

### WEEK 1: REVELATION 1:1-20

# Why We're Afraid of Revelation (And Why We Shouldn't Be)

### **Prologue**

<sup>1</sup> The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup> who testifies to everything he saw–that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

## **Greetings and Doxology**

<sup>4</sup> John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spiritsbefore his throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup> and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father–to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

<sup>7</sup> "Look, he is coming with the clouds," and "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him"; and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him." So shall it be! Amen.

<sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

#### John's Vision of Christ

<sup>9</sup> I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup> On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

<sup>12</sup> I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup> The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. <sup>15</sup> His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. <sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup> I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

<sup>19</sup> "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. <sup>20</sup> The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

1. Have you ever avoided reading Revelation? Why or why not?

2.	How does John's exile on Patmos help you understand the urgency and comfort of this letter?
3.	Revelation 1:17 says, "Do not be afraid." Why do you think that's such a central command?
4.	Jesus is seen walking among the lampstands (churches). What does that image mean to you personally?
5.	How can we read Revelation not as a horror story but a love letter from Christ to His Church?
6.	What would change in your spiritual life if you believed Jesus was truly present in your church today?

# WEEK 2: REVELATION 4-5

# Heaven Meets Earth, Not Escape from Earth

#### The Throne in Heaven

4 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." <sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. <sup>3</sup> And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. <sup>4</sup> Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. <sup>5</sup> From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. <sup>6</sup> Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. <sup>7</sup> The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup> Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

"'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come."

<sup>9</sup> Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, <sup>10</sup> the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

#### The Scroll and the Lamb

5 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup> And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" <sup>3</sup> But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. <sup>4</sup> I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. <sup>5</sup> Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

<sup>6</sup> Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. <sup>8</sup> And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. <sup>10</sup> You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth."

<sup>11</sup> Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. <sup>12</sup> In a loud voice they were saying:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

<sup>14</sup> The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

1.	When you picture "heaven," what comes to mind? and how does Revelation 4–5 affrim, challenge, or reshape that?
2.	How does the image of worship in heaven speak to our purpose as believers on earth?
3.	What does it mean that Jesus is portrayed as a Lamb who was slain? How does that redefine strength?
4.	How have you seen "worship as resistance" in your own life or in the history of the Church?
5.	Why is it important that worship is depicted as active, not passive, in Revelation?
6.	What are some practical ways we can "live like the Lamb reigns" right now?
7.	What does it look like for worship to reframe your Monday through Saturday?

## WEEK 3: REVELATION 13, 17

# The Beast Isn't Who You Think It Is

#### The Beast out of the Sea

13 The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. 2 The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. 3 One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. 4 People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?"

5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months.
6 It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.
7 It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.
8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast–all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

9 Whoever has ears, let them hear. 10 "If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed." This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.

#### The Beast out of the Earth

11 Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. 13 And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. 14 Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. 16 It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, 17 so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

18 This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. [e] That number is 666.

## Babylon, the Prostitute on the Beast

17 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. 2 With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."

3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. 5 The name written on her forehead was a mystery:

BABYLON THE GREAT
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

<sup>6</sup> I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. <sup>7</sup> Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. <sup>8</sup> The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

<sup>9</sup> "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. <sup>10</sup> They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. <sup>11</sup> The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

<sup>12</sup> "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. <sup>13</sup> They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. <sup>14</sup> They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

<sup>15</sup> Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. <sup>16</sup> The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. <sup>17</sup> For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God's words are fulfilled. <sup>18</sup> The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

- 1. How do you feel when you read about beasts and Babylon in Revelation? Curious, confused, cautious?
- 2. The early church saw Rome as "the Beast." What modern systems might Revelation be warning us about today?
- 3. Have you ever felt tension between faithfulness to Christ and cultural belonging? Share an example.
- 4. What is one area of your life where God might be calling you to greater courage or clarity?
- 5. How does this passage help you live as a faithful witness, not just a cultural Christian?

#### WEEK 4: REVELATION 19:11-21

# The Lamb Wins. Period.

#### The Heavenly Warrior Defeats the Beast

<sup>11</sup> I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

#### KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

<sup>17</sup> And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, <sup>18</sup> so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small."

<sup>19</sup> Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. <sup>20</sup> But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. <sup>21</sup> The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

1. When you hear "Jesus wins," what emotions or images come to mind?

2. How is Jesus' victory different from worldly definitions of success or domination?

3.	Revelation 19 portrays evil collapsing under its own weight. Have you seen examples of that in history or life?
4.	"They conquered by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11). What does that look like today?
5.	What does faithfulness look like in your daily life right now?
6.	In what areas are you tempted to "fight like the world" instead of witnessing like Christ?

# **WEEK 5: REVELATION 21:1-22:5**

# New Creation, Not the End of Creation

#### A New Heaven and a New Earth

21 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

<sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

<sup>6</sup> 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 water without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup> Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. <sup>8</sup> But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

#### The New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb

<sup>9</sup> One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." <sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup> It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup> It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>13</sup> There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. <sup>14</sup> The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup> The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. <sup>16</sup> The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. <sup>17</sup> The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits[d] thick.[e] <sup>18</sup> The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. <sup>19</sup> The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup> the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.[f] <sup>21</sup> The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

<sup>22</sup> I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. <sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. <sup>25</sup> On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. <sup>27</sup> Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

#### **Eden Restored**

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

1.	How does the idea of a "renewed creation" differ from popular ideas of heaven?
2.	What does it mean to you that God doesn't abandon creation but comes to dwell with His people?
3.	The city-garden imagery points to both restoration and progress. What does that say about God's purpose for creation?
4.	How does this vision challenge our tendency to disconnect faith from creation care, justice, or community life?
5.	In what ways can we "live as new creation people" today?
6.	How does knowing the end of the story help you stay faithful in the middle?
7.	What kind of legacy do you hope your faith will sow into the "new world" God is building?
8.	What part of this passage fills you with hope?

### WEEK 6: REVELATION 3:14-22

# Living Faithfully in a Fractured World

#### To the Church in Laodicea

<sup>14</sup> "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. <sup>15</sup> I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm–neither hot nor cold–I am about to spit you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup> You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on y eyes, so you can see.	you
<sup>19</sup> Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. <sup>20</sup> Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.	. If
<sup>21</sup> To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down was my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup> Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."	with
. What part of the Laodicea passage resonates with where you are spiritually right now?	

2. Jesus says, "You are neither hot nor cold." What does spiritual apathy look like today?

3. Why do you think comfort and self-reliance are so spiritually dangerous?

4.	Jesus stands at the door and knocks. What might it look like to "open the door" in your life right now?
5.	How do we stay spiritually awake when the world is exhausting and discouraging?
6.	What role does community play in helping us stay faithful when our motivation runs dry?
7.	What practices help you re-center your heart when you feel spiritually numb?