



Revelation & Review

The Bible finishes with visions of a new creation. Paradise lost will be regained. Inspired by this hope, let's make the Bible our priority until we get there!

Session 8

Introducing Revelation

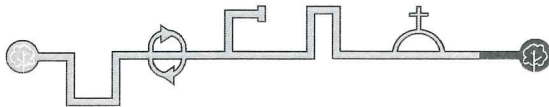
- The last book of the Bible
- 'Revelation' from Greek *apokalypsis* meaning 'unveiling'
- Visions given to the apostle John while exiled on the island of Patmos (c. AD 90)

The setting: persecution and martyrdom

- Christians were targeted by Roman emperors (e.g. Domitian)
- Revelation shows that Jesus is on the throne of heaven, no matter what is happening on earth.

I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'

Revelation 7.9–10



Interpreting Revelation and apocalyptic writings

- Apocalyptic writings engage with realities out of this world
- See also Old Testament books like Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah

Symbolic numbers

7	The number of perfection or completion	The number of Old Testament tribes and the original New Testament apostles	12	144,000
				12 (Old Testament) x 12 (New Testament) x 1000 = all God's people

Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

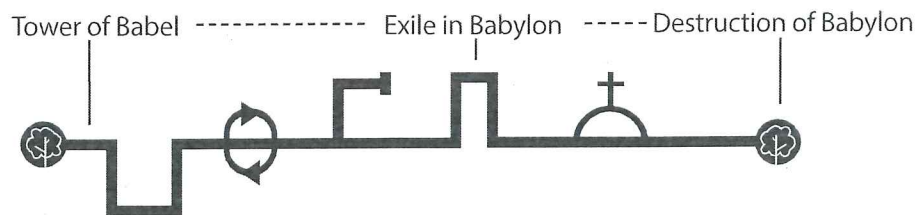
Revelation 14.1

Symbolic creatures

- Familiar concepts but strange combinations
- E.g. Revelation 9: locusts with lion's teeth, a human face and scorpion's tail
- Like political cartoons, exaggerated features make a point

Judgement: out with the old

Babylon symbolises worldly pride and rebellion



Woe! Woe, O great city [of Babylon]. Clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold ... For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.

Revelation 18.16–17 (paraphrase)

Living for money and possessions is like building sandcastles by the seashore. Soon it will all be gone.

Restoration: in with the new

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man!'

Revelation 21.1–3



New creation: 'A new heaven and a new earth'

- An Eden-like paradise is restored
- Resurrection bodies will enjoy a perfect new world



New Jerusalem: 'The holy city coming down'

- The people of God are like a new Jerusalem
- A true united nations



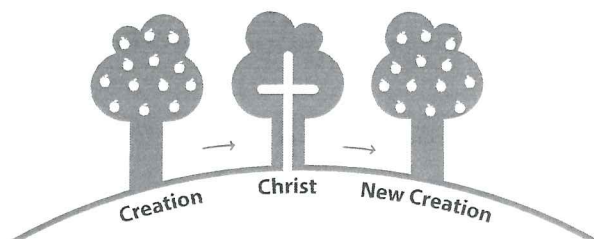
New temple: 'God will dwell with them'

- The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube
- Now the whole world is a temple of God's presence

The Bible: a tale of three trees

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal... also, on either side of the river, the tree of life ... The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22.1-2



The Bible turns full circle. Through Jesus we are brought back to Eden and the tree of life. Paradise lost is regained!

'All their life in this world ... had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before.'

CS Lewis, *The Last Battle*

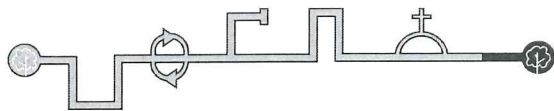
Discussion Time

Pause the video for 25 minutes.

Remember, John is describing something beyond our imagination. It's more like an artist's impression than a photo.

Read Revelation 21.1–5 and Revelation 22.1–5

- Which feature of these visions of new creation are you most looking forward to, and why?
- How will the way we relate to God in the new creation surpass our experience of him to date?
- How can this eternal hope motivate us through life's challenges?



Restart the video and move on to PART 2.

PART 2

Get the BIG picture

Try drawing the Bible storyline for yourself and label the key features.



How to interpret the Bible

WHAT? *What did this passage mean back then?*

Put the text in its context:

- When was the passage written?
- Who were the original readers?
- What did it mean to them?

SO WHAT? *So what does this passage mean in the light of Jesus?*

- The New Testament is our chapter of the story
- Jesus was foreshadowed in key characters (e.g. David), key events (e.g. the Exodus) and key prophecies (e.g. Isaiah)

Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself ... They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us ... while he opened to us the Scriptures?'

Luke 24.27,32

NOW WHAT? *Now what does this passage mean for my life today?*

- Our goal is to apply the Bible so that we are transformed.

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only... For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

James 1.22-23



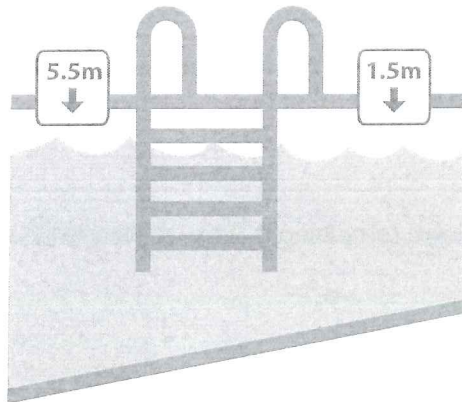
MY NOTES 

Next steps with the Bible

What's your next step?

- Read the Bible in one year
- Study a book in detail
- Memorise key verses
- Start a Bible book club
- Run The Bible Course again

See page 150 for recommended reading.



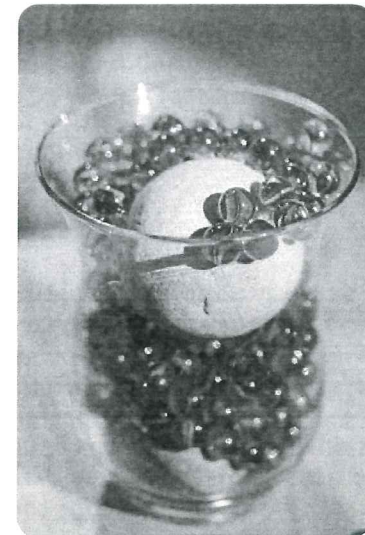
'In the Bible a child can paddle and an elephant can swim.'

William Temple (1881–1944)

Make the Bible a priority

'I read the Bible almost every day.

Almost on Monday, almost on Tuesday, almost on Wednesday...'



Put the Bible in first and the rest of life will fit in around it.

First things first



Life was always too busy and God got pushed to the back of the queue. I fell asleep reading my Bible so many times it might as well have been a pillow. But through The Bible Course, I took action and reordered my priorities. I put the Bible and prayer in first place and the results are beautiful and profound. On a daily basis I gain a sense of perspective and peace by seeing life through God's eyes.

Neil works in the media industry



I've always known the Bible was important and wanted to be someone who read it regularly. But I found it really difficult to actually get motivated, to open the pages and make a start. The Bible Course has been an incredible tool for me. The manual is something I still treasure; I call it my 'Bible sat nav'! It stays beside my Bible and I refer to it when I'm feeling lost. Now I have the confidence to read the Bible every day.

Jane is a primary school teacher

Personal Reflection

Suggested: 10 minutes

Take a moment to reflect on these verses:

Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither

Psalm 1.1–3 NIV

Write down something from these verses or the session that has inspired you ...

Write down something that has challenged you ...

Why not share your reflections with others and pray to finish.