

# ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TOUGH TIMES

LISTENING FOR GOD THROUGH  
REVELATION 1:1-20



## SUMMARY

The early Church was in a time of persecution. John was in exile on the island of Patmos, separated from his churches by 40 miles of sea. John and the churches in Asia found themselves in difficult times due to their preaching the word of God and testimonies about Jesus. They were partners in suffering and patient endurance—and in the kingdom of Jesus.

John, on a rocky island in the Aegean Sea, encountered the powerful presence of God.

Read the quote on page 14 by Eugene Peterson. What does this say to you about the importance of memorizing and internalizing Scripture?

*In Revelation's 404 verses there are 518 scriptural allusions [references], but not direct quotations. John is so immersed in Scripture that he does not merely repeat it, it is recreated in him. He does not quote Scripture to prove something; he assimilates it so that he becomes someone.*

—Eugene H. Peterson

The book begins with John hearing a voice. When John turned to see the voice he had heard behind him, he saw Jesus Christ. Christ's message was, "Do not be afraid . . . I am the Living One." This revelation changed everything. The good news was His churches were not abandoned. There is victory and hope. Christ is risen, with absolute power and glory.

## PREPARATION FOCUS YOUR THOUGHTS

What circumstances, or people, challenge your faith in Christ? What difficult situations are you going through? What encouraging message from Christ do you need to hear today?

## READING HEAR THE WORD

Some have called this the Book of Revelations. It is *The Revelation*—singular. It is not a series of predictions about the end of the world. It reveals new information about Jesus Christ. He is Revelation's central character.

Ancient tradition holds that Revelation was written during a time of intense, government-sanctioned persecution of Christians under the reign of Roman Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96). He endorsed worship of the emperor. He even required his own family to address him as “my lord and my god.” However, Christ is “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (v. 5). Christ alone is worthy of our worship and devotion.

Keep this in mind as you read Revelation 1.

## MEDITATION ENGAGE THE WORD

### *Meditate on Revelation 1:1-3*

Christ is revealed to John. How has Christ been revealed to you? How has that revelation made a difference in your life?

John writes what he sees so that it may be read by others. The revelation of Christ is not something we keep to ourselves. How have you shared your knowledge and faith in Christ with others? What was their response?

God revealed to John “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (v. 9). Testifying about Christ is the reason John was exiled on the island. Obeying God can sometimes cause difficulties. What has God urged you to do that might cause you difficulties?

John promises that those who hear “the words of this prophecy” (v. 3) will be blessed. What does it mean to “hear”? Does it only require listening? How do we take the message of this book “to heart”?

Read the statement below. What blessings do you need from God? What must you do in order receive those blessings?

*Revelation 1:3 is the first of seven beatitudes in Revelation. Read the others in 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14.*

The Bible seldom uses prophecy as a way to give detailed predictions of the future. Prophets offer God’s point of view on what He is up to: what He has done in the past, is doing in the present, and is about to do in the future. What is God doing in your life now to prepare you for the future?

### *Meditate on Revelation 1:4-8*

The risen Christ had a message for *each* of seven Asian churches (2:1—3:22). However, John sent the entire writing to *all* of them. As you read each letter, ask yourself, “What is Christ saying to the seven churches?” and “What is Christ saying to me?”

There were other Asian churches during the time John wrote Revelation. We know of Troas, Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 1:2; 4:13). Why do you think these seven churches were the only ones who received letters?

Have you ever read another person's mail? What are the challenges of understanding a letter written to someone else?

*The doxology in 1:5-6 is the first of seven in Revelation. Read the others in 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12; 11:15-18; 15:3-4; 19:1-8.*

Revelation contains many doxologies (expressions of praise to God). What can we learn from Revelation's doxologies?

Read the passages on page 18 from Zechariah and Daniel. They announce the theme of Revelation: the crucified Christ will return in glory as the exalted Son of Man and triumph over His enemies. How will you react to His coming?

*And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.* —Zechariah 12:10

*In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.* —Daniel 7:13-14

### *Meditate on Revelation 1:9-20*

What do these verses have to say to Christians who have never suffered for their faith?

The voice who identified himself as the Almighty Eternal God (1:8; see Isaiah 44:6; 48:12) was the crucified, risen, and reigning Christ (1:18; see 19:13). Why did the churches need to recognize that Jesus was with them? What difference does it make to know that during the tough times, Christ is with you?

## PRAYER ✝ ASK AND LISTEN

Seek the face of God. Ask, "Lord, what are you saying to us today?"

Read again Christ's words of reassurance in 1:17-18. What do you fear? Tough times? Suffering? Death? The Second Coming? God? Pray that God will help you hear Christ's words of challenge and comfort.

## CONTEMPLATION ✝ REFLECT AND YIELD

Tune out all distractions and hear the voice of Jesus say, "Do not be afraid . . . I hold the keys" (1:17-18).

To each church Christ said, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (2:7, 11, 17; 3:6, 13, 22). If your church is loveless, unrepentant, impoverished, compromising, misguided, lifeless, weak, self-satisfied, and lukewarm; take heart! Christ is among you.



## GROUP STUDY

- What are some difficulties we may face as a result of our testimony and faith in Christ?
- Do these difficult situations ever keep us from sharing our faith or challenge our belief in God?

## REVELATION

- How can God help us overcome these difficulties and strengthen our faith?
- How can today's passages from Revelation be a blessing to those who read it?
- What are ways we can share with others the good news that Jesus is alive and lives forever?
- How can the messages written to the seven churches be the same messages written to us today?
- Based on what we read, what message does Christ have for the Church today?