

Seven Pictures of Jesus in Revelation

Inductive Bible Study



Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy,
and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it,
for the time is near.

Revelation 1:3 (ESV)

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Front Cover

“Study for Improvisation V,” Vassily Kandinsky, Russian, 1910, Minneapolis Institute of Art; reproduction by Eleanor Carlson

In this apocalyptic painting depicting scenes from Revelation, a woman in blue kneels before Christ in a garden.

Introduction to Revelation

THE CONTEXT OF REVELATION

Towards the end of the first century, the Roman Empire was large and diverse, and worshipping the emperor was one way to enforce unity. When the early Christians refused to worship anyone but God, Emperor Domitian considered them to be disloyal and a threat to the unity of the Empire. Under his instructions, many Christians were imprisoned, executed or exiled.

The book of Revelation is traditionally attributed to the Apostle John, the writer of the fourth Gospel and Jesus' beloved disciple. In punishment for defying the emperor, he was sent to a Roman prison on the island of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea. There he recorded his visions in what we know today as the book of Revelation.

As John was worshipping God on the Lord's Day, he was visited by an angel who guided him through visions of the risen Jesus Christ. As instructed by the angel, John wrote down what he saw. For many modern Christians, the Book of Revelation is so strange that they avoid it; others become so fascinated by it that they ignore the rest of Scripture. The truth is, that in order to understand Revelation, we must consider the whole of Scripture, especially the Old Testament. We also need to understand the style in which John wrote the book and grasp how the original readers understood it. Surprisingly, John makes about five hundred allusions to the Old Testament.

THE AUDIENCE OF REVELATION

John cared deeply for the many churches which were established across the Roman province of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). While he was living in exile on Patmos, John was concerned for their wellbeing as they suffered for their faith in Jesus Christ. Each faced their own struggles and hardships. This group of churches was the primary audience to whom John wrote. Although the symbols and images are difficult for us to understand today, they would have been readily recognized by John's original audience.

THE STYLE OF REVELATION

Revelation is written in the style of apocalyptic literature, which was a common style with Jewish writers. The Greek word for "revelation" is apocalypse, meaning "unveiling," like drawing back a curtain to show what is behind it. The purpose of Revelation is to reveal the person of Jesus Christ. By sharing this revelation of Christ, John hoped to encourage believers during times of suffering and persecution. He reminded them that God is sovereign and that Jesus has won the ultimate victory in the cosmic war between good and evil. These visions reveal an unseen reality — the spiritual battle which continues to influence our world today.

Revelation also includes several other styles. It includes narrative, prophecy, songs, and poetry, and it is written in the form of a letter to the churches. The visions of Revelation are not written in narrative, chronological order, but rather present truths from many time periods all at once. The visions are like a large mosaic or kaleidoscope, full of colorful images that all tell a story.

SYMBOLS AND NUMBERS IN REVELATION

Apocalyptic literature contains visions and dreams experienced by the writer. It uses a mixture of fantastical pictures, symbols, and numbers to communicate what was seen. This style can be compared to political cartoons that use symbols and numbers to communicate a message beyond their literal meaning. Therefore, in reading Revelation, we first try to understand what these symbols meant to the original readers before we apply the message to our context.

Symbols and numbers are like a code language that represents a deeper meaning. They are best interpreted by considering their use in other parts of Scripture. Here are a few interpretations of symbols that we find in Revelation.

SYMBOL	INTERPRETATION
White	Purity, Victory, Divinity
Red	Blood, Violence
Black	Death, Disaster
1260 days or 3 ½ years	A Limited Time
7	Perfect, Complete
6	Imperfect, Incomplete
12	God's People (12 Tribes of Israel, 12 Apostles)
24	The Church (12 + 12)
144,000	A Multitude of God's People (12 x 12 x 1,000)
1,000	A large group, too many to count
Babylon	Ancient Rome, and All Nations and Powers Opposed to God
Lion and Lamb	Jesus Christ
Dragon and Beasts	The Devil and his Demons

THIS STUDY

There are many interpretations of the book of Revelation. This study does not present all of Revelation or all of the possible interpretations. The purpose of this study is to focus on seven visions where Jesus Christ is revealed.

- 1) Jesus, the Son of Man among the Churches (1:9-20)
- 2) Jesus, the Lamb Standing as Though Slain (4:1-6; 5:1-10)
- 3) Jesus, the Child Who is to Rule (12:1-17)
- 4) Jesus, the Lamb With His People (14:1-5; 15:2-4)
- 5) Jesus, the Harvester of Disciples (14:6-20)
- 6) Jesus, the Victorious Rider (19:1-21)
- 7) Jesus, the Lord of the New Creation (21:1-11, 21:22-22:5)

Revelation is fundamentally about Christ. It presents a radical vision of discipleship for today, and our eternal hope for the future. By looking at these visions, we will seek to come to know and love Jesus more fully. We will also seek to invite others to know and love Him. By seeing Jesus Christ in his cosmic splendor and personal presence, we are each invited to greater hope, greater love, and greater witness for Christ.

Letting God Speak Through The Bible

The Scriptures are a precious gift to the church — in them we encounter the living God and hear his voice. As we study the Bible, we come to see and know the present and risen Christ, and we are invited to walk with Him in our daily life.

As we read the Bible together, we take time for praise, study, teaching, discussion, and prayer. In this age of information, most of us are not used to reading something slowly and carefully. We have learned to simply get to the main point as fast as possible. When we treat the Scriptures like an instant message, we miss their richness, beauty and fullness.

Inductive Bible study is one method to help us slow down and focus our attention so that we can hear the Holy Spirit speak to us through the Scriptures. It is a discovery-oriented study that is highly participatory. It starts with **observation**, moves to **understanding**, and then leads to **application** in our own lives.

People tend to read their own worldview into the Bible. It is tempting to find the message that supports what we already think. An inductive approach helps us to humble ourselves under the authority of Scripture as we try to hear all of what the passage has to say and to be changed by it.

Inductive Bible study takes the cultural and literary nature of the Bible seriously. Behind every book of the Bible is a human author inspired by God. Yet the author also wrote from a specific viewpoint to a target audience within a particular culture.

We honor God's Word by looking closely at content, structure, form, and the cultural and historical context. We ask *What does the text say?* as well as *What does this mean to us today?*

When studying the details and the context of a passage:

- **ASK** newspaper reporter questions — who, what, when, where, how and why?
- **LOOK FOR** connections/relationships — repetition, similarity, contrast, cause and effect, general to particular, climax, etc.
- **NOTICE** logical connectors — words like *therefore, because, since, for, so, but*, etc.
- **OBSERVE** units of thought (change in location or in time, theme, thought, action, characters).
- **IDENTIFY** what is unexpected or unusual.
- **LOOK UP** Biblical quotes or allusions.
- **TAKE NOTE** of anything that intrigues, perplexes, or troubles you.

The Seven Steps of Inductive Bible Study

When planning for group inductive Bible readings, allow ample time to cover the following steps:

Step 1 **READ** the passage aloud with the whole group.

Step 2 **STUDY** individually. Ask God to speak to you personally as you look at the passage again on your own.

Step 3 **RETELL** the passage as a group or in partners. Try to tell as many details as possible that you recall from the passage. Use the context questions to guide in this process.

Step 4 **DISCUSS** the prepared questions with your group.

Step 5 **LISTEN** to a brief message highlighting ideas from the passage.

Step 6 **PRAY** with your group. Pray for each other, asking God to speak into your lives, helping you to experience the power of the Gospel in and through you individually, and through his Church.

Step 7 **APPLY** the passage to your own life. This may include further study, such as reading the Study Notes for each passage, reflecting on the passage throughout the week, or beginning your own Bible Study with friends.

Jesus, The Son of Man Among the Churches

Revelation 1:9-20 (ESV)

9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. 19 Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. 20 As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

Jesus, The Son of Man Among the Churches

Revelation 1:9-20

Questions

INTRODUCTION:

The book of Revelation begins with a vision given to John while he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea. John uses fantastical pictures, symbols, and numbers to communicate what he saw. As you read the passage, think about the meaning or interpretation of each symbol and what each one reveals about Jesus. In this passage, John calls Jesus the "Son of Man." This title from the Old Testament was used to describe the Messiah.

CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

Retell the passage with as many details as possible from the text. Use the following questions to help guide your retelling.

- 1) What was John doing before he received the vision?
- 2) What were the instructions given to John?
- 3) What did John see?
- 4) How did Jesus later interpret what John saw?
- 5) How was Jesus described? Recall details about his:
 - a. location
 - b. clothing and appearance
 - d. actions
 - e. voice
 - f. possessions in his hands
- 6) What was John's reaction to the vision?
- 7) How did Jesus respond?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Each description is significant and has a meaning beyond itself. Let's interpret the symbols together.

- 1) What does the vision of the Son of Man tell us about who Jesus is and what he does?
- 2) In the passage, the Church is represented by lampstands. What does this image tell us about the Church's mission in the world?
- 3) How does John's vision impact you? How might the Son of Man be inviting you to see and know him in a new way?

Jesus, The Son of Man Among the Churches

Revelation 1:9-20

Study Notes

JOHN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

John's relationship with Jesus began sixty years before the first vision of Revelation takes place. The Gospels tell us that John walked with Jesus as a disciple and friend. He saw the transfiguration of Jesus, sat next to Jesus at the Last Supper, and met him by the Sea of Galilee after the Resurrection (Matthew 4:21; 17:1-3; Luke 5:1-11; Luke 9:54; John 13:23; John 21:20).

LAMPSTANDS

In the vision, the seven lampstands represent seven specific churches of John's day as well as the universal Church throughout time. Standing in the midst of the lampstands was Jesus, the same person with whom John had lived in Palestine some sixty years earlier. Jesus is in the center — not above, not looking down, not looking in from the outside — but in the center of the churches. Because Jesus is among his people, he says, "I know. I know what is happening in each of you... I know your hard work. I know your struggles. I know your fears. I know your pain. I know your emptiness." The risen and loving Jesus lives and moves among his people, and he is among us now.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

John is told to write to the seven churches mentioned in the first chapter of Revelation: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These churches were scattered throughout what we know today as Turkey. Each faced their own struggles and hardships. Each had a special strength. While God had a specific message of encouragement for each of these seven churches, they stand as a representation of the Church throughout time. The words sent to them still apply to us today.

SON OF MAN

John saw one "like a Son of Man" (v.13). The Son of Man is a Hebraic way of saying "human being," but more importantly, John used a title for Jesus that comes from the Old Testament (Daniel 7:13-14). This short title conveys that Jesus is:

- The pre-existent one, God who became man
- The central figure in history
- The one to whom all the kingdoms of the world are given
- The one to whom all people of every age owe allegiance
- The one who will establish the Kingdom that cannot be destroyed

SYMBOLS USED TO DESCRIBE JESUS

John's vision of Jesus is so magnificent that he struggles to describe it with words. By using descriptive symbols, he conveys the full reality of the One who transcends all images.

- 1) *Clothed in a robe (v.13)*
 - Jesus is a high priest and mediator — one who is a bridge between God and Man.
- 2) *A golden sash around his chest (v.13)*
 - Jesus is a king to whom honor and obedience is due.
- 3) *The hairs of his head were white, like wool, like snow (v.14)*
 - Jesus is eternal, wise, and pure.
- 4) *His eyes were like a flame of fire (v.14)*
 - Jesus cleanses and takes away impurities.
- 5) *His feet were like burnished bronze (v.15)*
 - Jesus is strong, firm, and steady.
- 6) *His voice was like the sound of many waters (v.15)*
 - Jesus' words drown out all other voices and fill the listener with peace and quiet.
- 7) *From his mouth a sharp two-edged sword (v.16)*
 - Jesus' words cut through the nonsense of our lives. His words challenge rebellion, separate truth from error, and establish what is right.
- 8) *His face was like the sun (v.16)*
 - Jesus is light and a source of illumination.
- 9) *In his right hand he held seven stars (vs.16, 20)*
 - Jesus is in control of the angels, the messengers to the churches who carry out God's mission.
- 10) *I have the keys of Death and Hades (v.18)*
 - Jesus is alive! He walked into death and defeated it, carrying away the prison keys. Hades is the Old Testament name for the land of the dead. Jesus conquered death by dying and rising again, and he has the power to give us freedom from death as well. We need no longer fear — death has no more power over us.

JESUS' PRESENCE CONQUERS FEAR

John's response was to "fall at his feet as though dead" (1:17). This is the response throughout Scripture when a human encounters the divine. But Jesus laid his hand on John and comforted him. Jesus' loving presence assured John that God is mightier than even his Roman captors. The risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of the universe, knows your situation and puts his hand on your shoulder and says, "Fear not."

Jesus, The Lamb Standing as Though Slain

Revelation 4:1-6; 5:1-10 (ESV)

4 After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." **2** At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. **3** And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. **4** Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. **5** From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, **6** and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

5 **1** Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. **2** And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" **3** And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, **4** and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. **5** And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. **7** And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. **8** And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. **9** And they sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, **10** and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

Jesus, The Lamb Standing as Though Slain

Revelation 4:1-6; 5:1-10

Questions

INTRODUCTION:

In this passage, John is lifted up into the throne room of heaven. With John we see God the Father sitting on the throne, and the Son, described as a Lamb that looks as if it has been slain. The Lamb is the only one who is found worthy to open the scroll — to fulfill God's plan for salvation. A number of prophetic names from the Old Testament are used to describe Jesus — the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, and the sacrificial Lamb.

CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

Retell the passage with as many details as possible from the text. Use the following questions to help guide your retelling.

- 1) Describe what John saw and heard in the throne room of heaven.
- 2) Describe the One who sits on the throne.
- 3) Describe the 24 elders.
- 4) What was God Almighty holding?
- 5) Why did John begin to weep?
- 6) What comfort did the angel offer to John?
- 7) Describe this Lamb.
- 8) How did the elders respond? Describe the song that erupts in heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) What do the names, descriptions, and actions of Jesus tell us about who he is?
What does it mean that he has 7 horns and 7 eyes?
How can he be both a lion and a lamb?
Why is he worthy to open the scroll?
- 2) All of heaven responds to the work of the Lamb by erupting in a song of praise.
What does the song tell us about who Jesus is, and what his mission is?
- 3) How might this window into the unseen reality of heaven impact your life now on earth?

Jesus, The Lamb Standing as Though Slain

Revelation 4:1-6; 5:1-10

Study Notes

A DOOR TO HEAVEN

John looked and immediately he saw a door in heaven standing open. For John, heaven is not some far-away, distant place, unrelated to earth, but another dimension of present reality. Reality is more than what our physical eyes can see. Heaven is very close at hand and wants to break through into our lives. John also saw a throne and someone seated on the throne. God is in charge and directing the affairs of this world.

SEA OF GLASS

The sea of glass would have communicated a lot to the readers of John's day. In ancient literature, the sea was the powerful embodiment of evil and chaos. It was from the sea that evil monsters came to cause havoc on earth. But here we see that the sea is like glass. In other words, it has been tamed permanently.

SCROLL WITH SEVEN SEALS

John notices that the one seated on the throne has a scroll in his hand and that it is secured with seven seals. A scroll typically contains a king's plans for his kingdom and is sealed with his image. This scroll contains the will of the King of the universe. He has a plan for the destiny of the whole world, and that plan is secure because it is held firmly in the right hand of God Almighty.

THE ONLY ONE WORTHY TO OPEN THE SCROLL

Both the Lion of Judah and the Root of David were Messianic titles. Only the Messiah, the savior of the world is worthy to open the scroll. No one else in heaven or earth is able to bring about God's plan. John turns his gaze from the elder back to the throne.

What he sees next is the most critical element of the vision. John turns, expecting to see a roaring lion that will save the day. Instead, he sees a Lamb that looks as if it had been killed. Jesus is worthy not because he has the might, power, and strength of a Lion, but because of his sacrificial love.

JESUS THE LAMB

John sees a Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes (5:6). These symbols tell us about the characteristics of Jesus. Eyes are a picture of wisdom and seven is the number of completeness. The Lamb is completely wise. Horns are a picture of strength, and the Lamb has perfect strength. The Lamb is the essence of both wisdom and power. Yet this Lamb also has been slaughtered. Christ, the Lamb triumphed over death by sacrificing himself on the cross. Finally, the Lamb stands in the center. Jesus is at the center of creation, and at the center of God; he is at the center of history and the center of the Church.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

- 1) At the center of reality is the one who suffers. Through suffering, he has conquered. If you are suffering, Jesus is suffering with you.
- 2) At the center of reality is grace. Why was the Lamb slain? For our salvation. Jesus went to the cross instead of us. The Lamb, who freely gave his life to pardon our sin, freely receives any and all who come to him in repentance.
- 3) The way to fullness of life is the way of the Lamb. He gives us Life. The way of Jesus is humility, wisdom, strength, and sacrificial love.
- 4) As believers, we live in victory. God is on the throne. As the Church encounters evil, we know that Jesus Christ has already won the victory.
- 5) We see where the future is going. All of time is in the hands of Jesus. He is bringing about God's purpose for the world.

Jesus, The Child Who is to Rule

Revelation 12:1-17 (ESV)

12 1 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

13 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. 15 The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. 16 But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. 17 Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

Jesus, The Child Who is to Rule

Revelation 12:1-17

Questions

INTRODUCTION:

This passage contains all time periods: past, present and future. We are given new insight into a number of important Biblical stories: the fall of Satan and his angels, the birth of Christ, and the persecution of believers. It tells of the cosmic battle between good and evil, which we still feel the effects of today. As you consider the passage, look for the images of the woman, the dragon, the child, and the offspring. Notice allusions to familiar Biblical stories told in a new way. In this imagery, we are seeing what is happening behind the scenes, as the curtain is pulled back, to reveal all of life and all of history in light of Jesus Christ.

CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

Retell the passage with as many details as possible from the text. Use the following questions to help guide your retelling.

- 1) Tell about the woman — the first sign that appeared in heaven.
- 2) Tell about the dragon — the second sign that appeared in heaven.
- 3) Tell about the male child that was born. What job description is he given?
- 4) Tell about the war in heaven. Who is victorious?
- 5) Tell about the voice from heaven proclaiming victory.
- 6) What was the dragon’s response to this defeat?
- 7) How is the woman aided?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) After two signs appear in heaven (the woman and the dragon), a child is born. Note that the male child is not described as a sign. What does this, and other details from the passage, tell us about Christ?
2. We are the Church, the offspring of the woman, and brothers and sisters of Christ. How might this vision apply to our own walk with Christ? What is the warning and what is the hope? According to this passage, how are we conquering the dragon? How might the words of your testimony have an affect today?

Jesus, The Child Who is to Rule

Revelation 12:1-17

Study Notes

THE SIGN OF THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS

John sees two great signs in heaven that point to a greater reality. The first is a woman clothed with the sun, standing on the moon, with a crown of twelve stars. This woman represents Israel (see Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9). The woman also represents Mary, who by the Holy Spirit gave birth to Jesus. Her offspring is the Church, the collection of God's people across all time.

THE SIGN OF THE RED DRAGON

The second sign is a red dragon. Dragons often represent forces of evil and chaos, like the Old Testament Leviathan and Behemoth. The color red represents blood and violence. The seven heads represent authority, the ten horns represent strength, and the seven diadems represent great wealth. His tail sweeps away a third of the stars, symbolizing his ability to initiate chaos and confusion. The dragon was determined to devour the woman's child because he knew the significance of the child. This alludes to the account in Matthew of Herod the Great, who attempted to kill the newly-born Jesus (Matthew 2:16-18). When the dragon fails to kill the child, he does not stop creating chaos in the world.

THE CHILD WHO IS TO RULE

The child who is born is not a sign — he is an actual person, and does not point to anything or anyone beyond himself. He is central to the story. He is Jesus Christ. How do we know who this child is? Because he is "One who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron" (v.5). This is a quote from Psalm 2:9. The rod refers to a shepherd's staff. Jesus, the good shepherd, is both powerful and loving. Just as the resurrected Jesus ascended to heaven victoriously, so the child was brought up to God and to his throne before the dragon could devour him.

THE WAR IN HEAVEN

The dragon and his angels are defeated and thrown down to the earth. Note that the dragon is fully identified with names used in other parts of Scripture — the devil, Satan (the accuser), and the deceiver (v.9). This powerful foe has been defeated but he still tries to wield his influence over the world and over the followers of Jesus.

THE OFFSPRING OF THE WOMAN

The offspring of the woman are identified as disciples of the male child, of Jesus Christ. Believers (the Church) past, present and future, participate in conquering the dragon by:

- The blood of the Lamb
- The word of their testimony
- Willingness to give up their lives

Although defeated, the dragon continues to fight his losing battle (v.13-17). The Church is still under threat as Satan continues to oppose and persecute followers of Christ.

TIME PERIODS REFERENCED

- 1) Before time — the war in heaven when Satan was expelled from heaven (vs.7-9) (see also Luke 10:18 and Isaiah 14:12-15).
- 2) The time of Jesus' birth on earth (vs. 1,5) (Matthew 1:18–2:18 and Luke 1:26–2:40).
- 3) The time from Jesus' ministry on earth to his enthronement in heaven (v.5).
- 4) The time of the Church (including today), when the devil makes war on those who keep the commands of God (v. 17).
- 5) The future final and ultimate victory over evil (vs.11,12).

CREATION

God is the creator, and all creation serves him. All creation participates in the story of redemption. The earth provided protection for the woman in the wilderness (v.6) and swallowed the flood sent out by the dragon in his pursuit of her (v.16), perhaps an allusion to the account of the Exodus and the opening of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-28).

Jesus, The Lamb With His People

Revelation 14:1-5; 15:2-4 (ESV)

14 1 Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, 3 and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, 5 and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

15 2 And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. 3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways,
O King of the nations!
4 Who will not fear, O Lord,
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Jesus, The Lamb With His People

Revelation 14:1-5; 15:2-4

Questions

INTRODUCTION:

Revelation 14 & 15 are companion texts in which we are given a vision of redeemed humanity. The vision begins on Mount Zion — an image from the Old Testament that depicts the dwelling place of God. John sees Christ standing with 144,000 believers. This number is not to be taken literally, but is a symbolic number representing all of God's people throughout history.

The metaphor in 14:4 is complex. It refers to both men and women who have remained true to the Lamb. Sexual purity is used as a symbol for those who have not given themselves to the world, but belong to God, and to him alone.

CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

Retell the passage with as many details as possible from the text. Use the following questions to help guide your retelling.

- 1) What does John see and hear in the first vision?
- 2) What do we know about the 144,000 standing with the Lamb?
- 3) What does John see and hear in the second vision?
- 4) The Lamb's people are known by the song they sing. Describe the song. Who is the song about?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

From this passage, we see that Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, succeeded in his mission of establishing a kingdom and a people. His people, who have been saved by his blood, bear his name, look like him, and become like him.

- 1) From this passage, how would you summarize the characteristics of a follower of Jesus? What does it mean to bear his image and his name in the world?
- 2) How do you relate to these qualities of the Lamb's disciples?
- 3) How might you invite others to join in this number as a follower of Jesus?

Jesus, The Lamb With His People

Revelation 14:1-5; 15:2-4

Study Notes

MOUNT ZION

John saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, another name for Jerusalem. In Psalm 2:6 God says, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

THE 144,000

Standing with the Lamb are 144,000 who have been redeemed. As with most numbers in apocalyptic literature, the number 144,000 is symbolic. It signifies a large gathering, too many to count. $144,000 = 12 \times 12 \times 1,000$, made up of the 12 tribes of Israel, the 12 apostles and 1,000, representing a vast multitude. In other words, it represents countless followers of Jesus from all time — those who by faith looked forward to Christ, and those, like us, who look back by faith to Christ.

SEA OF GLASS

The second scene takes place on a sea of glass mingled with fire (15:1-2). The restless sea often represents the power of evil at work in a world threatening to undo us. The sea of glass represents the suppression of that chaos. Fire often represents the purifying work of God. The Lamb’s people sing their song of worship standing on the sea — standing on the defeated power of evil, which has been overcome and subdued by the Lamb.

SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAMB’S PEOPLE

- 1) The Lamb’s people **know that they are God’s, not their own**. Twice John writes that they are redeemed. This shapes their identity as children adopted by God into His family. Jesus’ name and the Father’s name are written on their foreheads. This is God’s guarantee of ultimate protection (14:1).
- 2) The Lamb’s people **know that they are an offering to God and bring him glory** (14:4). John calls them “firstfruits for God and the Lamb.” In the Old Testament, we read that the Israelites gave the first fruits of their harvest to God as a sign that everything else also belongs to God. We also are a gift offering to God because he made us and we are his.
- 3) The Lamb’s people, both men and women, **belong to him and to him only** (14:4). Throughout the Old Testament, sexual intimacy is used as an analogy of our relationship with God. God calls Israel his betrothed lover (Jer.2:2). God speaks of Israel defiling that intimacy by worshiping other gods, (Jer. 2:23). Idolatry is often called adultery (Exod. 34:15; Exek. 23; Hos. 2:14-21). God’s people (represented by the number 144,000) were not always faithful, but they have been redeemed. The Lamb broke through and won his Bride for himself. Because he has redeemed us, we know that God is the only one worthy of worship. We belong to the Lamb and to him alone. We know that we are pure because he has made us pure.

- 4) The Lamb’s people **want to be like the Lamb** (14:5). We want to take on the qualities and character traits of Jesus. John singles out just two qualities to represent them all: “no lie was found, for they are blameless.” Peter, quoting Isaiah 53:9, says of Jesus, “He committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth (1 Peter 2:22). Does blameless mean perfect? No! To be without deceit and blameless means to walk in integrity, which involves admitting our sins, confessing them to God, and receiving his forgiveness. It is through God’s forgiveness that we are blameless.
- 5) The Lamb’s people **are those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes** (14:4). In the Gospels, Jesus’ call to his disciples was, “Follow me.” It is tempting to follow the lead of culture, our own ideas, imaginations, and desires. But to follow Jesus is the greatest gift of all.
- 6) The Lamb’s people **win the victory over the beast** (15:2). God’s people do not give in to evil. Even when threatened with death, they remain faithful to the Lamb.
- 7) The Lamb’s people **are known by the song they sing** (14:3, 15:4). The songs we sing reveal what is in our hearts. The Lamb’s people sing what John calls “the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.” The song of Moses refers to the song the people of Israel sang after they crossed through the Red Sea (Exodus 15). It ends, “Yahweh shall reign forever and ever.” This song was sung during every Jewish Sabbath celebration. The Redeemed also sing the song of Moses because Jesus, our Passover Lamb, brings us through the waters of baptism to new life free from the slavery of sin.

Jesus, The Harvester of Disciples

Revelation 14:6-20 (ESV)

14 6 Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. 7 And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” 8 Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.” 9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.” 12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” 16 So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped. 17 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, “Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.” 19 So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse’s bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

Jesus, The Harvester of Disciples

Revelation 14:6-20

Questions

INTRODUCTION:

This passage presents an image of Jesus as the harvester. Again, we have a mixture of time periods represented. In Matthew 9:37, Jesus declares, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” Jesus uses the image of a farmer harvesting as an image for gathering disciples into the kingdom of God. This passage describes two kinds of harvesting: gathering the harvest from the earth; and pressing grapes in a winepress. This is a picture of Christ: on behalf of Israel and the whole world, he shed his blood, and his blood covers all the sins of the world.

John wants us to understand that while the conflict rages on, things are not what they seem. Something else is happening — the gospel is being announced throughout the world; seeds of the kingdom of God are sown; and very soon Jesus will reap the harvest that comes through the gospel.

Note the literary structure of the passage:

- Three angels announcing (vs.6-13)
- The Son of Man reaping the harvest (vs.14)
- Three angels reaping what was announced (vs.15-20)

In this context, “Babylon” is used by John as a symbol for Rome, the nation in power. For us, it is a symbol of any people, nation, or city that rejects the living God. The phrase “passion of her sexual immorality” is a description of idolatry.

CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

Retell the passage with as many details as possible from the text. Use the following questions to help guide your retelling.

- 1) Tell about the messages of the three angels.
- 2) What warnings and blessings are announced from heaven?
- 3) Describe the image of the Son of Man.
- 4) Describe the reaping of the earth.
- 5) Tell about the winepress of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) How might the words of the angels be good news?
- 2) What do we learn about Jesus from this passage? What is his work in the world?
- 3) We are called to join Jesus in the work of discipleship. What are the implications for making disciples that emerge from this passage?

Jesus, The Harvester of Disciples

Revelation 14:6-20

Study Notes

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE ANGELS

In Greek, the word for angel is messenger. The Church is also called to be the messenger of the Gospel to the world. John says the angels announce an eternal gospel (Rev. 14:6). The gospel of Jesus Christ is rooted and grounded in God's eternal character and will. But is what the angels announce good news?

The first angel vs. 6-13 preaches to "every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (vs.6). He tells the world to fear God and give him glory, and to worship the God of heaven. We were created by God to worship him! We cannot truly be who we were made to be until we worship him. The angel also says that the hour for judgement has come. This is a good thing — justice will finally come to the earth! God has conquered the powers of evil that have ruined the earth and he has taken his rightful rule as King. He will make all things right.

The second angel declares that Babylon has fallen. Babylon is a name for all of the corrupt and rebellious powers of the earth that are opposed to God. When John wrote Revelation, he may have imagined the fall of the Roman Empire, which was yet to come. Often the only way for people to hear the gospel is for the ungodly systems around them to collapse. Even as Babylon falls, God's heart is for the salvation of all people in darkness.

The third angel declares that if anyone worships the beast and his image, he also will receive the wrath of God (14: 9-10). Is this good news? Yes, as it means God takes us seriously and honors our choices. Worshiping the living God leads to one destiny. Aligning with the beast leads to another destiny. Knowing that judgment is real impels the church to tell the good news.

THE SON OF MAN

The one *like a Son of Man* is Jesus, risen and glorified. The phrase "Son of Man" comes from the book of Daniel. In this passage, John sees Jesus come to reap the fruit from the seeds of the gospel that the messengers have sown. The angels declare that the harvest is ripe. Even now the Son of Man is moving through the earth reaping the fruit of the Gospel — those who put their faith in him.

THE HARVEST

John uses two images for this work – reaping grains and gathering grapes. The Bible does not refer to reaping or harvesting as a metaphor for judgment — harvesting is always a gathering of what is to be kept and saved. Jesus the Son of Man swings his sickle to gather into the kingdom those who have responded to the gospel. Grain (for bread) and grapes (for wine) might also bring to mind the Lord's Supper.

The harvesting of grapes, to be trod in the winepress, is also an act of salvation. Notice that the winepress is outside the city. Jesus died on a cross outside the city. It was on the cross that the wrath of God against sin was expressed (Romans 3:21-26). The Judge sheds his own blood to redeem those who repent. It is his blood that makes the salvation of all people possible. As the grape harvest of God's people is gathered into the winepress, the blood that flows is the blood of Jesus, the True Vine.

1,600 STADIA

This measurement is a Biblical reference to the length of the land of Israel (representing all of God's people of all time). Blood "as high as a horse's bridle" symbolizes a super-abundance. There is enough to cover all the sins of all who repent.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND WITNESS

- 1) Everyone worships something. The choices we make about who and what we worship are important.
- 2) Wrong choices can be forgiven and cleansed through Jesus.
- 3) Following Jesus leads to ultimate fulfillment and everlasting life in Christ.
- 4) Following the world and its fallen powers does not bring fulfillment and only leads to death.
- 5) We are called to join Jesus in the work of harvesting by announcing the gospel to the world and inviting others to follow him.

Jesus, The Victorious Rider

Revelation 19:1-21 (ESV)

19 1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2 for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” 3 Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.” 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” 5 And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.” 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” 10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh, he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.” 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

Jesus, The Victorious Rider

Revelation 19:1-21

Questions

INTRODUCTION:

The context of this chapter begins after the war against evil has already been won, and Jesus rides in on a white horse, victorious. Two feasts take place. One feast is a victorious celebration: the marriage supper of the Lamb — when Christ is united with his people forever. The second feast is for all those who have rejected Jesus and are not part of his victory. Which feast you attend is determined by how you respond to Jesus. Here we see two pictures of Christ: as a victorious warrior, and also as a bridegroom, engaged to the church. We also see two pictures of the followers of Christ: 1) as the bride, and 2) as the army of heaven following Jesus in victory.

Here is an outline of the passage:

- Marriage supper between Christ and the Church (vs. 1-11)
- The rider on the white horse (vs.11-16)
- The supper of God for those who have rejected Jesus (vs. 17-21)

CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

Retell the passage with as many details as possible from the text. Use the following questions to help guide your retelling.

- 1) Tell about the rejoicing in heaven before the throne. What are they praising God for?
- 2) Tell about the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- 3) Why does the angel rebuke John?
- 4) Describe the one sitting on the white horse.
- 5) Describe the supper of God.
- 6) How are the beast and the false prophet defeated?
- 7) How was the person sitting on the horse described?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

For the purpose of this study we will focus on verses 11-16, and what it says about the person of Christ.

- 1) What is it about Jesus’ nature that allows him to defeat the beast and win the battle against evil?
- 2) How do we, as both the bride and soldiers of Christ, live in this victory? How does Jesus give us a model for victory against our adversaries? How does he help us against the enemy?

Jesus, The Victorious Rider

Revelation 19:1-21

Study Notes

THE WAR

John saw Jesus clothed in fine linen, riding on a white horse. If Jesus was going off to battle, he would be wearing battle armor. Instead, he is wearing the clothes of the victor. The war has already been won on the cross, and Jesus is claiming his victory. Even the soldiers following him, the gathering of his people, are dressed in the clothes of celebration. The ultimate defeat of evil, death, and sin was won on the cross, and now Jesus is fully ushering in that victory for all of creation.

THE VICTORY

The war is won because of who Jesus is.

- 1) He is called “Faithful and True” (v.11). He was faithful all the way to the cross; he was committed to His Father’s will. He is true and he is reliable, genuine, in contrast to something false. Therefore, Jesus can be the judge of all humanity; he alone is qualified to judge righteously.
- 2) “His eyes are a flame of fire” (v.12). Eyes speak — they tell what is going on in our souls. Jesus’ eyes reveal that he is pure, bright, penetrating, and purifying. His eyes not only look at us, but they also look through us. Nothing is hidden from Him.
- 3) “Upon his head are many diadems” (v.12). Diadems and crowns are symbols of victory. In history, it was not uncommon for a monarch to wear more than one crown in order to show that he was the king of more than one country. On Jesus’ head are many victories, too many to count. Every human being who is a believer in Jesus Christ represents a diadem. Just think of the millions now!
- 4) “He has a name written upon him which no one knows except himself” (v.12). In ancient times it was thought that by knowing someone’s name you could exercise a certain level of control over them. Names often revealed something about the person’s nature and character. Jesus has also revealed himself to us through many names: Lord, Savior, Son of God, Son of Man, Bread of Life, Light of the World, Faithful and True, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, the Lamb of God, the Bright Morning Star, and more. Even if we listed all the names, there is still more to be revealed about God.
- 5) He is “clothed with a robe dipped in blood” (v.13). Whose blood is it? From the book of Revelation and all of the New Testament, there is only one answer. The blood on Jesus’ robe is his own. His kingly, priestly robe is stained with his own blood that he gave sacrificially. He won the battle over sin, evil, and death through the shedding of his own blood on the cross. That was the moment of victory!

- 6) He is the Word of God (v.13). No doubt John had in mind a line from the Gospel of John 1:1-18, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Evil, sin, and death are no match for the Word of God.
- 7) “On his robe and on his thigh, he has a name written, ‘King of Kings, and Lord of Lords’” (v.16). Jesus is the ultimate ruler; king over every country and every person. The only issue is whether or not we will follow him. John says, “He will rule them with a rod of iron” (v.15). A rod refers to a shepherd’s staff. Jesus cares for his people, just as a shepherd cares for his sheep. But his staff is a rod of iron that will never fail.
- 8) “From his mouth comes a sharp sword” (v.15). The sword is the Word that proceeds from his mouth — the Scriptures. Jesus wins by speaking Truth. In the beginning was the WORD by which God created the world (Gen 1:1). And the WORD became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14-18). He healed and liberated people by speaking. He overcame demons by speaking. He calmed the sea by speaking. Lazarus came back to life when Jesus said, “Come out!”

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Throughout church history, this passage has been referred to as the Final Battle, but this is misleading since the battle has already been won on the cross. Jesus rides to finally implement his victory — he rides to lock up the enemies of God: the beast from the sea, the false prophet, and the beast from the earth. We can participate in this victory even now because on the cross our sins have been forgiven and death has been conquered. We no longer live in guilt, and death has no power over us. We can live in victory because the One who conquered is with us even now.

Jesus, The Lord of the New Creation

Revelation 21:1-11; 21:22–22:5 (ESV)

21 1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6 And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” 9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

21 22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

22 1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Jesus, The Lord of the New Creation

Revelation 21:1-11; 21:22–22:5

Questions

INTRODUCTION:

In this passage, we have a vision of our future in Jesus. John sees a city coming down from heaven — a new city in a new creation. In the first creation God walked with humanity in a garden; in the new creation God dwells with people from all tribes, tongues, and nations in a city. As we study this section, we will take note of what is present and what is notably absent from the city. But most importantly, we will focus on the person of Jesus who, united and ruling with God the Father, is Heaven itself.

CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

Retell the passage with as many details as possible from the text. Use the following questions to help guide your retelling.

- 1) What is in the city?
- 2) What is not in the city?
- 3) How is Jesus, the Lamb, described in this passage?
- 4) How is God the Father described in this passage?
- 5) How is the Church, the Bride, described in this passage?
- 6) Describe the river of the water of life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is significant about what is and isn’t in the city?
What does that tell us about who Jesus is and who we are as his beloved people?
- 2) How does this vision of the future shape our present?
How does it give us hope for today?
- 3) How might we share this hope with those around us and invite others to join in the reality of heaven?

Jesus, The Lord of the New Creation

Revelation 21:1-11; 21:22–22:5

Study Notes

THE NEW CITY

In this passage, we have a vision of our future in Jesus, given to us by the one who holds the future. Our picture of the future shapes the way we live in the present. So, what does John see in this final vision of the book? A city! A new city in a new creation. This may be a surprise because God's first creation began in a garden. And throughout history, cities have been known as a place to be distracted and escape the influence of God. But this city is holy and sanctified. God dwells in this city and is ever present.

WHAT IS NOT IN THE CITY:

- 1) The sea — an ancient symbol of untamed chaos and evil (21:1)
- 2) Tears, death, mourning, crying and pain (21:4)
- 3) Character traits and behaviors that are inconsistent with the kingdom: the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars (21:8). But the good news is that Jesus offers everyone an invitation to be among the redeemed. (see I Corinthians 6:9-11)
- 4) The temple (21:22)
- 5) The sun, the moon, and night (21:23-25)
- 6) Closed gates (21:25)
- 7) Anything accursed (22:3)

WHAT IS IN THE CITY:

- 1) The Lord Almighty and the Lamb — God and the Lamb are the temple (21:22)
- 2) Glory — The Glory of God is the light of the city (21:23)
- 3) All manner of trees, stones, gems, a river, walls, houses (22:1-2)
- 4) People of all nations, ethnic groups, and races — all who are written in the Lamb's book of life (21:27)
- 5) Creativity and newness (21:5)
- 6) Life and healing (22:1-2)
- 7) The unveiled face of God (22:4)

OUR SECURE FUTURE

This is no idle wish list. This is the promise of the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Jesus was at the beginning as the source of everything, and he will be there in the beginning of the new creation. The vision is magnificent and totally secure because we can trust God to remain faithful to his promises.

Personal Reflection

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the word of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. Revelation 1:3 (ESV)

Now that you have looked at 7 pictures of Jesus in Revelation, ask God to remind you about what he has shown you. *How has God spoken to you through these seven images of Jesus? What has stood out to you? What might Jesus be leading you towards or inviting you to?*

- Jesus, the Son of Man among the Churches Revelation 1:9-20
- Jesus, the Lamb Standing as Though Slain Revelation 4:1-6; 5:1-10
- Jesus, the Child Who is to Rule Revelation 12:1-17
- Jesus, the Lamb with His People Revelation 14:1-5; 15:2-4
- Jesus, the Harvester of Disciples Revelation 14:6-20
- Jesus, the Victorious Rider Revelation 19:1-21
- Jesus, the Lord of the New Creation Revelation 21:1-11; 21:22–22:5

AN INVITATION

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price." Revelation 22:17 (ESV)

Do you know yourself to be one of the Lamb's people? You can know for certain that you belong to Christ. Acts 16:31 says "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." If you have never responded to Christ's invitation, you can pray, "Lord Jesus, I want my name to be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I want to have your name written on me. I want to belong to you. I turn from following my own way, the way that leads to death. I turn to you. I receive the free gift of salvation and the new life that you offer."

If you are a believer, but you're not fully living into your identity as a follower of the Lamb, take time now to pray, "Lord, I am yours, but I have not been following you. I have not been loving you with my whole heart, soul, mind and strength. Overcome anything that keeps me from you. Take me and make me yours, and yours alone."

PRAYER PRACTICE

Use your imagination as you read again the passages from chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation. As you imagine this, our heavenly home, who do you want to invite to be there? Take a moment to pray for those who do not yet know Jesus. Pray that we, the Bride, will join with the Spirit in saying "Come"!

Sources and Further Reading

The following scholarly works have been used in preparing this study, and are recommended for further research. This study has drawn heavily from the book *Discipleship on the Edge*, by Darrell W. Johnson.

- *Discipleship On The Edge* by Darrell W. Johnson (2004)
- *ESV Study Bible*, (2008)
- *MacArthur Study Bible*, NASB, John MacArthur (2013)
- *Revelation for Everyone* by N.T. Wright (2011)
- *Reading Revelation Responsibly* by Michael Gorman (2011)
- *Reversed Thunder* by Eugene Peterson (1991)
- *The Bible Project* – Revelation www.thebibleproject.com
- *The Theology Of The Book Of Revelation* by Richard Bauckham (1993)