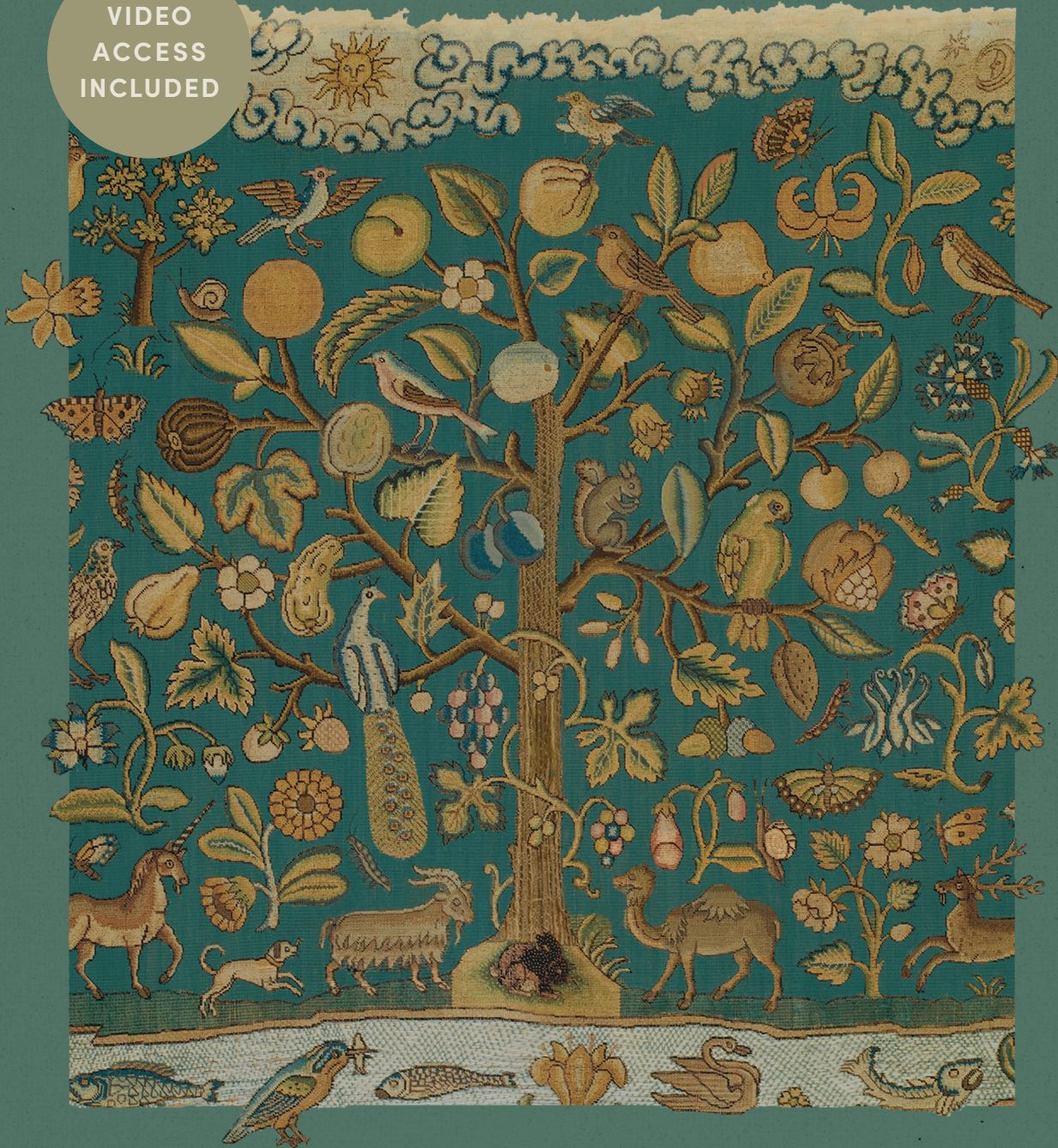


10-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

JEN WILKIN

VIDEO  
ACCESS  
INCLUDED



# REVELATION

Eternal King, Everlasting Kingdom

JEN WILKIN



# REVELATION

Eternal King, Everlasting Kingdom

Lifeway Press® Brentwood, Tennessee

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# CONTENTS



ABOUT THE AUTHOR	5
FOREWORD: HOW SHOULD WE APPROACH GOD'S WORD?	6
HOW TO USE THIS STUDY	11
<b>WEEK ONE:</b> Unveiling   <i>Revelation 1:1-3</i>	14
<b>WEEK TWO:</b> Seven Churches   <i>Revelation 1:4-3:22</i>	19
<b>WEEK THREE:</b> The Heavenly Throne Room   <i>Revelation 4:1-5:14</i>	35
<b>WEEK FOUR:</b> Seven Seals   <i>Revelation 6:1-8:1</i>	51
<b>WEEK FIVE:</b> Seven Trumpets   <i>Revelation 8:2-11:19</i>	67
<b>WEEK SIX:</b> Seven Histories   <i>Revelation 12:1-15:5</i>	83
<b>WEEK SEVEN:</b> Seven Bowls   <i>Revelation 15:1-16:21</i>	101
<b>WEEK EIGHT:</b> Seven Words of Woe   <i>Revelation 17:1-19:10</i>	115
<b>WEEK NINE:</b> Seven Last Sights   <i>Revelation 19:11-21:8</i>	137
<b>WEEK TEN:</b> On Earth as in Heaven   <i>Revelation 21:9-22:21</i>	153
WRAP-UP	169
CSB TEXT OF REVELATION	173
APPENDIX	
FOUR VIEWS OF REVELATION	209
NUMBERS IN THE BIBLE	210
SYMBOLS IN THE BIBLE	211
THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT (EXODUS 7-13)	212
ATTRIBUTES OF GOD	213
THE TABERNACLE AND COURTYARD	214
RECAPITULATION OF DANIEL 7 IN REVELATION 4 & 5	215
CROSS REFERENCES	216
REFERENCE LIST	219
PLAYLIST	220
VIDEO REDEMPTION CARD	225





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jen Wilkin is an author and Bible teacher from Dallas, Texas. She has organized and led studies for women in home, church, and parachurch contexts. Her passion is to see others become articulate and committed followers of Christ, with a clear understanding of why they believe what they believe, grounded in the Word of God. Jen is the author of *Ten Words to Live By: Delighting in and Doing What God Commands*, *Women of the Word*, *None Like Him*, *In His Image*, and Bible studies exploring the Sermon on the Mount and the books of Genesis, Exodus, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and 1,2,3 John. You can find her at [jenwilkin.net](http://jenwilkin.net).



# FOREWORD: HOW SHOULD WE APPROACH GOD'S WORD?



## Our Purpose

The Bible study you are about to begin will teach you a book of the Bible in a way that will stay with you for years to come. It will challenge you to move beyond loving God with just your heart to loving Him with your mind. It will focus on answering the question, “What does the Bible say about God?” It will aid you in the worthy task of God-discovery.

You see, the Bible is not a book about self-discovery; it is a book about God-discovery. The Bible is God's declared intent to make Himself known to us. In learning about the character of God in Scripture, we *will* experience self-discovery, but it must not be the first object of our study. The first object must be God Himself.

This focus changes the way we study. We look first for what a passage can teach us about the character of God, allowing self-discovery to be the by-product of God-discovery. This is a much better approach because there can be no true knowledge of self apart from knowledge of God. So when I read the account of Jonah, I see first that God is just and faithful to His Word—He is faithful to proclaim His message to Nineveh no matter what. I see second that I, by contrast (and much like Jonah), am unjust to my fellow man and unfaithful to God's Word. Thus, knowledge of God leads to true knowledge of self, which leads to repentance and transformation. So are confirmed Paul's words in Romans 12:2 that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Most of us are good at loving God with our hearts. We are good at employing our emotions in our pursuit of God. But the God who commands us to love with the totality of our hearts, souls, and strength also commands us to love Him with all of our minds. Because He only commands what He also enables His children to do, it must be possible for us to love Him well with our minds or He would not command it. I know you will bring your emotions to your study of God's Word, and that is good and right. But it is your mind I am jealous for. God intends for you to be a good student, renewing your mind and thus transforming your heart.

## Our Process

Being a good student entails following good study habits. When we sit down to read, most of us like to read through a particular passage and then find a way to apply it to our everyday lives. We may read through an entire book of the Bible over a period of time, or we may jump around from place to place. I want to suggest a different approach, one that may not always yield immediate application, comfort, or peace, but one that builds over time a cumulative understanding of the message of Scripture.

## Reading in Context and Repetitively

Imagine yourself receiving a letter in the mail. The envelope is handwritten, but you don't glance at the return address. Instead you tear open the envelope, flip to the second page, read two paragraphs near the bottom, and set the letter aside. Knowing that if someone bothered to send it to you, you should act on its contents in some way, you spend a few minutes trying to figure out how to respond to what the section you just read had to say. What are the odds you will be successful?

No one would read a letter this way. But this is precisely the way many of us read our Bibles. We skip past reading the “envelope”—*Who wrote this? To whom was it written? When was it written? Where was it written?*—and then try to determine the purpose of its contents from a portion of the whole. What if we took time to read the envelope? What if, after determining the context for its writing, we started at the beginning and read to the end? Wouldn't that make infinitely more sense?

In our study, we will take this approach to Scripture. We will begin by placing the book in its historical and cultural context. We will “read the envelope.” Then we will read through the entire text so that we can better determine what it wants to say to us. We will read repetitively so that we might move through three critical stages of understanding: comprehension, interpretation, and application.

### **STAGE 1: COMPREHENSION**

Remember the reading comprehension section on the SAT? Remember those long reading passages followed by questions to test your knowledge of what you had just read? The objective was to force you to read for detail. We are going to apply the same method to our study of God's Word. When we read for comprehension, we ask ourselves, *What does it say?* This is hard work. A person who *comprehends* the account of the six days of creation can tell you specifically what happened on each day. This is the first step toward being able to interpret and apply the story of creation to our lives.

### **STAGE 2: INTERPRETATION**

While comprehension asks, *What does it say?*, interpretation asks, *What does it mean?* Once we have read a passage enough times to know what it says, we are ready to look into its meaning. A person who *interprets* the creation story can tell you why God created in a particular order or way. She is able to imply things from the text beyond what it says.



## **STAGE 3: APPLICATION**

After doing the work to understand what the text says and what the text means, we are finally ready to ask, *How should it change me?* Here is where we draw on our God-centered perspective to ask three supporting questions:

- What does this passage teach me about God?
- How does this aspect of God's character change my view of self?
- What should I do in response?

A person who *applies* the creation story can tell us that because God creates in an orderly fashion, we, too, should live well-ordered lives. Knowledge of God gleaned through comprehension of the text and interpretation of its meaning can now be applied to my life in a way that challenges me to be different.

## **SOME GUIDELINES**

It is vital to the learning process that you allow yourself to move through the three stages of understanding on your own, without the aid of commentaries or study notes. The first several times you read a passage, you will probably be confused. In our study together, not all the homework questions will have answers that are immediately clear to you. This is actually a good thing. If you are unsure of an answer, give it your best shot. Allow yourself to feel lost, to dwell in the "I don't know." It will make the moment of discovery stick. We'll also expand our understanding in the small-group discussion and teaching time.

Nobody likes to feel lost or confused, but it is an important step in the acquisition and retention of understanding. Because of this, I have a few guidelines to lay out for you as you go through this study.

1. **Avoid all commentaries** until *comprehension* and *interpretation* have been earnestly attempted on your own. In other words, wait to read commentaries until after you have done the homework, attended small-group time, and listened to the teaching. And then, consult commentaries you can trust. Ask a pastor or Bible teacher at your church for suggested authors. A list of the commentaries, books, and resources used in creating this study can be found on page 219.
2. For the purposes of this study, **get a Bible without study notes**. Come on, it's just too easy to look at them. You know I'm right.
3. Though commentaries are initially off-limits, here are some **tools you should use**:
  - **Cross-references**. These are the Scripture references in the margin or at the bottom of the page in your Bible. They point you to other passages that

deal with the same topic or theme. You'll find a list on pages 216–218 to get you started.

- **An English dictionary** to look up unfamiliar words. A good online dictionary is *merriam-webster.com*.
- **Other translations of the Bible.** We will use the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) as a starting point, but you can easily consult other versions online. I recommend the English Standard Version (ESV), New International Version (NIV), New Living Translation (NLT), and New King James Version (NKJV). Reading more than one translation can expand your understanding of the meaning of a passage. Note: Paraphrases, such as *The Message*, can be useful but should be regarded as commentary rather than a translation. They are best consulted after careful study of an actual translation.
- **A printed copy of the text**, double-spaced, so you can mark repeated words, phrases, or ideas. A complete copy of Revelation is provided for you to mark at the back of this workbook.

## STORING UP TREASURE

Approaching God's Word with a God-centered perspective, with context, and with care takes effort and commitment. It is study for the long-term. Some days your study may not move you emotionally or speak to an immediate need. You may not be able to apply a passage at all. But what if ten years from now, in a dark night of the soul, that passage suddenly opens up to you because of the work you have done today? Wouldn't your long-term investment be worth it?

In Matthew 13 we see Jesus begin to teach in parables. He tells seven deceptively simple stories that left His disciples struggling for understanding—dwelling in the “I don't know,” if you will. After the last parable, He turns to them and asks, “Have you understood all these things?” (v. 51a). Despite their apparent confusion, they answer out of their earnest desire with, “Yes” (v. 51b). Jesus tells them that their newfound understanding makes them “like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old” (v. 52, NIV).

A storeroom, as Jesus indicated, is a place for keeping valuables over a long period of time for use when needed. Faithful study of God's Word is a means for filling our spiritual storerooms with truth, so that in our hour of need we can bring forth both the old and the new as a source of rich provision. I pray that this study would be for you a source of much treasure and that you would labor well to obtain it.

Grace and peace,

*Jen Wilkin*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Of all the studies I have written and taught, this one has been the most challenging. I had no desire to tackle it on my own, and because the Lord is kind to me, He surrounded me with excellent helpers. These faithful friends and partners have buffered me from the storm of blind spots, self-doubt, and loneliness that can accompany a project of this complexity. They loaned me their time. They loaned me courage. And their enthusiasm, faithful prayer, and material help has made the study you hold more useful and beautiful than it ever could have been had the whole thing been left to me.

To my agent, Erik Wolgemuth: Remember that time you helped me get my first study published? I'll never stop being grateful that you believed in this work.

To Team Glamarrillo, my friends Lindsey Brittain and Lindey Duckworth: You help me put my best self forward with patience and humor. You're the best therapy in a stressful week of taping. I'm sorry about all the dog fur and boring neutrals. Please never write a memoir of our time together.

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And finally, to my beloved "guinea pigs" who sat for hours in my dining room to allow me to develop my thoughts in real time: thank you, Molly Abridg, Lindsey Brittain, Becca Burt, Erin Campbell, Aina Carruth, Marissa Castilleja, Susan Davis, Ashley Dittimore, Hannah Elmore, Lauren Galgano, Megan Gray, Tyler Gray, Kelli Galyean, Kelsey Hency, Anne Lincoln Holibaugh, Michelle Holmgren, Emily Spalding, Sally Sturm, Elizabeth Woodson, and my favorite of all, Jeff Wilkin. The coffee was bad and the seating was uncomfortable. You came anyway. Your honest feedback is almost as precious to me as your friendships. I will always remember your faces in the late afternoon light of that room. One fine day, we will sing the doxology together in the new Jerusalem.

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This workbook is designed to be used in a specific way. The homework in the workbook will start you in the process of comprehension, interpretation, and application. However, it was designed to dovetail with small-group discussion time and the video teaching sessions. **The workbook is not intended to be used apart from the video teaching.** The video teaching sessions are intended to resolve most, if not all, of your unanswered questions from the homework and discussion time. You'll find detailed information for how to access the video teaching sessions that accompany this study in the back of your workbook. With this in mind, consider using the materials as follows.

First, watch the brief video "Introduction: Before You Begin" available in your Lifeway On Demand app or at [lifeway.com/revelation](http://lifeway.com/revelation). In the video Jen shares about her methodology for Bible study and provides helpful insight for what to expect from *Revelation*. If you have never done one of Jen's studies, [start here](#).

If you are going through the study **in a group**, first do your homework, and then discuss the questions your group decides to cover. Then watch the video teaching. Some groups watch the teaching before they meet, which can also work if that format fits best for everyone. Just be aware that this approach changes the content of the discussion. Group leaders, you'll find a video just for you, promotional materials, and more tools to help you lead at [lifeway.com/revelation](http://lifeway.com/revelation).

If you are going through the study **on your own**, first work through the homework, and then watch the corresponding video teaching for that week.



**A note about the homework.** Each week of homework is divided into five sections plus a wrap-up. When you see this icon, it indicates the beginning of a new section of the study. Each homework section includes a series of comprehension and interpretation questions and one set of application questions. For Week One, there is no homework. The study begins with a video introduction. You will find a Viewer Guide on pages 16–17 that you can use as you watch the introductory material.



You'll find detailed information for how to **ACCESS THE VIDEO TEACHING SESSIONS** that accompany this study in the back of your workbook.

# A NOTE TO GROUP LEADERS

Thank you for saying yes to leading a women's Bible study group. The leadership task ahead of you may feel daunting, but it doesn't have to be. Revelation may present unique challenges for discussion groups, but not insurmountable ones!

Visit [lifeway.com/revelation](https://www.lifeway.com/revelation) for a word of encouragement and help from Jen as you prepare to lead other women through their study of Revelation.

At the end of each week's homework you will find a group discussion guide intended to help facilitate discussion in small groups. This guide includes questions to help group members compare what they have learned from their homework. These questions are either pulled directly from the homework, or they summarize a concept or theme that the homework covered. Each section covers content from a particular day of the homework, first asking group members to reflect on their observations and then asking them to apply. The observation questions typically ask group members to report a finding or flesh out an interpretation. The application questions challenge them to move beyond intellectual understanding and to identify ways to live differently in light of what they have learned.

As a small group leader, you will want to review these questions before you meet with your group, thinking through your own answers, marking where they occur in the homework, and noting if there are any additional questions you might want to reference to help the flow of the discussion. These questions are suggestions only, intended to help you cover as much ground as you can in a forty-five minute discussion time. They should not be seen as requirements or limitations but as guidelines to help you prepare your group for the teaching time by allowing them to process collectively what they have learned during their homework.

As a facilitator of discussion rather than a teacher, you are allowed and encouraged to be a colearner with your group members. This means you yourself may not always feel confident of your answer to a given question, and that is perfectly OK. Because we are studying for the long-term, we are allowed to leave some questions partially answered or unresolved, trusting for clarity at a later time. In most cases, the video teaching time should address any lingering questions that are not resolved in the homework or the small group discussion time.



WEEK ONE



# UNVEILING

REVELATION 1:1-3



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

REVELATION 1:3





## VIEWER GUIDE NOTES

Watch the teaching video for Week One. Use the space provided to take notes.

Who wrote Revelation?

To whom was it written?

When was it written?



To access the video teaching sessions, use the instructions in the back of your workbook.

In what style was it written?

What are the central themes of the book?

**Before you begin your Week Two homework, be sure to read the Foreword (pp. 6–10) and watch the “Introduction: Before You Begin” video (view in your Lifeway OnDemand app or online at [lifeway.com/revelation](http://lifeway.com/revelation)) for an explanation of the Bible study method used in this study.**



# SEVEN CHURCHES

In our introduction we noted John's pronouncement of blessing on the one who reads aloud the words of Revelation, the one who hears them, and the one who keeps them. Each week of our study, we will practice these three actions.

At the end of a week of homework, we will reflect on what we have heard and how we can keep it. At the beginning of the week, your first assignment will be to read aloud the portion of the text you are examining. Use the printed copy in the back of this workbook to help (pp. 173–208). Try to refrain from making any notes or stopping to think through an idea. You will have time for that as you work through the homework assignment. Imagine yourself reading to a room full of listeners. (Or even better, read the passage aloud to someone!) Choose your pacing and emphasis so that a listener could absorb what you are reading.

This week we will behold the risen Christ in all His glory, and we will hear the seven letters given to seven young churches in Asia Minor. As in our day, these churches faced the schemes of the devil with varying degrees of success. We have much to learn from what the Spirit says to them—and to us. Remember: we have described the book of Revelation as cinematic. With this in mind, we will move at a quick pace through the letters, examining them at a high level and looking for their message to those who conquer through their faithful witness.

## REVELATION 1:4–3:22





## READ REVELATION 1:1–3:22 ALOUD from start to finish.

---

1. Summarize each of the main sections in two to three sentences. What does John see? What does he hear?

*1:1-3*

*1:4-8*

*1:9-20*

*2:1-3:22*

2. What stood out to you as you read, either because it was clear or because it was confusing?

CLEAR	CONFUSING



## NOW LOOK AT REVELATION 1:4-8.

---

3. We will be paying attention to the way that John uses numbers in his writing. What significant number occurs in 1:4? \_\_\_\_\_ Mark it in your copy of the text by drawing an orange box around the word.

On page 210 of your workbook is a breakdown of the symbolic meaning of numbers in the Bible. What does this number symbolize?

Now take a minute to skim back through this week's section of the text, marking every occurrence of the number seven with an orange box around the word. You can also number each letter to the seven churches from 1-7 in orange.

4. John begins with a typical two-word greeting in 1:4. What two words are they? Why do you think he uses both, versus just one or the other?

Is the greeting from John or from someone else? List every person mentioned in 1:4-5a, along with the description associated with them.

5. Of the people you noted above, which one is celebrated in 1:5b-7?

What has this person accomplished in the past? (1:5b-6)

What is due to this person in the present? (1:6b)

What will this person do in the future? (1:7)

6. How would you describe the tone of verse 7? Why do you think it carries this tone, versus a warmer, more welcoming one?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What two attributes of God are extolled in 1:8? Use the appendix on page 213 for help with your answer.

**LOOK BEHIND:** Read the following Old Testament references and note how they relate to this description of God. How are they similar? How are they different?

*Exodus 3:13-15*

*Deuteronomy 32:39-41*

8. **APPLY:** The eternity of God will be a recurring theme in Revelation. How should God's eternal nature comfort us? How should it warn us?



## NOW LOOK AT REVELATION 1:9-20.

9. What two words does John use to describe his relationship with his listeners (1:9)? Why do you think he uses these two descriptors, versus different ones?

10. Where is John when he receives the message?

Why is he there?

*“because of the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and the  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_”*

11. What does the voice of the messenger sound like (1:10)? \_\_\_\_\_

**LOOK BEHIND:** Read the following verses and note what you find about other moments of unveilings in the Bible.

	What sound is heard?	What is being revealed/ announced?
Exodus 19:16-19		
Isaiah 58:1		
Joel 2:1-17 (You can skim this.)		





12. On the map, number the seven churches in the order in which they are mentioned (1:11). What do you notice?

13. What does John see in 1:12-13? (Compare in the CSB and ESV.)

Seven \_\_\_\_\_

Among them: \_\_\_\_\_

On the map, mark where John saw the Son of Man standing.

We will discuss it in the teaching time, but where else in the Bible do we see reference to a golden lampstand? (*Hint: it's in Exodus.*) Sketch it below and note any connections you find.

14. **LOOK BEHIND:** In the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, Jesus speaks about the coming of the Son of Man. Read Matthew 24:29-31 and note what you learn about the identity of the Son of Man.

15. **LOOK BEHIND:** Daniel 7 is recapitulated in many ways in Revelation. This is the first place we will see it. Skim Daniel 7. What similar images or ideas do you see?

16. In your copy of the text, underline and number in orange each of the seven physical descriptions of the Son of Man from Revelation 1:14-16 (hair, eyes, feet, voice, hand, mouth, face). In the margin next to them, draw an orange 7 with a box around it.

What emotional response do you think this description is intended to evoke in John's listeners?

What does John's response in 1:17 tell you about his own emotional reaction?

How do the first words of the Son of Man in 1:17 speak to John's response?

17. How is the divine attribute of eternity reiterated in 1:17-19? Look back at 1:4,8 to help with your answer.

18. What do the seven stars represent (1:20)?

Why might each church have an angel associated with it? Look up Hebrews 1:14 to help with your answer.

19. What do the seven lampstands represent (1:20)?

Why is the image of a lampstand an appropriate one for the church? Look up Matthew 5:14-16 to help with your answer.

20. **APPLY:** How would it have been encouraging to the recipients of John's letter to hear Jesus described in such terrifying and lofty terms?

How should this description encourage us, as well?



## NOW LOOK AT REVELATION 2:1–3:22.

---

21. The letters to the seven churches follow a six-part pattern. In your copy of the text, draw a box around each section using the following colors.

Introduction	Yellow
Jesus described	Orange
Statement of knowing	Red
Accusation/warning	Purple
Call to listen	Blue
Promise to the one who conquers	Green

22. In the chart on the following page, summarize the contents of each letter. Pay attention to how the letters are similar and different.

23. The word *conquers* is frequently translated “overcomes.” Read through all of the promises to those who overcome. We will discuss it in the teaching time, but for now, what common thread do you find in all of them? How are they appropriate rewards for someone who overcomes?

24. **APPLY:** If you were looking for a church in Asia Minor, which of the seven churches would you be more likely to join? Which ones would you avoid? Why?

**COMPARING THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES**

<b>Yellow</b> To the angel of the church in:	<b>Orange</b> Jesus described	<b>Red</b> "I know . . ."	<b>Purple</b> Accusation/warning	<b>Blue</b> Call to listen? Y/N	<b>Green</b> Promise to the one who conquers		



## NOW REREAD REVELATION 2:1–3:22.

---

We've seen the six-part pattern of the letters to the seven churches and compared the contents of the letters. Now let's consider a few of the letters' specifics.

25. In 2:14, Pergamum is rebuked for following what teaching?

You may know this person's name because of a well-known incident with a donkey (Num. 22). A prophet of Israel, he sold himself to whoever wanted to purchase a prophetic word to use to their advantage. Look up the following verses and note how they expand your understanding of the kind of erroneous teaching in view.

*2 Peter 2:15-16*

*Jude 11*

26. Twice the teachings of the Nicolaitans are mentioned. Which two churches were threatened by these teachings?

What can you infer about the nature of these teachings from the context? In your copy of the text, circle the first four words of 2:15. Then compare 2:15 to 2:14. Circle the word that best summarizes the message of the Nicolaitans.

LEGALISM

LICENTIOUSNESS

27. In 2:20, Thyatira is warned about a woman. What name is she given?

Look up 1 Kings 16:29-33 and 21:1-25. Based on this Old Testament story, do you think the woman in Thyatira's real name is given? Explain your answer.

28. Theologian Iain Duguid has noted that Satan only has three weapons to use against us: seduction, deception, and persecution.<sup>1</sup> Seduction is the temptation to live like unbelievers. Deception is believing a lie instead of the truth. Persecution is suffering for the sake of our Christian witness. On your chart on page 28, note which of these weapons each of the seven churches is facing. How does the tone of each letter reflect the weapon(s) in view?

29. Revelation 3:20 is an often-quoted verse. How does seeing it in the context of the letter to the church in Laodicea help you understand it?

30. **APPLY:** Seduction, deception, and persecution are threats to the church in any age. How are Jesus's words to the seven churches of John's day timely for the modern-day church? For your local church in particular?

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1. Iain Duguid, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), Ezekiel 25.



## WRAP-UP

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What have you *heard* this week in Revelation?

How will you *keep* what you have heard?

What encouragement can God's people take from this week's passage of Revelation? What encouragement does it hold for you personally?

What aspect of God's character has this week's passage of Revelation shown you more clearly? (*Note: A list of God's attributes can be found in the back of your workbook on page 213 to help you think through your answer.*)

Fill in the following statement:

*Knowing that God is \_\_\_\_\_ shows me that*

*I am \_\_\_\_\_.*

What one step can you take this week to better live in light of this truth?





## GROUP DISCUSSION

Use the questions below to guide your group discussion.

**1. OBSERVE:** (question 7, p. 22) Read Exodus 3:13-15 and Deuteronomy 32:39-41. How do they relate to the description of God in Revelation 1:8? How are they similar? How are they different?

**APPLY:** (question 8, p. 22) The eternity of God will be a recurring theme in Revelation. How should God's eternal nature comfort us? How should it warn us?

**2. OBSERVE:** (question 16, p. 25) What emotional response do you think the physical description of the Son of Man is intended to evoke in John's listeners? What does John's response in 1:17 tell you about his own emotional reaction? How do the first words of the Son of Man in 1:17 speak to John's response?

**APPLY:** (question 20, p. 26) How would it have been encouraging to the recipients of John's letter to hear Jesus described in such terrifying and lofty terms? How should this description encourage us, as well?

**3. OBSERVE:** (question 23, p. 27) What common thread do you find in all of the promises to those who overcome? How are they appropriate rewards for someone who overcomes?

**APPLY:** (question 24, p. 27) If you were looking for a church in Asia Minor, which of the seven churches would you be more likely to join? Which ones would you avoid? Why?

**4. OBSERVE:** (question 25, p. 29) In 2:14, Pergamum is rebuked for following what teaching? How do 2 Peter 2:15-16 and Jude 1:11 expand your understanding of the kind of erroneous teaching in view?

**APPLY:** (question 30, p. 30) Seduction, deception, and persecution are threats to the church in any age. How are Jesus's words to the seven churches of John's day timely for the modern day church? For your local church in particular?

**5. WRAP-UP:** (p. 31) What have you *heard* this week in Revelation? How will you *keep* what you have heard?

## VIEWER GUIDE NOTES

Watch the teaching video for Week Two. Use the space provided to take notes.



To access the video teaching sessions, use the instructions in the back of your workbook.