoke of himself and His Son in verse 8 as *who is and who was and who is to come*? Write your own ideas, and then summarize the following scriptures.
 - Psalms 90:2
 - Hebrews 13:8
 - Revelation 22:13
5. Our personal image of God is changed as we experience Him. Look up the following two stories, and write

who God became known as to His servants after they experienced Him.

Genesis 22:1-14

Exodus 17:8-16

6. Can you think of a way in which God became personal to you through experience? What name would you give Him to fit this situation?

In his book *Exploring Revelation*, John Phillips points out that the terms "Alpha" and "Omega" describe God in His omniscience. Omniscience is God's knowledge. God created everything and knows all there is to know about everything. He is also the beginning and the end, which means He is omnipresent. Omnipresence is the universal presence of God everywhere at all times from the beginning of time to the end of time. Finally, God is omnipotent. He has infinite power and is known as "the Almighty." In the *words who is and who was and who is to come*, we see the God of the past as revealed to us throughout His Word. We see Him in the present because we choose to believe. We see Him in the future because we have faith that what He has said and done in the past and present He will also do in the future.¹

"Jehovah" is actually a compound word formed from three words. The first word means "He is," the second means "He was," and the third means "He will be" or "He will come." Another phrase that ties together "omniscience," "omnipresence," "omnipotence," and "Jehovah" would be "God is the Eternal."

Who is and who was and who is to come is a powerful tool for how God explains himself to humanity. His Word begins with *In the beginning God . . .* (Genesis 1:1) and then throughout the Bible gives us descriptions of Him in many ways and forms. One of the most graphic descriptions is His great "I Ams," of which *who is and who was and who is to come* is a form. For God to become personal to us, we must come to know Him in one of these "I Am" forms.

Becky was a single mother with two small children. She had a great faith in God and had seen Him lead her all the way through difficult days when her husband left her. Money was tight, but she just believed she should keep putting one foot in front of another and trust God for her needs.

One big problem for Becky was that she disliked her job. She thought the male boss was too friendly, while the other women in the office were catty and critical. The pay was only average, and a better-paying job would really help. She had to drive farther to work than she liked, and the company expected overtime when things were not finished—yet did not pay extra for it. She had no support system there, and each workday became a drudgery. She felt trapped because she needed the money the job provided.

One day Becky's boss called her into his office. He closed the door and became physically aggressive. By some miracle, she was able to get out of his grip, open the door, and flee. After she got home, she called the personnel department and resigned. She prayed, "Lord, I don't know how the kids and I are going to manage, but I'm at peace that this is what I'm to do."

The next morning as Becky got up for her devotional time of Bible reading and prayer, it came to her that God was her Deliverer. She felt led to read Psalm 144 and found in verse 2, *My lovingkindness and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer; my shield and He in whom I take refuge, who subdues my people under me.* That day God became even more personal to Becky because she came to know Him as her personal Deliverer.

When God delivered her, did He take care of her? Absolutely! During the next two months, the children's father was faithful to pay his child support. She received some money from her retirement account at her previous job and got an unexpected check from an unknown source. Her friends brought food, and her parents were able to pay her gas bill. Furthermore, she quickly landed a new job that was closer to home, paid better, never had overtime, and had two wonderful Christian women working there. Becky stayed at that job for eight years until she remarried and moved to another state.

When Becky waited on the Lord and refused to take matters into her own hands, she gave God an opportunity to be her Deliverer. But He also gave her an opportunity to know Him better through her own experience. He became even more personal. She knew Him as "I am your Deliverer." He is, He was, and He is to come. May we choose to experience those names too.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

Write Psalm 103:1 below.

DAY FOUR

Worship

Read Revelation 1:9-11.

1. In Revelation 1:9, John says that he is on the island of Patmos for two reasons that are titles of earlier days in this lesson. He was there because of the w _____ and Jesus Christ's _____.
2. Using a dictionary or Bible concordance, record a definition of "worship."
3. What happened to John when he was worshipping *in the Spirit*?
4. John must have prepared for worship. How do we prepare for worship? Give ideas from the following scriptures.

Psalm 95:6

Mark 12:30

Acts 16:25

Romans 12:1

Hebrews 13:15

Patmos is one of the Sporades Islands and lies 37 miles west-southwest of Miletus in the Icarian Sea. John was

banished there for about 18 months. He says he was a partner with fellow Christians in (1) suffering, to test and purify their loyalty, (2) the kingdom, and (3) faithful endurance. While isolated in this place, John developed his ability to worship. Willard Sperry emphasizes that “worship is a deliberate and disciplined adventure in reality.”¹ John’s worship was a daily discipline, and it certainly became an adventure.

Humanity is forbidden to give worship to any but God alone. This was originally lined out in the Ten Commandments and reiterated in Exodus 34:14: *You shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.* Jesus confronted Satan with this when He said, *It is written, “YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY”* (Luke 4:8).

To be able to worship in the same Spirit as John did, we must certainly give our worship to God alone. This means not honoring anything or anyone above Him, but placing Him first on our priority list. We must never give more attention to our job, making money, helping the poor, raising our kids, or even working in the church. God must come first. As we put Him first, it becomes important in our daily lives to read His Word so we are familiar with all He has to say to us. Prayer is a priority as we learn to communicate with Him. Gathering as a body to lift up the name of the Lord in praise, singing, scripture reading, preaching, and prayer is vital. Putting aside our human activities so we can concentrate on God and His attributes opens an avenue into worship. When we worship, we are not only to praise His name but also to be ready like John to hear what God has to say to us. Part of worship is receiving what He has to give us.

So often we take worship for granted. To us it is “going to church.” Do we go there each time to truly worship? Is being *in the Spirit* there most important to us, rather than what we wear, who we see, or how good the service is? What has caught your attention about worship in this lesson today? Challenge yourself to pursue that thought through prayer and more study or discussion with mature Christian friends. Find out for yourself what worship is and how God wants you to incorporate it in your life. Only through the discipline of doing this was John able to receive his revelation. God has something He wants to say to you too. Worship Him. Worship and be ready to receive.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

Fill in the blanks:

*Bless the LORD, O my _____, and all that is
_____ me, _____ His holy name.*

Psalm 103:1

DAY FIVE

Wow!

Read Revelation 1:12-17a.

1. What did John observe when he turned to *see the voice* that was speaking to him?

This revelation concerning the lampstand and the Son of Man was consistent with John’s knowledge of the Old Testament. The lampstand is mentioned in Exodus 25:31, 37, as well as in Zechariah 4:1-2.

2. See how the following scriptures compare to the description of Christ in Revelation 1:14-16.

Isaiah 49:2

Ezekiel 8:2

Ezekiel 43:2

Daniel 7:9

Daniel 10:5

3. Had John ever experienced such a thing in person? Learn about this or review it by summarizing Matthew 17:1-8.

4. What did John do when he saw the Son of Man?

What does this all mean? The seven golden lampstands and the description of Christ are indicative of Christ’s role as High Priest. These were the garments and one of the instruments of a high priest. In the original Greek text, this section starting with Revelation 1:12 is a long quotation that doesn’t end until 3:22. The seven golden lampstands are explained in 1:20, where we’re told that they represent the seven churches, which are named in chapters 2 and 3.

The symbolism in this section is rich. The hair as white as wool and snow is a description from Daniel of the Ancient of Days. In Eastern countries white hair commands respect and indicates wisdom of years. It is also a symbol of purity.

Judgment is symbolized in several ways. The phrase *eyes . . . like a flame of fire* (verse 14) indicates the searching for righteousness or judgment. The *burnished bronze . . . glow[ing] in a furnace* (verse 15) represents judgment, since the instruments used for sin sacrifices in the Old Testament were made of this metal. The sharp two-edged sword that came out of His mouth is to strike the wicked: *From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations* (19:15).

His voice, which was *like the sound of many waters* (verse 15), represented the majesty and glory of God. It's a description of God's own voice. His face, *like the sun shining in its strength* (verse 16), shows the glory of His countenance and His holiness.

Verse 20 describes Christ holding the seven stars in His hand. This is a sign of political authority and reminds us that the world and the church's ultimate fate is not in the hands of government or humanity but in the hands of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. His right hand is a place of power and safety. Praise His name!

This description of Christ is important to us because it teaches us about His character and attributes. He is a reflection of the Father. As Christians, we want to know God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in all their fullness. Wow! The revelation was overwhelming to John, but it's just as powerful in its magnitude to us. What an amazing God we serve!

MEMORY CHALLENGE

What does Psalm 103:1 mean to you spiritually?

DAY SIX

Write

Read Revelation 1:17b-20.

1. What were the first four words Christ spoke to John in his revelation?
2. John described how he saw Christ, but now Christ describes himself in the "I Am" form, as we studied in Day 3. Who does Christ say He is?
3. Record Revelation 1:19.
4. Use a dictionary to give a definition of "commission."
5. Read the following stories and summarize the commission God gave each of these persons.
 - Judges 6:11-14
 - Hosea 1:1-3
 - Matthew 4:18-20
6. Using short phrases, summarize the requirements for a commission as described in the following verses.
 - 1 Samuel 3:9-10
 - Matthew 26:39, 42
 - 2 Timothy 4:1-2
 - 2 Timothy 4:7
 - 1 Peter 3:13-14
7. Personalize 2 Timothy 2:15 as a summarization of what God expects in a commission.

Often a child of God who had a revelation first met it with fear. (For further study, see Ezekiel 1:28, Daniel 8:7, and Luke 1:26-30.) But immediately John is told, *Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last* (Revelation 1:17; see also Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12). Christ then states, *[I am] the living One* (Revelation 1:18). He has authority over death. While men killed Jesus, they did not know that death had no control over Him. When His time was completed, He became alive again. He states, *I have the keys of death and of Hades* (verse 18). The gates of death are referred to in several scriptures, including Psalm 9:13, 107:18, and Isaiah 38:10. But Christ proclaims that He has the keys. Keys give access to places. In the ancient world, the wearing of large keys was a mark of status in the community. To death and Hades, only one set of keys exists. Jesus Christ has them, and to Him we must come. *Because I live, you will live also* (John 14:19).

Christ commissioned John to write. He was to write of the past, present, and future. The past mainly refers to what John had already seen in his revelation. *The things which are* refer to the present state of the seven churches who are addressed in chapters 2 and 3. The future is described as *the things which will take place after these things* (verse 19) and comprises most of the rest of the Book of Revelation beginning with chapter 4. These chapters contain prophecy or events yet to occur in the future. How do we know they have not yet occurred? If they had, we wouldn't be here!

Twelve times in Revelation, John is told to write. It seems that God often affirmed His commission. Only once, in 10:4, is John told not to write.

When we are willing and ready and are listening to God, He will give us a commission too. We'll have to remain obedient and probably endure difficulties, but He'll empower us and give us the strength to persevere. Christ has a plan, a work for each of us to do. Henry Blackaby and Claude King in their study *Experiencing God* put it this way: "You cannot be in a relationship with Jesus and not be on a mission."¹ God has a commission for each of us.

God commissioned Jeannie McCullough many years ago to share with others what she had learned of Him in her walk. (See "About Wisdom of the Word.") This has led her to speaking with hundreds of people on airplanes as she travels, witnessing to salespeople in department stores, and stopping at strangers' houses to help with a simple chore in order to show the love of Christ. It has also led her to speak in numerous settings such as luncheons, retreats, and church services. Jeannie has been obedient to teach the Wisdom of the Word Bible study for 12 years. The study has literally reached thousands of people for Christ not only in salvation but also in rekindling a passion for God and developing a deeper relationship with Him. The commission has required willingness, endurance, and much listening. It has brought hardships, but also sweet rewards in doing the will and work of God.

Jeannie's commission has been to share the good news of Jesus Christ, and He has taught her personally. John's commission was to write. What is your commission? Do you know? If so, you're at a place of peace and contentment even in the midst of possible difficulties. If you're uncertain about your commission, be assured that God wants to make it as clear to you as He did to Jeannie and John. Stop now and take time to ask God where you stand in this area. Perhaps you lack willingness, readiness, or endurance. Ask God to show you the very point at which you need to begin to pray to discover your commission. John obeyed, and by doing so he preserved for us who live almost 2,000 years later the promise of our future with God. Because Jeannie obeyed and shared, God has changed hundreds of lives for the Kingdom. Our Heavenly Father has a special commission in mind for you. Pause now and pray. Let God speak to you.

Written by Linda Shaw

MEMORY CHALLENGE

Do you know the song that comes from Psalm 103:1? *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.* Sing it to Him today, or, if you don't know it, recite it to Him as poetry.