SOUTH TAMPA FELLOWSHIP · COMMUNITY GROUPS

# REVELATION

## Participant Guide

*"Because Jesus reigns and will make all things right, we can be faithfully present in a broken world."*

Revelation 4–8 · October 4 to November 22, 2026

# Revelation Introduction

**SERIES THEME**

*Because Jesus reigns and will make all things right, we can be faithfully present in a broken world.*

Too many people avoid the book of Revelation out of confusion or dread. Others approach it as a secret code designed to predict tomorrow's headlines. But the opening word of the book in Greek is *apokalypsis*, which means an "unveiling" or "revealing." Revelation was not given to confuse us or incite panic; it was given to pull back the curtain on history and show us who is truly on the throne.

When we see that Jesus reigns supreme over heaven and earth, we no longer have to live as anxious, reactive, or defensive people. We are freed to live as a calm, compassionate, and enduring presence in a broken world.

Last year our church walked through Revelation 1–3, including Jesus' letters to the seven churches. This year opens with a brief look back at chapter 1, then picks up in chapter 4. If you missed those messages or want a refresher, you can watch them at youtube.com/@stfchurch.

## Reading Revelation: 5 Practical Tools

To help you engage these chapters meaningfully, keep five simple reading tools in mind:

1. **Remember the Original Hearers:** Revelation was written by John to seven real churches in the Roman province of Asia. Before asking what an image means for us today, ask: What courage, comfort, or warning did this bring to a first-century believer facing imperial pressure?
2. **A Circle, Not a Line:** Revelation does not unfold like a straight chronological timeline or a future roadmap. It works in spiraling cycles, showing us the same spiritual realities from multiple perspectives.
3. **Weigh the Symbols, Don't Measure Them:** Apocalyptic writing uses visual symbolism to convey spiritual truths. Colors, numbers, and composite creatures carry theological meaning rather than mathematical precision. Ask what spiritual reality the image represents.

4. **See the Patterns:** Revelation's images describe realities that show up in every generation, not only events at the end of history. The four horsemen in chapter 6, for example, picture conquest, bloodshed, economic distress, and death, which have marked every age, including ours. Ask where that pattern shows up in the world you live in, and what faithfulness looks like there.
5. **Ask the Three Questions:** In every passage, ask the questions that frame this series:
   - *What is actually happening in heaven?* Jesus reigns.
   - *What is actually happening on earth?* Our faithfulness is being contested through suffering, deception, and pressure to compromise.
   - *What will ultimately happen?* Jesus will judge evil and dwell with his people.

## How to Use This Guide

This study is designed specifically for group discussion. We encourage you to listen to the sermon, spend time in the passage, and answer the questions before you get to group. The more thought you put in before arriving at group, the better the conversations will be.

This curriculum follows a simple rhythm called **SOAP**:

- **S: Scripture.** Read the passage aloud together slowly. Pay attention to the imagery, the words that repeat, and how the passage presents Jesus.
- **O: Observation.** Explore what the text actually says. We use historical Context boxes and theological Closer Look insights to ground our understanding without getting lost in speculation.
- **A: Application.** Revelation is an intensely practical book. We will reflect together on what it looks like to show up in our daily relationships, workplaces, and neighborhoods, our "corners," with Christlike compassion, availability, and courage.
- **P: Prayer.** Close every gathering by bringing your lives, your city, and your prayers before the God who hears and reigns.

WEEK 1 · OCTOBER 4

# First Things First

*Revelation 1:1–8*

BIG IDEA

**Revelation shows us the reigning Jesus so we can live faithfully in the world we actually face.**

## Scripture

*Revelation 1:1–8 (NIV)*

1 The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take
place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he
saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud
the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it,
because the time is near. 4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to
you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,
5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the
kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made
us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and
ever! Amen. 7 “Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who
pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen. 8 “I am the
Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

CONTEXT

John wrote Revelation near the end of the first century while exiled on the island of Patmos. His readers were seven congregations in the Roman province of Asia, in what is now western Turkey. Their situations differed. Some faced open hostility while others quietly blended into the culture around them. Across the region, cities competed to build temples honoring the emperor, who was hailed as Lord and Savior. Trade guilds held banquets in honor of patron gods, and civic festivals celebrated Rome’s power. A Christian shopkeeper or craftsman could feel the pressure to go along simply to keep working. The letters to these churches in chapters 2 and 3 keep returning to one question: how to stay faithful in the world they actually faced.

**CLOSER LOOK**

The first word of the book in Greek is *apokalypsis*. Our English title, "Revelation," comes through the Latin *revelatio*, which translates that word. Today "apocalypse" suggests catastrophe, but the original word means an unveiling: pulling back a curtain so something hidden can be seen. Jewish readers knew this style of writing from books like Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, where visions, symbols, and numbers communicate truths too large for plain description. Symbols in this kind of writing are meant to be weighed, not measured. A beast can signal hostile or oppressive power. Notice also whose revelation this is. The opening phrase can be read as a revelation given by Jesus, a revelation about Jesus, or both at once.

## Warm-Up

When you hear the word "Revelation" or "apocalypse," what comes to mind first? Where do you think that picture came from?

## Observation

1. Verse 3 promises a blessing to people who do three things. What are they? What does that suggest about why the book was written?

2. In verses 5–6, John describes Jesus with three titles and then names three things he has done. What are they? Which of these stands out to you, and why?

3. In verse 7, what will Jesus' coming look like, and who will see it? Why would that matter to people who feel overlooked or overpowered?

4. In verse 8, God speaks for himself. How does he describe himself? Why might those words matter coming right after the promise in verse 7?

5. Look back over verses 4–8. What does John say is already true, and what does he say is still coming? Why do you think he puts them in that order?

## Application

1. Verse 5 calls Jesus the ruler of the kings of the earth. Think about the pressures in your life right now, at work, at home, or in the news. What feels like it's in charge? What would change if you really believed Jesus already rules over it?

2. Think about what you named in the last question. When does that pressure usually hit hardest? What is one small thing you could do in that moment to remember that Jesus rules over it?

3. In the Bible, priests served God by praying for people and helping them draw near to him. Verse 6 says Jesus has made all his followers priests. Who in your corner could you pray for this week? What is one way you could show them God's care?

## Prayer