

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

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Week 13 | There's a New World Coming | 1,2,3 John and Revelation

The Letters of John: *Walk in God's light; live in God's love*

The three letters written by the apostle John were written to churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) as a warning against some itinerant teachers who were traveling around teaching false doctrine. These false teachers were teaching that Jesus was not Israel's Messiah. They were teaching that Jesus was not the Son of God. These teachers had once been a part of the Christian community, but they had left the community and now they were gathering followers as they taught false doctrine.

In the letter of 1 John, the apostle John gives a strong correction to this false teaching. John proclaims essential truth about Jesus as God's Son, and John teaches us how to live in fellowship with God and in fellowship with one another.

[*Note: the term *fellowship* connotes a cooperative and affectionate personal relationship]

Jesus is the Son of God—the source of eternal life

1. Read 1 John 1:1-4 and from John's gospel: John 1:1-2 and John 1:14

- In this introductory paragraph to the letter of 1 John proclaims that the subject of his letter is "*the Word of life*." Look back at John's gospel: John 1:1-2 and John 1:14. Who is "*the Word of life*"?
- What sort of life does "*the Word of life*" bring? (1 John 1:2)
- How does this "Word of Life" correspond to God? (see the gospel of John: John 1:1-2)

John's letter is rich with metaphors and images and stark contrasts. There are two main sections to this letter, and two main emphases about the character and glory of God. In the first section of the book, John teaches that God is light. In the second section John teaches that God is love. In both sections John explores what that means for us as we live in fellowship with God and with one another.

Part 1: *God is light*

Light signifies both truth and purity—correct doctrine and holy living

2. Read 1 John 1:5-2:2

Walking in the light is living in obedience to Jesus

- How does John describe the life of the person who is living in fellowship with God? (1:5-7)
- Personal reflection:* What sorts of actions and attitudes would correspond to "walking in the light"?
- Personal reflection:* By contrast, what sorts of actions and attitudes take us onto the path of darkness?
- What provision has God given us for forgiveness and perfect restoration? (2:1-2)

SEMESTER 04:

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A JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

3. Read (the gospel of) John 13:34-35 and 1 John 2:7-11 *Walking in the light is loving one another*

- a. What is the new command that Jesus gave His disciples just before His betrayal? (John 13:34-35)
- b. How is “*walking in the light*” reflected in how we treat others? (2:7-11)

4. Read 1 John 2:15-17 *Walking in the light is resisting the world's values*

- a. What three aspects of the world system that we are to resist falling in love with? (2:16)
- b. *Personal reflection:* In what way may loving the things of this world become a snare for us?

Part 2: *God is love*

5. Read 1 John 3:1-3; 3:16-18 *God's love makes us His children*

- a. What is the nature of God's love for us? (3:1)
- b. How is God's love demonstrated? (3:16)
- c. As God's children, how are we to love others? (3:17-18)

6. Read 1 John 4:7-16 *God's love enables us to love others*

- a. How does God command His children to live? (4:7)
- b. How do we know that we are united with God? (4:13-16)

7. Read 1 John 5:10-13 *God's love has provided eternal life through Jesus*

- a. What is the testimony (the truth statement) that God has given about His Son Jesus? (5:11-12)
- b. What confidence do we have if we believe in the Bible's teaching about Jesus? (5:13)

God's love calls us to live in fellowship with Him forever

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A JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

Revelation: *Jesus will return to make all things new.*

The apostle John was in exile on the island of Patmos when he received and recorded this prophetic vision of the future. John proclaims this book to be “*the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” (Revelation 1:1) It is both a revelation *about* Jesus and a revelation *from* Jesus. The purpose of the book is to bring encouragement to God’s people who are suffering in this fallen world, and to challenge them to remain faithful to the end.

The Christians at the end of the first century were suffering persecution under the Roman emperor Domitian, and there was no end in sight. This important book, the book of Revelation, affirms God’s sovereign control over the course of history and God’s plan to establish His Kingdom. The book of Revelation proclaims God’s final victory over sin and death through the promise of Christ’s return to judge the wicked and to welcome the people of faith into God’s eternal Kingdom.

The book is written in the genre of *apocalypse* – a type of Jewish literature that describes events and characters in dramatic symbolic imagery. Through colorful images, the text reveals not only the events that will occur, but it also reveals God’s heavenly perspective on those events. The book emphasizes the certainty of God’s victory over evil.

The first three chapters of the book of Revelation are written as a circular letter to be delivered to seven churches in Asia Minor. In this letter, John addresses each of the churches, and encourages them to resist sin, to remain faithful to Christ, and to remember that Jesus will one day return as King.

1. Read Revelation 1:4-6

Jesus will return in glory and power

- a. How does John describe Jesus? (vs. 5)
- b. What does John proclaim that Jesus has done for us—for Christians? (vs. 5-6)
- c. What do you learn about Christ’s future return from Revelation 1:7?
- d. Why do you think that the peoples of the earth will mourn when He returns? (vs. 7)

After John completed his message to the seven churches, John saw a door standing open in heaven, and the Spirit of God transported John into the throne room of heaven where John was able to see a glorious vision of the majesty and power of God. In this vision, John saw that God held a scroll sealed with seven seals.

At various places in the Old Testament, God gave His prophets scrolls, and often these scrolls were a written account of God’s judgments and prophetic plans for His people. Hundreds of years before the time of Christ, the prophet Daniel was given a prophecy about the future of God’s people Israel and a time of future judgment. (Daniel 12:1-10) Daniel was told to seal up the words of that prophecy until the time of the end—the end of the ages.

Now in Revelation chapter 5, John sees that God has in His hand a scroll sealed with seven seals. This scroll seems to represent God’s purpose and plan for all of future history, culminating in the ultimate provision of God’s future Kingdom. The opening of the scroll will set in motion events that will result in Christ’s final victory over sin and death.

SEMESTER 04:

Transformed

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

2. Read Revelation 5:1-14.

The Lion of Judah is the Lamb who was slain

- a. Why was John in distress? Why was John weeping? (vs. 1-4)
- b. John hears a voice that declares that Someone is worthy. Who is able to open the scroll? (5:5)

This speaks of the Messiah, the Lion of Judah, the King who was expected in the Old Testament. This King was to be the Son of David, the King who would reign forever over God's Kingdom.

- c. John envisioned a lion, but when John turned to look, what did he see? (Rev. 5:6-10).
- d. Why is the Lamb who was slain worthy to open the scroll? (Rev. 5: 9-10)
- e. What do you learn about the Kingdom of God from Revelation 5:9-14?
- f. *Personal reflection:* We see from Revelation 5:9-10 that we will one day reign with Jesus in God's Kingdom. What did it cost Jesus to make this honor come to you?

The symbol of Jesus as the slain Lamb is important for understanding the book of Revelation. The Old Testament vision of God's powerful victorious Kingdom is coming to pass, but it is not through the strength of a mighty Warrior, but through the sacrifice of a Servant. The victory of God (symbolized by the lion) has been accomplished by the suffering of the Lamb. Jesus is the *crucified* Messiah. Jesus rescued God's people by dying for them as the true sacrificed Lamb.

Beginning in chapter 6 of Revelation, Jesus begins to open the scroll, demonstrating that He has divine authority to guide the course of history to its glorious conclusion. In the next several chapters there are three cycles of seven—seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. Each cycle represents God's justice against evil and each cycle looks forward to God's Kingdom as it will come on earth when Christ returns.

Sprinkled throughout the book of Revelation are some intermissions in the progress of the story. There are some parenthetical accounts that John calls *signs*, or symbols, and they shed light on the reality of what is happening in our world.

3. Read Revelation chapter 12:1-12.

The devil is defeated by the King who will come

This vision pictures the cosmic battle that lies behind the suffering of God's people throughout history. It reveals that the world's rebellion against God is a manifestation of the ancient conflict that began in Genesis 3 when the serpent applied his cunning to deceive Adam and Eve (God's first created people) and to destroy their innocence.

This sign describes the serpent—the devil, the source of all evil, pictured as an enormous red dragon poised in front of a pregnant woman so that he can devour her Child as the Child is born. The woman represents God's people Israel, and her Child represents the Messiah.

SEMESTER 04:

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A JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

- a. What is the destiny of this Child? (12:5)
- b. How is the Child delivered from the schemes of the serpent? (12:5)

[*Note: Many scholars understand this to refer to the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.]

- c. There is war in heaven between God's angels and the serpent. Who is the victor in this battle? (12:7-9)
- d. How does heaven proclaim this victory? What is the result of this victory? (12:10) List several elements that you see in verse 10.
- e. How do the people of God (the people of faith) overcome this evil adversary? (12:11)
- f. **Read Revelation 12:17.** The dragon has been thrown out of heaven, but he continues to make war on the rest of the offspring of the woman. Who are these offspring of the woman? (12:17)

In this vision, John reveals that the real enemy of God's people is not Rome, nor any nation, nor any human. There are dark spiritual powers at work that continue to lead the world astray (see Rev. 12:9) We follow the Lamb by remaining faithful even unto death.

The book of Revelation has a lot to say about the struggle between the people of God and the forces of evil, but our purpose in this survey is to understand the *overall message* of this book. The book of Revelation was not written to frighten God's people; it was written to strengthen and encourage them. It was not written to foster despair; it was written to give us hope.

Let's fast forward to the end and see how it's all going to turn out.

In chapter 17, an angel carries John into the desert and shows John a vision of the nations of the earth that have elevated themselves in defiance of God. These nations are called "*Babylon the Great*", and the vision represents not only Babylon, but Persia, Greece, Rome, Egypt—all world powers throughout history, including the world powers of today—nations and peoples that have been seduced by wealth and power, and who refuse to honor God.

4. Read Revelation 17:3-6 and 18:1-5. *Godless pursuits are revealed as adultery against God*

- a. How does this ugly image reveal the true nature of idolatrous passions for pleasure and power? (17:3-6)
- b. What is God's plan for the global city whose success is based on this wicked motivating force? (18:2-3)

SEMESTER 04:

Transformed

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

5. Read Revelation 19:11-16

Jesus returns in glory

- a. How does Jesus appear in His return? (19:11-13)
- b. *For deeper thought:* Why do you think His robe is dipped in blood? (19:13)
- c. What is His title? (19:16)

6. Read Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15

The dead will be raised; the wicked will be judged

- a. What is the destiny of those who were slain for the faith? (20:4)
- b. What is the destiny of those who have died without Jesus? (20:12-13)

7. Read Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-7, 12-17

The Kingdom has come!

- a. Revelation 21 and 22 describe the arrival of the New Jerusalem—the coming of the Eternal Kingdom of God. How is God's relationship with His people described? (21:3)
- b. What will be no longer present in the New Jerusalem? (21:4, 22, 27)
- c. What will we enjoy in the New Jerusalem that was also in Eden? (22:1-2; Genesis 2:9)
- d. What invitation does Jesus give in 22:16-17? What does this invitation mean to you?
- e. *Personal reflection:* How does this revelation of your eternal destiny bring you encouragement?

There will come a day when everything that is wrong will be made right. There will be no pain, no death, no mourning, and no crying. The book of Revelation teaches us that one day Jesus will return to raise the dead, judge the wicked and establish His eternal Kingdom. Be encouraged; keep the faith. God's Kingdom will prevail.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

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A JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT