

BNEXT BIBLE STUDY PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Brighten Your Light

FEATURING THE AMAZING JOURNEY VIDEO SERIES



BNEXT STUDY

Seeing God's Passion : Revelation 1–3

Understanding God's Judgment : Revelation 4–18

Envisioning God's Plan : Revelation 19–22

AMAZING JOURNEY VIDEO

▶ The Unveiling

▶ The Scroll

▶ The Finalé

STUDY **BNEXT**

William P. Campbell



Welcome to BNEXT Amazing Journey

I am excited to share this journey through God's Word with you. This electronic version contains the same material as the printed version. It allows you to electronically record your answers to the questions which are part of each lesson. Following each question, you will find a blue text box. Click or touch the box and the field within it will turn white allowing you to type in your answer. Your answer will automatically be saved when you exit the text box. Should you need more space for your answer, the text box will automatically expand and place a scroll bar on the right-hand side.

The Scripture covered by each lesson is listed on the mast of the page. Read the Scripture passages and then begin working your way through the lesson. Each lesson in this series contains three pages of commentary, followed by three pages of questions that will assist you dig deeper and reflect on God's Word.

An important component of BNEXT Amazing Journey are the videos that accompany each series. To access the videos associated with this particular series, see the link below my signature.

Also we have included, in the last pages of this digital version, a Leader's Guide that will enable anyone to facilitate a small group. Once you have completed this BNEXT Amazing Journey series, I hope you will consider leading others through this study material.

Again, thank you for allowing me to share this amazing journey with you.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

Handwritten signature of William P. Campbell in blue ink.

William P. Campbell

BNEXT Amazing Journey Video Link

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... I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Isaiah 6:1

Introduction

The word *Revelation* means “unveiling.” The book of Revelation unveils the person and purpose of God. Using vivid imagery and Biblical symbolism, John composed this great closing book of the New Testament as apocalyptic literature—much like the book of Daniel in the Old Testament. Revelation opens with the promise, “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy...” (Revelation 1:3). Rich promises and insights from God sit on the surface of the pages of this book of visions, ready to enrich the reader. And to the one who knows Old Testament imagery, the symbols of Revelation give way to even deeper meaning, fulfilling the adage, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Background

From the days of the early Church fathers, most theologians have assumed the author of Revelation to be the Apostle John, who also wrote the Gospel of John and the three epistles that carry his name. John was apprehended for his faith by Roman authorities and banished to Patmos, a small rocky island on the Aegean Sea (Revelation 1:9). This may have been during persecutions under Nero's reign from AD 54 to 68 or possibly during the latter part of Domitian's reign from AD 81 to 96. John must have looked with longing across the 50 mile stretch of sparkling blue water to the Asian region now known as Turkey where Christians he loved languished under Roman oppression.

One Sunday, as John was enraptured in worship, Jesus appeared to him in a vision and unveiled God's plan for the present and for the future (Revelation 1:10, 19). This cryptic style of writing, known as apocalyptic literature, was a standard means of presenting truths about the future in the ancient world. The symbols used by John as he recorded visions from God could only be unlocked by those who know scripture well. This message of encouragement, to be sent as a scroll along a standard postal route to the seven churches in the province of Asia (Revelation 1:4, 11), would not be understood if apprehended by Roman officials. We need not miss the wonders of this book's central truths for we have the whole Bible as our key to unlock the code.

Unveiling God's Person (Revelation 1)

The first step toward understanding God's message is to trust God's messenger, Jesus Christ. John knew Jesus intimately during the years of our Lord's earthly pilgrimage. Yet the truths revealed when Christ visited John on Patmos were fresh and startling. This was the resurrected Lord—Jesus unveiled in heavenly glory. The symbolism surrounding John's vision of the glorified Lord is packed with rich meaning and provides the context for the letters to the seven churches (found in Revelation 2-3).

John heard a commanding voice and turned to see seven golden lamp stands representing these seven Asian churches. Furthermore, the vision he saw of Christ in the midst of the lamp stands revealed symbolically our Lord's roles as prophet, priest, and king. The long robe and reference to Christ's sacrifice speak of His priestly position, the sash around His chest speaks of royalty, and the sword from His mouth represents the authority with which He speaks as a prophet. This sword was two-edged, able to pierce the hearts of those who hear God's Word



Watch Amazing Journey Video
“The Unveiling”

Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it...

Revelation 1:3a, b

(Hebrews 4:12). Jesus' hair was "white like wool, as white as snow" (Revelation 1:14), speaking of His wisdom and triumph, for He is the long-predicted Savior, the "Ancient of days" (Daniel 7:9, 22). With eyes like blazing fire, Christ could see and know all—He had no tolerance for sin. The holiness of our Lord was also made plain by feet that were like "bronze glowing in a furnace" and a face "like the sun shining in all its brilliance" (Revelation 1:15-16). John fell before Him "as though dead." Christ then places His hand on John and tells him to write what he has seen (which are the letters to the seven churches found in Revelation 2-3).

Some view these seven churches as representative of seven stages of Church history, demonstrating God's promise to care for His people at all times. Another perspective shows the seven basic problems faced by churches in each generation and God's guidelines for repentance and renewal in each situation. A third option points out that these letters were simply for seven congregations in the first century. Perhaps the best approach is to recognize the validity of all three viewpoints, for Scripture was given by the Eternal God whose Word influences time and eternity. Like ripples on a pond, God's Word moves outward in concentric circles from its first point of impact to touch all believers in every generation.

God's Passion For Love (Revelation 2:1-11)

The first letter is to the Church at Ephesus. Christ addresses them as the one who "walks among the seven golden lampstands" (Revelation 1:19-20). God does not abandon His children, nor does He overlook His Church. He walks among them. He cares for them. He notices their hard work and their acts of faithful obedience. What He wants most, however, is their love. Christ rebuked the Ephesians, "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love" (Revelation 1:4). The "first" love would be the sincere love that was willing to sacrifice all for Christ. It was the first response to God's grace, like the early passionate, romance in a marriage before affections begin to cool. A congregation can have all of its programs, but if the passion of God's love does not fill their hearts, then their light will become darkness.

The second letter was written to the Church in Smyrna. This is the suffering church, called to demonstrate love for God to the end—even unto death. Smyrna was the city in which emperor worship first began. To be a Christian in Smyrna, you had to make a choice—either publicly offer your incense to Caesar or lose your reputation, job, and even your life. God promised that those who overcame would "not be hurt at all by the second death" (Revelation 2:11). The first death is the separation of our eternal spirits from our bodies; the second death is the separation our eternal spirits from God.

God's Passion For Holiness (Revelation 2:12-29)

The third church addressed by the Lord was located in Pergamum. The word *Pergamum* can be translated "mixed marriage"; the Church in Pergamum was mixing their love for God with things of the world. Only a cutting and authoritative word from God would stop them from compromising their spirituality. Hence, Christ harkens back to the imagery from chapter one, describing Himself as "him who has the sharp, double-edged sword" (Revelation 2:12). The double-edged sword is the Word of God, able to penetrate "even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). The fourth church, in Thyatira,

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Revelation 2:11

slipped from the state of compromise seen in Pergamum to outright spiritual corruption. Thus Christ shows Himself as one whose “eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze” (Revelation 2:18; see also 1:14.). He is the Holy One whose radiance exudes a purity that nearly blinds the mortal onlooker. The gaze of Christ, like blazing fire, penetrates our deepest thoughts and darkest ways with a passion for us to avoid every form of sin.

God's Passion For Obedience (Revelation 3:1-13)

The fifth church was in Sardis, the capital city of ancient Lydia—a place of great fame and wealth. This church had “the reputation of being alive” but was spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1). Their deeds were *not complete* in the sight of God. They were in desperate need of renewal that only Christ could bring. Therefore Christ emphasizes to the Church in Sardis that He holds the Seven Spirits of God and the Seven Stars (Revelation 1:4, 16; 3:1). Once again, the number seven stands out. We see in Scripture that seven refers to fullness or perfection and points out the fact that there is more than enough of the Spirit's power to accomplish this great work of renewal. Sardis (like ourselves) needs to wake up to the resources at their (our) disposal. In the same way, the Church in Philadelphia, described in the sixth letter needed to walk through the open door of ministry the Lord had placed before them. They were situated along the gateway to the high central plateau of the province of Asia, an open field for mission work. What opportunities do we neglect that are right at our doorstep?

God's Passion For Repentance (Revelation 3:14-22)

The final letter was sent to the Church in Laodicea, a town that drew its water through aqueducts from nearby Hierapolis. These waters were renowned for their healing properties. By the time they reached Laodicea, however, the hot water had become warm and the cold waters tepid. Rather than being refreshed by a drink of water, a person would want to spit it out. In the same way, God would rather see people hot or cold for Him than lukewarm. Those who overcome spiritual lethargy will be allowed to sit on the very throne of Christ, sharing His authority forever!

Final Thought

When we read the seven letters of Revelation 2-3 and think about their Author, the glorified Christ pictured in Revelation 1, we cannot help think that they were written just for us. These letters call us to become as passionate as God is about living for Christ. “He who has an ear, let him hear!” (Revelation 3:22).

Spending Time With God

This lesson, in the series “Brighten Your Light,” is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Pray, asking God to give you



SERIES

BRIGHTEN YOUR LIGHT | THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 1

Seeing God's Passion | Revelation 1-3

revelation of Himself through His Word.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this study guide. In what way has this lesson challenged you to deepen your passion for Christ and His cause?

3. Revelation 1:4-8 carries significant insight about the person of Christ. Pick one verse from this section that especially blesses or puzzles you. Explain why.

4. Revelation 1:12-18 is loaded with symbolic meaning about the person of Christ. Pick one descriptive phrase in this section that intrigues you and explain what you think it means.

2. Why was the book of Revelation written (Revelation 1:1)?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. What is the main concern of the letter to Ephesus (Revelation 2:4)?

What promise is attached to this book (Revelation 1:3)?

What promise is given to the one who overcomes (Revelation 2:7)?



SERIES

BRIGHTEN YOUR LIGHT | THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 1

Seeing God's Passion | Revelation 1-3

What does this mean to you (Genesis 2:9, Revelation 22:14)?

What promise is given to the one who overcomes (Revelation 2:17)?

6. What is the main concern of the letter to Smyrna (Revelation 2:9-10)?

What does thi mean to you?

What promise is given to the one who overcomes (Revelation 2:11)?

8. What is the main concern of the letter to Thyatira (Revelation 2:20-25)?

What does this mean to you (Revelation 20:14)?

What promise is given to the one who overcomes (Revelation 2:26-27)?

7. What is the main concern of the letter to Pergamum (Revelation 2:14-16)?

What does this mean to you personally?



SERIES

BRIGHTEN YOUR LIGHT | THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 1

Seeing God's Passion | Revelation 1-3

9. What is the main concern of the letter to Sardis (Revelation 3:1-3)?

How does this promise encourage or challenge you?

Pick at least one promise given to the one who overcomes (Revelation 3:4-6)?

11. What is the main concern of the letter to the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-18)?

How does this promise encourage or challenge you?

What promise is given to the one who overcomes (Revelation 3:21)?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. What is the main concern of the letter to Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-10)?

What does this mean to you?

Pick at least one promise given to the one who overcomes (Revelation 3:11-13)?

Scripture for Meditation

HERE I AM! I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK. IF ANYONE HEARS MY VOICE AND OPENS THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN AND EAT WITH THAT PERSON, AND THEY WITH ME.

REVELATION 3:20



As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat... His throne was flaming with fire...

Daniel 7:9

Introduction

Some people suppose that the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament appears to be full of wrath and quick to pronounce judgment; the New Testament God seems kind, merciful, and full of grace. Those who take time to study Scripture, however, find that God *has not changed*, for He is “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). It is people who have changed. We have grown in maturity and in the ability to understand God’s heart, God’s will, and God’s ways (Galatians 3:23-25; Hebrews 6:1a). Providing a concluding summary for the whole of the Bible, the book of Revelation brings together these unchanging elements of God’s character. Here we find the bright colors of God’s mercy and kindness set against the dark background of God’s awesome and horrific judgments. Grace and judgment are both part of the fabric of God’s eternal Person, woven together in the book of Revelation.

The Throne Room (Revelation 4 and 5)

In Revelation 4 and 5, John is transported into the very throne room of God where he sees God on His throne with the “appearance of jasper and carnelian” (Revelation 4:3). The jasper described here is like our modern-day diamond brilliant and clear as glass. Carnelian is a gem with a deep red hue. Thus we see the brilliance of our holy God whose character is colored red by the love of His sacrifice for us. Next, in the same verse we see a “rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.” The rainbow is a sign of God’s covenant with man—to never destroy the earth with a flood. Even here, God reminds John that He will never break His promises. Furthermore, the rainbow’s emerald green hue can represent the eternal life and growth we enjoy through God’s grace. In Noah’s time and ever since, the rainbow was a semi-circle, broken by the earth’s horizon. In heaven, however, it will be seen as a complete circle...unending and perfect.

The means of this covenant is reiterated in Revelation 5, where the Lamb of God is the central figure. The word “lamb,” appearing here for the first time in Revelation, becomes a constant theme and appears more than 30 times through the ensuing chapters. God’s judgment on the world came only after Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36), received God’s judgment upon Himself. With the sacrifice of His life, Jesus “purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). In response to this immeasurable kindness, the whole of creation will sing with thankful hearts forevermore (Revelation 5:11-14).

The Seven Seals (Revelation 6)

We find that the Lamb of God is the only One worthy and able to break the seven seals and open the scroll of God’s coming judgment. The scroll represents God’s unfolding plan and to break the seals is to put the plan into action. He who secured our redemption is also the initiating source of God’s wrath upon those who refuse to believe. The first six seals, described in Revelation 6, follow closely the great, end-time tribulation foretold by our Lord in Matthew 24. The coming of the antichrist, wars on earth, famine, plague and death, and signs on the earth and in the heavens, all follow the predictions in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:4-8, 29). When Christians face the terrible calamities associated with the end of the world, they can look up and



Watch Amazing Journey Video
“The Scroll”

...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.

Revelation 5:5

know that God still reigns on His throne. He uses difficulty to shake people out of their complacency so that every last possible soul might turn to Him for salvation (2 Peter 3:9).

It is possible that the vision of the heavenly throne in Revelation 4-5 precedes the seven seals of God's judgment. This reflects the idea that Christians will be caught up into the presence of God before the Great Tribulation occurs. The concept of the "Rapture," or the catching up of Christians before the great judgment of God, is often supported by other scripture (Matthew 24:40-41; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 3:10).

The Saved (Revelation 7)

If Revelation 6 describes God's seals (judgment), Revelation 7 shows God's salvation. The first section points to Jewish believers (Revelation 7:1-8) and the second part references Gentiles who have trusted their lives to God (Revelation 7:9-14). Both groups are rewarded immeasurably for their faith and faithfulness (Revelation 7:15-17). It seems that every time the book of Revelation unveils God's plans for great judgment, it counterbalances the equation by reminding us of His end goal, people's salvation (Revelation 11:15-19; 14:1-5; 15:2-8; and chapters 19-22).

The Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8-9)

The seals of God introduce the trumpets of God. The ram's horn was used as an instrument throughout Biblical history to gather God's people for worship and for warfare (Joshua 6:16; Leviticus 23:24). When Christ returns, He will be announced with a trumpet (1 Thessalonians 4:16). For those who believe, the trumpet blast will be a clarion call of victory; those who hate God will know their time of reckoning has come (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 5:1-3). So too, in Revelation, the sound of the trumpet introduces punishment from God while setting the scene for victorious celebration with God.

The judgments of the seven trumpets are more pronounced than the seven seals, now unleashing devastation on earth, water, and sky (Revelation 8), along with untold misery cast upon humans (Revelation 9). All this prepares the way for "the mystery of God" (Revelation 10:7). The Biblical term *mystery* points to a purpose or plan of God that will not be fully grasped by our minds until all is accomplished. When the seventh trumpet is blasted, "The kingdom of the world" will become "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15). Once again, we are urged to understand that God sends judgment as a precursor for His unending mercies.

The Witness (Revelation 10 and 11)

Chapters 10 and 11 remind us that God shines His light through His chosen witnesses, even in the darkest of times. In chapter 10 a mighty angel appears, "coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun..." (Revelation 10:1-2). He was handed a scroll which John was commanded to take and eat. This scroll represents the decided will of God waiting to be declared to the world. Thus, when John ate it he found it to be sour in his stomach, but sweet as honey in his mouth (Revelation 10:10). God's Word is not meant to be contained but proclaimed by God's prophets. John's experience put him in line

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

Revelation 12:9

with great Old Testament prophets like Exekiel (Exekiel 2:8-3:3). There is no higher calling that to serve as God's ambassador, a witness to God's truth.

In Revelation 11, we are introduced to two additional witnesses, who come in the spirit of Elijah and Moses. They have power to call down fire from heaven and to shut the rain in the sky, as did Elijah (Revelation 11:5-6; 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 1:10-12). They also turn water into blood and unleash mighty plagues, as did Moses (Revelation 11:6; Exodus 7:17-21). Some believe that these two men are actually Moses and Elijah, sent back to earth for a final witness to God's power, even as they appeared briefly on the Mount of Transfiguration with Christ Jesus (Matthew 17:3). Another viewpoint suggests these two personages represent two groups of believers, Jewish and Gentil converts who are empowered by God to serve as witnesses to His saving grace just before the end.

The Satanic Trinity (Revelation 12-13)

These chapters reveal Satan's attempt to divert the masses from believing in God, that this deceiver might bring as many as possible with him into the place of eternal punishment. This father of lies mocks the triune nature of God by forming an unholy trinity of his own. Here we see the "dragon" (Satan himself—Revelation 12), the "beast" (the antichrist figure—Revelation 13:1-10) and the "image of the beast" (the personage or system through which he works), imitating the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In Revelation 12, the devil is symbolized as a dragon, pursuing a woman (Israel) from whom the Savior has come. The dragon sought to destroy the woman's child, but Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the place of ultimate victory. Satan has since been seeking to destroy those who love Christ. However, we overcome him by trusting in the substitutionary sacrifice of the Lamb. God has taken our judgment upon Himself that we might escape His judgments (Revelation 12:5, 9-12).

In Revelation 13, the *antichrist* is described as a "beast coming out of the sea" (Revelation 13:1). Even as Jesus was crucified and raised again, this beast will be dealt a "fatal wound" from which he will recover (Revelation 13:3). Thus "the whole world" will be astonished and will follow him. To help his cause, he will establish an "image of the beast" (Revelation 13:15) to promote his wicked schemes, even as Christ sends the Holy Spirit. In the face of such mockery and deception we can better understand why God will finally find need to unleash the full measure of His fury against Satan and his followers.

A Peek at the End (Revelation 14)

In chapter 14, although we are still very much in the story, we are given a glimpse of the end. John gives us a vision of the saints gathered before God, offering their praises in song. John also describes for us the angels sent to harvest the earth at the end. Those who belong to God will be harvested like wheat; while those who have followed Satan, the antichrist or have been marked by the sign of the beast shall be harvested like grapes. They will be cast into the "great winepress of God's wrath" (Revelation 14:19).

The Seven Bowls (Revelation 15-18)

The judgments of God described by the seven bowls of God's wrath (Revelation 16) follow the same basic pattern of the seven trumpets (Revelation 8–9) but are more intense and complete. In both cases, we note judgments on the earth, on the sea, on rivers and springs, and on the heavenly luminaries, followed by powers of darkness and great warfare, in that order. The seventh and last bowl, however, ushers in Babylon's final judgment (Revelation 17 and 18).

The image of Babylon finds its roots in the ancient tower of Babel, where humans first united forces to worship the sun and the stars, and to rebel against their Creator (Genesis 11:1-9). The city of Babylon became known as a city filled with wickedness, deserving full-scale destruction by God (Jeremiah 50-51). The Babylon described in Revelation may symbolize a city, but more likely describes the whole world system of evil that taunts, tempts, and seeks to destroy God's people. In the end, Babylon and its deep rooted iniquity will be destroyed in a single hour (Revelation 18:19). With startling imagery, God describes how the world of rebellion and sin will be brought to its final end (Revelation 18) as the great kingdom of His light, love, and truth is established over all (Revelation 19–22).

Final Thought

In Revelation, we see that God is a great and terrible Judge. Imbedded in the same book, however, we also see glorious promises of God: mercy and kindness for those who put their faith in Him for salvation through the sacrifice of His Son, the Lamb of God. Are you ready to meet your God? Have you trusted in Him with a saving faith?

Spending Time With God

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give you revelation of Himself through His Word.

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this study guide. In what way has this lesson challenged you to prepare for the Lord's return?

2. Note in Revelation 4:1-2 how John is caught up into the throne room of heaven. Every part of the image of the heavenly throne in Revelation 4:3-8 carries special significance. What is the general sense you gain from this vision...what stands out to you?

3. From Revelation 5:1-5, why do you think the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ; see also John 1:29) was the only one able to break the seals and open the scroll?



4. Describe in your own words the magnitude of praise offered to Christ for His work of redemption, based on Revelation 5:11-14. Then, in a single sentence, write your own words of praise to God for the redemption He has won for us in Christ.

7. Revelation 7:9-17 describes the saints who died for the Lord, through the Great Tribulation. What made them victors?

What is their reward (Revelation 7:16-17)?

Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. Revelation 6 describes the initial judgments of God unleashed through the breaking of the first six seals. How do the rulers of the earth respond by the time the sixth seal is broken (Revelation 6:15-17)?

8. The seven seals are followed by the more severe judgment of the seven trumpets. The seventh and last trumpet, however, is a preview of the end (Revelation 11:15-19). What wondrous promises do we find in this text (Compare with Philippians 2:9-11 and 1 Corinthians 15:23-25)?

6. If those who do not know God refuse to turn to Him even in times of great calamity and judgment, what might cause them to turn to the Lord for salvation (See Romans 10:14-15)?

9. Considering the great judgments of God unleashed thus far, do you think most of the world will blame God for these calamities or will they consider them acts of nature?



SERIES

BRIGHTEN YOUR LIGHT | THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 2

Understanding God's Judgment | Revelation 4-18

Explain.

Can you give an example of how learning about end-time events has helped you or another person turn their lives over to Christ?

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. The imagery in Revelation 13 regarding the “beast” and the “image of the beast,” and the “number of the beast” has inspired writers of movies and novels through the ages. Based on your own experience, can you point to examples of ways you think people might have gone too far in promoting literature or pushing specific viewpoints about these end-time images?

11. On the other side of the coin, do you feel many do not take these prophecies seriously enough?

Scripture for Meditation

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 11:15



Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made Herself ready.

Revelation 19:7

Introduction

The last chapters of the final book of the Bible describe the first chapter of the final plan of God. Here we see through image and promise, the new heaven and earth where everything we can touch, see, and perceive is alive with immortality and shining perfection. There is no place in the Bible that describes so fully the plan of God for the world to come.

The Marriage Supper (Revelation 19:1-10)

This passage describes the wedding supper of the Lamb. In Biblical times, wedding feasts were central to the celebration of a marriage and could last for one to two weeks. The whole town would be invited to this glorious celebration of two made one. Marriage, the covenant between a man and a woman, is designed by God to be the most intimate and long-lasting bond between humans known on earth. Now, as God unfolds His plan for heaven, He places the heavenly marriage center stage. In this wedding, until death do us part will mean forever. Intimacy through this on-going relationship of joy will be perfected. What better image than that of marriage could express the wondrous relationship with God that will be ours for all eternity?

The concept of God as the husband of the nation of Israel dominates the Old Testament (Jeremiah 3:14; Ezekiel 16:32; Hosea 2:16). The picture of Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church fills the New Testament (Matthew 9:15; 25:1-13; John 3:29). During the wedding supper of the Lamb, where both testaments become one, the perfect union between God and His people leads to the most significant and real-time celebration ever known. The saints will shout with joy because evil has been vanquished and God's grace and glory are made visible. God's people are clothed in white (the righteousness of Christ) and made part of the Bride because of the inviting love of their God. John was so overwhelmed by the unfolding plan of God that he fell down to worship before the angel who gave this vision. He was reminded that God alone is worthy of our praise for it is His goodness that makes all of this possible.

The White Horse (Revelation 19:11-21)

Revelation 19:11-21 describes the conquering Christ bringing end-time judgment on the beast and the false prophet. This conquering hero is known as "Faithful and True," "The Word of God," one whose eyes are "like blazing fire," and who wears "many crowns" upon His head. Furthermore, "out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations" (Revelation 19:15). This is the Christ who enters into battle. His robe and thigh carry the name "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." None can resist His plans or thwart His purposes!

The Thousand Year Reign

These verses describe the thousand year reign of Christ on earth, also known as "the Millennium." During this thousand year period, the devil will be bound and the saints who came victoriously through the Great Tribulation will be honored. There are three general viewpoints on the Millennium. The most dominant historic viewpoint, postmillennialism, envisions the world becoming so transformed by the Gospel and the Church of God, that this thousand year reign of Christ will be realized before our Lord's final return. A more modern development, the premi-



Watch Amazing Journey Video
"The Finalé"

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:15

Millennial viewpoint, teaches that the world is becoming increasingly dark and dismal until Jesus comes back to establish His thousand year reign. A third point of view, amillennialism, holds the thousand years to be symbolic of the long and glorious period of time in which those who die in Christ will reign in heaven until our Lord comes back to make all things new. Any way we cut it, God will reward those who are His, and the accuser of the saints will be thrown into the Lake of Fire and tormented forever.

The Final Judgment (Revelation 20:1-15)

The "Great White Throne" of God's judgment appears in Revelation 20:1-15. The key to understanding this passage is through the mention of "the books" and "the book of life."

All who don't believe in the salvation of God will be judged by "the books" according to what they have done. Every careless word, sinful thought, and improper deed will be made known (Matthew 12:36; Romans 2:15-16). Those who thought they could enter God's heaven based on the merit of their personal righteousness will fall short. Then "another book was opened, which is the book of life" (Revelation 20:14). This is the registry of those who have embraced God's salvation and who have given their lives to God's service. They will avoid the "lake of fire" not by their own merits, but by the merit of Christ's sacrifice on their behalf. This is not to say that Christians will not be rewarded for their good deeds and faithful service. The Apostle Paul was greatly motivated in service by the realization that even those who have eternal life in Christ will be judged by their deeds and blessed for every fruitful act of obedience (2 Corinthians 5:10; see also Matthew 10:42).

The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21)

Chapter 21 of Revelation describes the "Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her Husband" (Revelation 21:2). The Jerusalem of old crowned a great hill, and the temple in the city was like a jewel on that crown. In the New Jerusalem, however, He Himself will be the temple, for He will dwell with us. The first humans had a special relationship with God in the Garden of Eden. In the new paradise, we will know God perfectly, forever. Imagine the God of unending love and mercy personally wiping every tear from our eyes. Things that depress us, sadden our hearts, and burden our lives will be eradicated forever. We are heading to a place where "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain..." (Revelation 21:4). All will be made new. God will not simply reform our present world but will destroy it down to its foundational elements (2 Peter 3:10), that He might start afresh.

John was taken by an angel to view the heavenly city. It descended out of heaven, shining with God's glory "clear as crystal." On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, for through them God entered the world to establish the first Covenant with the Children of Israel in the Old Testament. On the foundations of the Holy City were inscribed the names of the twelve apostles, for they became the foundation of the New Covenant in Christ. Thus, this glorious city of splendor includes believers from all times, places, and walks of life...all who embrace the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

2 Peter 3:13

An angel measured the city and found it to be a perfect square some 1,400 miles in length, width, and height. Taken literally, the city would be about half the size of the United States of America. The main point of the vision, however, is to show the perfection of all that God has planned for those who love Him...things that can baffle one's mind and imagination (1 Corinthians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 12:4). The walls of the city were about 200 feet thick; they were made of clear jasper, and the city itself was constructed of gold as pure as glass. Precious stones decorated the foundations of the city walls. Each of the city's gates was made of a single great pearl, signifying that the value of entry into this celestial fortress is beyond any price we could pay or gift we could deserve.

The unending glory of the New Jerusalem is made real by the resplendent radiance of the God who inhabits it; no longer are temporary luminaries like the sun and moon necessary. If we, who now dwell on earth, had but a passing glimpse of the true brightness of God's light, we would await the day of His return with eager anticipation!

The Glorious New Beginning (Revelation 22)

Imagery in Revelation 22 connects the first pages of the Bible (where this present world finds its beginnings) with last page of the Bible (where God starts over for the last time). The "tree of life" is available once again to humans, showing the fulfillment of God's plan that we will live forever, eternally blessed by the Lord (Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24; Revelation 22:2). The dark curse that blanketed the world, when humans first disobeyed God will be lifted (Genesis 3:17; Revelation 22:3). We, who before could not look upon the unveiled face of God, will now "see his face" (Exodus 33:20; Revelation 22:4). With God, we "will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5).

Those who do not believe God's Word and who do not embrace Christ, the Living Word, will have no access to the treasures in God's storehouse. They will be left outside the gates of the city. Thus the need to heed God's call to come today and drink of the water of life.

Final Thought

The book of Revelation opens with promises of blessing for those who hear God's Word and closes with blessings for those who keep God's Word (Revelation 1:3; 22:7, 18-19). To keep Scripture is to learn it, to treasure it, to guard its truth, and to obey it. In three lessons, we have heard many of God's promises through the book of Revelation. Our challenge now is to keep them.

Spending Time With God

This lesson, in the series "Brighten Your Light," is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Pray, asking God to give you revelation of Himself through His Word.



SERIES

BRIGHTEN YOUR LIGHT | THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 3

Envisioning God's Plan | Revelation 19-22

Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this study guide. Describe one promise or insight that especially encouraged you.

Who might be in the “armies of heaven...following Him” (Matthew 16:27)?

2. Note Revelation 19:6-9 describes the upcoming “wedding of the Lamb.” What do you think the “fine linen, bright and clean” might represent?

What does the name given to Him mean to you (Revelation 19:16)?

Who do you think will be invited to the great “wedding supper of the Lamb” (compare Revelation 19:9 with Matthew 22:1-14)?

4. The “great white throne” of God's judgment is described in Revelation 20:11-15. How will people be judged, according to these verses?

3. Based on Revelation 19:11-14, who do you think is the rider of the white horse? Why?

How can one escape judgment, according to Revelation 20:15 (see also Philippians 4:3 and Revelation 3:5)?



Discussion (Small Group Study)

5. Revelation 21:1 describes a “new heaven and a new earth.” We sometimes envision heaven as a place we will live among the angels, with harps in our hands, floating on top of the clouds. What do you make of the idea of a new earth?

6. How is the “Holy City, the new Jerusalem” described in Revelation 21:2? What do you think is the significance of this imagery?

7. What are some of the greatest benefits of this new city, according to Revelation 21:3-4?

8. The “Holy City” is described in some detail in Revelation 21:10-27. Do you take these descriptions as symbolic or literal?

If they are taken symbolically, does it minimize or increase this Scripture's impact for our lives? Explain.

9. The last chapter of the Bible is the first chapter of our new life with God. Compare Revelation 22:1-2 with Genesis 3:24. What significance do you see in the “tree of life”?



SERIES

BRIGHTEN YOUR LIGHT | THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 3

Envisioning God's Plan | Revelation 19-22

Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. Compare Revelation 22:4 with Exodus 33:20. What does the concept of seeing the face of God mean to you personally?

11. We are encouraged to “come” to the Lord for salvation (Revelation 22:17), because He is soon coming to claim His own (Revelation 22:20). Are you ready for the return of Christ? Why or why not?

12. Finally, after studying about the new heaven and new earth, what are you most thankful for? Pray to God praising Him for this and all that is to come.

Scripture for Meditation

Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Revelation 22:17b



BNEXT Amazing Journey Leader's Guide

This BNEXT Leader's Guide section is for facilitator/leaders. Please read this information before you begin. As the facilitator of a small group, you will have the experience of not only sharing this journey through God's Word with others, but of aiding them along the way. The purpose of this Leader's Guide is to aid you in your role as facilitator. You do not need previous experience or special training to lead a group. Your primary responsibility is to serve as facilitator, not to teach.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE

The BNEXT Study / Amazing Journey includes a weekly video of 15–20 minutes in length. The video provided is on a flash drive, so make sure you have USB-compatible technology. Please review the video *before* each class. Here's a materials checklist:

- TV or computer with a USB 2.0 (or faster) port
- For larger groups, a projector is needed (and may even enhance a small group experience)
- Amazing Journey videos (on USB flash-drive)
- This Participant's Guide (one per participant)
- Bible for each participant, preferably the same version (these studies use the NIV)
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Watch or clock to monitor time

ABOUT THIS STUDY

The BNEXT study series' are versatile and may be used by individuals, small groups, or even entire congregations. The use of a small group as part of the program will enhance each one's experience. BNEXT studies have successfully been used in a variety of environments, including home groups, churches, prisons, and businesses.

Total time for each weekly lesson should be about 1 to 1 ½ hours in length, which includes time for group discussion and video viewing. Suggested lesson plans with timing guidelines are found at the end of this Guide.

If you use this study in a large group or an entire church, there are two possible approaches. One approach is for the entire group to first gather for a welcome and opening prayer, after which participants can meet in small groups for discussion using the BNEXT questions. After a specified amount of time, all would reconvene into a larger setting to watch the video together. Alternately, the flash-drive videos may be made available for each small group, in which case, after the opening and welcome time, everyone can move to groups and remain there until the end of the day's session.

ABOUT SMALL GROUPS

Group Size: Experience has shown that a group size of 10–12 people works best. If your group is significantly larger, we suggest that you create additional small groups.

Group Leaders: Each group should have its own facilitator/leader. It is good to also have at least one back-up facilitator in case the primary facilitator is absent. If you have several groups meeting at one time, decide who will be responsible for facilitating the larger group gatherings for the welcome time and so forth.

ABOUT FACILITATOR/LEADERS

The ideal small group facilitator/leader should have:

- A hunger for God's Word and a deep desire to see others grow in their knowledge of God and His Word.
- A commitment to the group, emphasizing seeing the program through to the end.
- The ability to facilitate and moderate discussion rather than teach.
- A willingness to follow the "Discussion Group Rules of Engagement" (found in this Participant's Guide).

As facilitator, pray for your small group. Spend time preparing your own lesson and be thinking about how to present the questions to the class. You should attempt to answer all of the questions before the class. Group members should be encouraged to at least answer the first two sets of questions: Devotion (Personal Study) and Discussion (Small Group Study) questions, before each class, to enhance their learning experience. Even better, encourage them to find time to complete Digging Deeper (Further Study) questions on their own. One of the goals of this approach is to encourage participants to develop the habit of delving into Scripture and studying on a regular basis.

You are not expected to be a Biblical expert. You are a facilitator, so resist the attempt to teach. You are there to guide the group, keep them on track, and avoid getting caught up in doctrinal debates. These lessons are designed to easi-

ly be used by a first-time leader as well as an experienced leader. If you want to facilitate the group with a broadened background knowledge, see our "Background Study Option" below.

Recognize that not everyone is comfortable answering questions. Gently keep discussion going by asking questions like, "Does anyone else have something to add?" It can be helpful at times to have a volunteer read Scripture texts that are referred to in the questions.

Recognize and affirm all who contribute to the discussion. Do not dismiss someone's answer as wrong. If an answer is obviously off-base, thank them for their answer, then ask what others think. Remind the group to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

If you feel that a certain statement or question is inappropriate for your group, you may omit it or at least recognize that not everyone needs to answer it. However, do not be afraid of letting the group tackle tough topics.

BACKGROUND STUDY OPTIONS

Again, facilitators are not expected to be Biblical experts. If the group looks to you for an answer you do not have, it is perfectly fine to say, "I'm not sure. Perhaps we can all think about that one and bring it up again next week?" Or, "Let's bring this one up to the larger group when there is time allotted for such discussion," or, "Let's see if this doesn't answer itself over the weeks as we continue our study. Remember, the Bible interprets itself."

For extra study, you may wish to approach your pastor, or to read commentaries and use other resources. The internet contains a wealth of information ... and also disinformation. Some internet sites that provide reliable (and free) commentaries and articles include: biblegateway.com, biblestudytools.com, biblehub.com, and blueletterbible.org.

Another useful source of general Biblical knowledge is *The Essential Bible Companion*, by the same contributors of our Bible

in 90 Days study series: John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).

LEADING THE CLASS

First Class

Decide where you want to meet weekly and decide on a time. Once this has been done, actively publicize the *BNEXT Amazing Journey* study throughout all your circles — at your church, workplace, friends, family, etc. There are some free publicity aids on our website at ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/freebies/.

The first class is unique in that the participant will not have anything to prepare. Use this time for getting to know one another and to introduce the BNEXT lesson format. There is an 18-minute BNEXT introduction video that accompanies this first lesson. Before showing the introduction video, we recommend:

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of members (10 minutes)
 - a. Think of something brief each participant could say about themselves such as: “Tell us something unique about yourself.” Or perhaps, “What do you hope to get out of this BNEXT study?” Or, “This first lesson will provide an overview of the Bible. How comfortable are you with the Bible as a whole? Do you think you can benefit by learning more about each of its books and sections?”
 - b. Remind them to keep their answers brief (one minute or less).
2. Handout materials and give an overview (7 minutes)
 - a. Discuss the format of BNEXT Amazing Journey:
 - Reading of a specific book(s) or chapters of a book of the Bible.
 - Lesson commentary and questions (at least the Devotion and Discussion questions, and ideally, more) to be completed individually through the week.
 - Meet weekly to watch a 20-minute video and to go

through the Discussion questions (and if time allows, the Digging Deeper questions).

- b. Review the “Rules of Engagement” (found in the front of this Participant's Guide).
 - c. Ask if there are any questions.
3. Discuss the study you will be doing (15 minutes)
 - a. Inform class of how many weeks you will be meeting to cover the study and what date will be your last date for this study.
 - b. Ask the group, “What do you know about [insert study's Bible book(s) name(s) such as Genesis].”
 - c. Ask the group, “What do you hope to have answered about (Genesis)?”
 4. Watch the BNEXT Amazing Journey Introduction and Overview video (18 minutes)
 5. Video discussion (5 minutes)
 - a. Ask if there are one or two participants who have a comment on the video or who may have learned something new from the video.
 - b. Remind them to keep their answers brief to allow others to respond.
 6. Closing prayer (5 minutes)
 - a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
 - b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.
 7. Dismissal

Subsequent Classes

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of any new participants (5 minutes)
 - a. If there are new members, have them introduce themselves. Remind them to be brief (one minute or less).

- b. Think of a good ice-breaker that somehow relates to the study. For example, if you are about to watch a video on the Exodus from Israel: “Why do you think the Exodus was important?”, or “From what you know about the Exodus, how does it relate to the work of Christ on the cross?” Remind them to keep their answers short. Set a time limit for this opening section; not everyone needs to answer.
 - c. If you think it's necessary, remind the group of the “Rules of Engagement” in the front of this Participant's Guide.
 2. Discuss lesson questions (20 minutes)
 - a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that people in the group would like to discuss. These are the questions they have been encouraged to complete on their own prior to the class.
 - b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are designed to promote good discussion.
 - c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.
 3. Watch the BNEXT Amazing Journey video (about 20 minutes)
 4. Video discussion (10 minutes)

Ask what participants may have learned or found interesting in the video.
 5. Closing prayer (5 minutes)
 - a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
 - b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.
 6. Dismissal