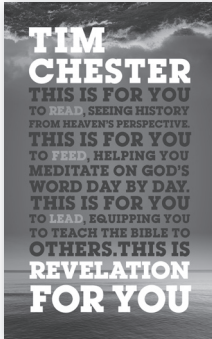




# Heaven's perspective

**Revelation**

by Tim Chester



## Revelation For You

If you are reading *Revelation For You* (see page 77) alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *Revelation For You*:

Study One → Ch 1  
Study Two → Ch 2  
Study Three → Ch 3  
Study Four → Ch 4-5

Study Five → Ch 6-7  
Study Six → Ch 8-9  
Study Seven → Ch 9-10

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Heaven's perspective

The Good Book Guide to Revelation

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Series Consultants: Tim Chester, Tim Thornborough, Anne Woodcock, Carl Laferton

The Good Book Company

Tel (US): 866 244 2165

Tel (UK): 0333 123 0880

Email (US): [info@thegoodbook.com](mailto:info@thegoodbook.com)

Email (UK): [info@thegoodbook.co.uk](mailto:info@thegoodbook.co.uk)

### Websites

**North America:** [www.thegoodbook.com](http://www.thegoodbook.com)

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Tim Chester has asserted his right to be identified as author of this work.

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# Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mothers with children, students, business people or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ♥ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- 🗨️ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- ➡️ **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗨️ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ⬆️ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

# Why study Revelation?

Many people find the book of Revelation intimidating, perhaps a bit scary or just plain confusing. But there's no need to be scared—and every reason to be excited.

Imagine looking close up at the details of an impressionist painting. All you can see are strokes of paint and dabs of colour. It's hard to make sense of it. But take a step back, and the picture becomes clear. And what emerges is not just a scene but the mood it evokes. That's how we should approach the book of Revelation. If you lean in too close and look only at the detail—it's all a bit perplexing. But step back, look at the big picture and Revelation not only becomes clearer but it grabs our imaginations.

John is writing to Christians facing the threats and seductions of life in and under the Roman Empire. We need to put ourselves in their shoes and see how Revelation inspires them to remain faithful to Christ, before we apply it to ourselves. Since we are faced with the threat and seductions of the world around us, John wants to recapture our imagination about how God is at work.

Despite everything that is going wrong with our world, God remains in control. And when we see history, our present and our future from heaven's perspective, it will encourage us to trust God and remain faithful to the end.

John does this by presenting to us the visions he receives—visions that take us beyond the chaos of history to see God at work behind the scenes; visions that raise our eyes from this world to the world above, and the world to come. Above all, he shows us a vision of who Jesus Christ is—the ascended reigning Lord, the Lamb who was slain but who now lives for ever, the one who speaks with a voice like the sound of a waterfall, and the one who holds the people of God safe in his hands.

These seven insightful studies will help ordinary Christians see how John's message is just as relevant and applicable to our lives today as it was 2,000 years ago.



## BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of Revelation fit into the whole story of God's word?

### REVELATION 90s

27BC	Augustus becomes emperor
AD14	Tiberius becomes emperor
37	Caligula becomes emperor
41	Claudius becomes emperor
54	Nero becomes emperor
65	Christian persecution
66	The Jewish revolt begins
69	The year of the four emperors: Galba, Otto, Vitellius and Vespasian
70	The Jerusalem Temple is destroyed
79	Titus becomes emperor
81	Domitian becomes emperor
90s	Probable date when John wrote Revelation
98	Trajan becomes emperor

# 1

## Revelation 1

# THE LORD WHO REVEALS



### talkabout

1. What are your feelings as you approach these studies in the book of Revelation? If you are feeling nervous or excited, can you explain why?

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- From your previous knowledge of this book, how might you summarise its message to a Christian friend, or to someone who is not a Christian?

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### investigate

#### Read Revelation 1 v 1-11

2. What is this a revelation of (v 1; see also v 19)?

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- What is the five-link chain that has led to you reading it now?

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#### DICTIONARY

**Revelation (v 1):** hidden truths made known by God to someone.

**Testimony (v 2):** evidence or claims about Jesus.

**Blessed (v 3):** to be in right relationship with God, enjoying his love and favour.

**Alpha and Omega (v 8):** the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

3. According to verse 4, what will be the result of us reading this book? How does this compare with your answer to question 1?

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4. How does verse 5 fill out our understanding of what being blessed by God's grace and peace means for those who receive them?

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### explore more

optional

➤ **Read Revelation 22 v 16-17**

*What is the big application of the whole of the book of Revelation?*

*What should it cause us to do (v 17)?*

*Sevens and symbols:* In this section, we encounter the first example of something peculiar to Revelation and books like Daniel. Apocalyptic literature uses a system of symbols to communicate truths about God powerfully. Here “the seven spirits before his throne” (1 v 4) is simply a description of the Holy Spirit. Seven is the number of perfection or completeness. It is telling us that the Spirit of God is all-present and all-seeing—he is everywhere and sees everything. There is more detail on the meaning of these symbols on page 12.

5. What situation do John and the churches he is writing to face (v 9)?

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- Given what we know about the number seven, what is the significance of the churches listed in verse 11?

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## investigate

### ▶ Read Revelation 1 v 12-20

We are not meant to imagine what this figure looks like. Jesus is described with symbols drawn from the Old Testament that tell us something about who he is and what he is doing now.

#### DICTIONARY

**Hades (v 18):** the realm of the dead in Greek mythology.

6. Can you decode the symbolic meanings in this description of Jesus? What Old Testament images do they bring to mind?

- Robe:
- Hair (see Daniel 7 v 9):
- Eyes:
- Feet (see Daniel 10 v 6):
- Voice:
- Stars (see Daniel 12 v 3):
- Sword (see Isaiah 11 v 4; Hebrews 4 v 12-13):
- Face (see Exodus 33 v 20):
  
- *Where* is the figure that John sees? What is the significance of that?

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## **apply**

7. What opposition or pressure do you and your church face today?

- How will this vision of Jesus encourage you to be bold and to persevere in your struggle against these powers?

8. Why is John's response the only appropriate reaction to seeing Jesus as he really is?

9. How is Jesus' response to John so encouraging for him, and for us?



## **getting personal**

Does your understanding of who Jesus is match up with what was revealed to John?

What emotions do you feel when you come to him in prayer? What emotions should you feel, if you understand who Christ is correctly?



## investigate

10. How might each of the descriptions Jesus gives of himself encourage John and the churches he is writing to as they face hostility and division?

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11. What is Jesus' relationship with his beleaguered people (v 20)?

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## apply

12. What is there in your life that will last? What will truly make a difference in eternity?

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## pray

Spend some time praising the risen Lord Jesus. Use some of the descriptions from the passage, and their meanings, to inform your praises for all that Christ is and has done for us.

Pray for yourselves as individuals and as a group as you read the Father's revelation to you. Pray that you would read it rightly, and understand how it comforts, warns and encourages us.

Pray that you would become faithful witnesses to the grace and peace to be found in Jesus. Ask the Lord to help you find and make opportunities to share Jesus with others as you read this book together.



## Symbols in Revelation

The word translated “made ... known” in 1 v 1 is literally “signified”. Revelation is written in the language of “Sign”. In Daniel 2 King Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a statue that is crushed by a stone that becomes a mountain. Daniel makes known this mystery to the king. The four parts of the statue are four great kingdoms, and the stone is God’s kingdom. The dream is clearly not to be taken literally. Its components are all symbols that signify something that takes place in history. The same is true of the book of Revelation. It doesn’t describe events that will literally take place at some point in the future. It’s written in symbols because its aim is not merely to convey information but to capture our imagination. Here is a brief guide to the meaning of some of them. For further help, refer to *Revelation for You*.

**Seven:** completeness or perfection (perhaps from the seven days of creation)

**Six:** incompleteness or imperfection (one less than the completeness symbolised by seven)

**Seven spirits or sevenfold Spirit:** the ever-present Spirit of God (seven signifies his complete or perfect presence)

**Four:** completeness, especially geographic completeness (the four corners of the earth)

**Horn:** strength

**Eyes:** sight or wisdom (insight)

**Sea:** the forces of chaos (so a crystal sea represents complete control over the forces of chaos)

**Living creatures:** power or imperial powers

**White robes:** God’s declaration of

the wearer’s purity, righteousness and vindication, and therefore also the right to be in God’s presence

**Earthquakes:** Earth-shattering events

**1,000:** many

**12:** completeness for God’s people (from the twelve patriarchs of the Old Testament and twelve apostles of the New Testament)

**144,000:**  $12 \times 12 \times 1000 =$  completeness  $\times$  many = all God’s many people

**Rainbow:** covenant faithfulness and mercy (from Noah’s rainbow)

**Virginity:** faithfulness to God (ready for the marriage of the Lamb)

**Adultery:** unfaithfulness to God

**Trumpets:** warnings of judgment, victory or battle