



Revelation

The Kingdom Yet to Come

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Front cover: The island of Patmos, located off the coast of Greece in the Aegean Sea, is pictured. St. John the Evangelist was exiled there after being imprisoned in Rome. Surviving under harsh conditions, he received mystical visions, which he recorded in the book of Revelation.

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NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Welcome to *The Great Adventure*™



“To fall in love with God is the greatest of all romances; to seek him, the greatest adventure.”
– St. Augustine of Hippo

The Bible is at the heart of our Catholic Faith—and our relationship with God. It is the living Word of God, where our Father meets with us and lovingly speaks to us. Reading the Bible should bring us closer to Christ, but understanding it is not always easy. Many people tell us they have tried time and again to prayerfully read Scripture, but they get frustrated because they “just don’t get it.”

The Great Adventure is designed so that anyone can make sense of the Bible and experience the life-changing power of God’s Word. At the core of *The Great Adventure* is the concept that there is a story running through the seventy-three books of the Bible that ties all of Scripture together and makes sense not just of the Bible, but of our lives as well.

That story is God’s plan as it has unfolded throughout salvation history and continues to unfold today. Once we grasp this “big picture,” the readings at Mass begin to make more sense, our Scripture reading and study come to life, and we see how our lives fit into God’s loving plan.

Hundreds of thousands of participants have discovered the riches of Scripture by experiencing one or more *Great Adventure* Bible studies. It is our prayer that you will gain a newfound understanding of God’s Word that will transform your life and bring you closer to Christ.

Jeff Cavins, creator and president, *The Great Adventure*
Sarah Christmyer, co-developer and author, *The Great Adventure*

About *The Great Adventure* Catholic Bible Study Program

At the core of *The Great Adventure* is *The Bible Timeline*™ Learning System: a simple way to get the “big picture” of the Bible by focusing on the story that runs throughout Sacred Scripture. *Great Adventure* Bible studies explore the biblical narrative in light of Catholic teaching and the historical, cultural, and literary context of the Scriptures to discover what Scripture reveals about God’s plan and our place within it. Studies of individual books of the Bible are supplemented by thematic and “life application” studies.

Every *Great Adventure* study is designed to foster:

- Familiarity with the Bible and ease of reading it
- Bible study habits consistent with the guidelines of the Catholic Church
- Personal engagement in the Word of God
- Faith-sharing based on the Word of God
- Growth in knowledge about Scripture and the Catholic Faith

About *Revelation: The Kingdom Yet to Come*



Revelation: The Kingdom Yet to Come is an intriguing study that shows how the kingdom established by Christ in his Church is intimately connected with the kingdom of heaven. Here, you will discover what the mysterious figures and images of Revelation mean. You will see how Revelation is more than an apocalyptic vision of the “end times.” It is a revelation of God as our Divine Bridegroom and the Church as his spotless bride, forever united in a heavenly, holy, and mystical marriage that we enter into every time we celebrate the Mass.

Materials

Materials for *Revelation: The Kingdom Yet to Come* include:

- **Workbook:** contains engaging study questions (with session summaries, home reading assignments, charts, and diagrams), Talk Notes, responses to the questions, and the Revelation Reference Card. (*You will need one workbook for every participant, study leader, and small-group facilitator.*)
- **Video Presentations** (eleven, 55-minute sessions): presented by Jeff Cavins, these eleven video presentations provide comprehensive teaching and commentary on Revelation. (*You will need one DVD set.*)

In addition, every participant, leader, and small-group facilitator should have a Catholic Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. For this study, we recommend *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*, an RSV-2CE Bible that incorporates the same color-coded *Bible Timeline* Learning System that you will use throughout this program.

How the Study Works

Every *Great Adventure* study includes four essential steps, which are designed to fit together and build upon each other. Following these steps in order will help you to get the most out of each session.



STEP ONE: HOME PREPARATION

NOTE: *There is no home preparation required for the Introduction.*

Each session begins with personal study that involves reading Scripture and answering a series of questions that will help you understand and think more deeply about what you have read. Some questions will include additional reading from other parts of the Bible or from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to help you consider the passage in light of the bigger picture of salvation history and Catholic teaching.

We recommend that you allow at least 90 minutes to complete the reading and answer the questions for each session. We also suggest that home preparation be done in several sittings over the course of a week. This will help you create a habit of daily Bible reading and prayerful meditation.

STEP TWO: SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

The small-group discussion is one of the most effective components of a *Great Adventure* Bible study. During this discussion, members of your small group will have an opportunity to share their insights into the Scripture reading. The goal of the small-group discussion is to help participants obtain a richer understanding of the readings and apply them to their lives. Trained facilitators guide the small-group discussion and keep it on track. Be sure to follow the “Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion” on page xii.

STEP THREE: VIDEO PRESENTATION

Jeff Cavins wraps up each session with a video presentation that offers unique insights and profound connections to help you gain a deeper understanding of the Bible and its relationship to the Catholic Faith, with a special emphasis on ways to apply what you have learned to your life.

STEP FOUR: REVIEW OF RESPONSES

NOTE: *There are no responses for the Introduction.*

The final step—reviewing the responses at the back of this workbook—is done at home prior to beginning the reading for the next session. These responses will help you read the Scripture passages for the next session in the proper context.

For the most effective study experience, complete these steps in the following order: (1) Read and answer the questions; (2) discuss them in your small group; (3) view the video presentation; and (4) review the responses. During the discussion, your small-group facilitator will incorporate points found in the responses, but the richness that comes from individual insights can be lost when participants view the responses prior to the discussion.

For more information about how to plan and promote a Bible study and how to facilitate a small-group discussion, visit ascensionpress.com or call 1-800-376-0520.

Session Outline and Reading Guide

Each session in this workbook has the following sections. (Note: the Introduction follows a different format.)

1. Session Questions (used during Step 1: Home Preparation and Step 2: Small-Group Discussion)

- A.** Establish (or review) the Context
- B.** Read the Story
- C.** Take a Deeper Look
- D.** Application

2. Session Talk Notes (used during Step 3: Video Presentation)

3. Session Responses (used during Step 4: Review of Responses)

The following chart offers an overview of the home preparation readings assigned in each session of the study. The main reading is provided in section **B. Read the Story** and should be read before you answer the session questions. Additional Bible readings and *Catechism* readings are provided in section **C. Take a Deeper Look** and should be read as you answer the study questions for each session.

Session (Video Time)	Main Reading	Additional Bible Readings	Catechism Readings (CCC)
Introduction (55:02)	—	—	—
1. Revelation 1: Introduction and Inaugural Vision (53:23)	Revelation 1	Isaiah 44:6-8; Luke 11:27-28; James 1:22-25; Revelation 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14	16, 1719–1723
2. Revelation 2–3: Letters to the Seven Churches (60:29)	Revelation 2–3	—	1061–1065
3. Revelation 4–5: Creation and Redemption (52:41)	Revelation 4–5	Exodus 19:16-19; Leviticus 26:18, 26:23-24, 26:27-28; Isaiah 6:2; Ezekiel 1:4-21, 1:26-28, 2:9-10; Revelation 1:6, 2:10, 2:26-27, 3:21	602, 608, 613, 1090
4. Revelation 6–7: Opening the Seals (54:55)	Revelation 6–7	Genesis 49:17; Deuteronomy 6:6-8; 1 Kings 12:28-30; Isaiah 34:4; Jeremiah 4:15, 8:16; Ezekiel 5:17, 14:21; Joel 2:30-31; Amos 8:9; John 5:22; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 5:5, 19:11-16	775

Session (Video Time)	Main Reading	Additional Bible Readings	Catechism Readings (CCC)
5. Revelation 8–11: The Seventh Seal Unleashes Seven Trumpets (53:39)	Revelation 8–11	Isaiah 13:9–13, 13:19; Jeremiah 51:27; Ezekiel 32:7–8; Joel 2:10–11, 2:28–32	1295–1296
6. Revelation 12–13: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (48:56)	Revelation 12–13	2 Samuel 6:2, 6:9, 6:11, 6:16; Psalm 74:13–14; Isaiah 27:1; Ezekiel 29:3; Daniel 10:13, 10:20–21, 12:1; Luke 1:39, 1:43–44, 1:56; Acts 4:25–27; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12; Jude 9; Revelation 2:26–27	391–395, 530, 967–970, 972
7. Revelation 14–15: Praising the Lamb (49:16)	Revelation 14–15	Exodus 15:1–8; Leviticus 16:4; Isaiah 63:1–6; Joel 3:1–2, 3:13; Matthew 13:24–30; John 4:35–38; James 5:7–11, 5:13	1040
8. Revelation 16–18: Seven Bowls of Judgment and the Fall of Babylon (50:39)	Revelation 16–18	Exodus 7:22, 8:15–19; Isaiah 24:1–10; 1 Thessalonians 5:1–10; Luke 12:35–48; Revelation 12:1–17	1850
9. Revelation 19–20: The Marriage Supper and the Great Judgment (51:47)	Revelation 19–20	Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12–13	675–677, 1038–1041, 1602–1617
10. Revelation 21–22: A New Heaven and a New Earth (53:38)	Revelation 21–22	Luke 12:4–12; Revelation 12:11	326, 1014, 1023–1029

What to Do for Each Session

1. Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes)
2. Small-Group Discussion (40 minutes)
3. **Note to Study Leaders:** There is no small-group discussion for the first week. Instead, use this time to divide participants into small groups of eight to twelve people, ensure that everyone has the study materials, and explain how the study works. Each small group should be led by a trained facilitator.
4. Video Presentation (50 minutes)
5. Closing and Prayer (5 minutes)

Getting the Most out of This Study

This study will help you understand the Bible in a new way. The “head knowledge” you gain will help you grow in “heart knowledge” as you follow up on what you have learned. The Bible will always remain a mystery, though, and that is part of the beauty of it: We can never exhaust the treasures of Scripture. Fortunately for us, the Bible is not a subject to master; it is a place to encounter the living Word of God.

Whenever you open your Bible to read, *start with prayer*, and place yourself in God’s presence. You might take Samuel’s prayer as your own: “Speak, for your servant hears” (1 Samuel 3:10). When you read, adopt an attitude of listening. Try not to treat Scripture as a text, but as a personal message from God. What is he saying? What does it mean? What does it mean for my life? If you come to the Word focused on having an encounter with the Lord, he will speak to your heart, and you will be transformed.

An Important Note About the Responses to the Study Questions

Responses to the study questions are provided in the back of this workbook. These responses do not exhaust the meaning that can be found in the Scripture reading. People will have unique insights. The responses have two important functions:

1. The first purpose of the responses is to provide participants with a review of each session, which will help establish a context for the reading and questions in the following session. The best time to read the responses is just before starting on the next session.
2. The second purpose of the responses is to provide guidelines for the small-group facilitators. **Facilitators:** Complete the Scripture reading and answer the questions on your own before reading the responses in preparation for facilitating the small-group discussion.

Participants should not review the responses for each session until after the session is completed. Although it might be tempting to look at these responses in advance, it is important to wait for the following reasons:

1. Bible study is not about simply watching a video presentation or reading a Bible commentary. It is just as important to immerse yourself in the Word of God itself and engage it with your heart and mind. The questions in *The Great Adventure* studies are designed to draw you into the Scriptures so that the Word of God will be planted and grow in your heart. Reading a response written by someone else may satisfy your mind for a moment, but it will not result in the kind of growth that will occur if you attempt to answer the question on your own first.
2. The success of a small group depends on a good discussion. A group of participants who have spent time pondering the Scripture passages on their own will have more varied insights to discuss.

For these reasons, please wait to read the responses until after the session. When you follow the steps of this study as intended, you will explore the Word of God in different ways—in the reading, the small-group discussion, the video presentation, and, finally, in the responses. Follow these steps over time, and you will be more than fed—you will learn to feed yourself.

Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion¹

1. Enjoy yourself!
2. Speak with respect and charity.
3. Do not ridicule or dismiss what others say. Keep comments positive.
4. Come prepared.
5. If you were not able to prepare, let others speak first.
6. Stick to the topic and questions at hand.
7. Start and end on time.
8. Allow silence. Give people a chance to think.
9. Listen to others without interrupting.
10. Keep personal matters within the group.

¹ Adapted from Thomas Smith's original "10 Commandments of a Small Group."

Introduction



Revelation: The Kingdom Yet to Come

No book in the Bible fascinates people more than the book of Revelation. Scholars have produced countless interpretations of this volume, from the ridiculous to the sublime. Catholic convert G.K. Chesterton said it best: “Though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators.” Amazingly, he said this nearly a hundred years ago. Consider the sheer number of books on the “end times” that have been published in just the last thirty years. Some of them have been among the best-selling books of all time. *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey (1970) has sold more than fifteen million copies. The more recent *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins has sold a staggering sixty-two million volumes. Growing tensions in the Middle East, predictions of pandemics, killer storms, and tsunamis have all fed the flame. No one questions that there has been a growing fascination with the book of Revelation and its connection to our time, but unfortunately, this recent phenomenon has produced more heat than light, and few people have studied the book in its original setting and considered its original audience. Even fewer have written studies from a Catholic perspective. Recognizing the great need for a sound and sane study of this book, and in response to the growing desire of thousands of Catholics around the country, *The Great Adventure* series has turned its attention to this remarkable and life-changing text.

The ancient title of Revelation is *Apokalypsis*, which literally means to “pull back the veil” or the covers. It is bridal language. The book of Revelation ushers the reader into the sacred bridal chamber of the Lord and his bride, the Church. In fact, one may frame the entire book with this theme in mind. Revelation 1–11 is an “unveiling” of our Divine Groom, and Revelation 12–22 lifts the veil of his bride, allowing us to see the nature and beauty of the Church.

Even with a cursory glance at Revelation, one realizes that it is not like reading one of the Gospels or one of Paul’s carefully crafted letters. This book is full of images, numbers, colors, and creatures unfamiliar to a twenty-first century reader. Though the images in this book may seem fantastical, once you understand their rich symbolism, you will find the book of Revelation very relevant to your daily life.

This study uses *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*, an RSV-2CE Bible.

AUTHORSHIP

Although modern scholars differ on the issue of authorship, the book itself (in Revelation 1:4, 1:9, and 22:8) and the most ancient testimony in our Sacred Tradition identify St. John the Apostle as the author of the book of Revelation. The earliest witness was St. Justin, a member of the Ephesus community, who wrote around AD 135. This is particularly significant since the church in Ephesus was both a recipient of the book (see Revelation 2) and the traditional site where St. John himself served as a bishop. Additionally, St. Melito (bishop of Sardis; see Revelation 3) has been quoted by Eusebius (the first Church historian) as affirming Johannine authorship. Other second-century authors agreed, including St. Papias (bishop of Hierapolis, a neighbor to the cities cited in Revelation 2–3), and ancient Gaul’s St. Irenaeus, who frequently quoted Revelation in his treatise, *Against Heresies*. Many who question Johannine authorship point to differences in language and style between the book of Revelation and St. John’s Gospel. Supporters of John’s authorship remind us that the book of Revelation is a genre very different from that of the four Gospels and that even considering this, many similarities exist between the two volumes. For example, both volumes use the image of Jesus Christ as a Lamb, both emphasize his deity, and of all the New Testament books, only John’s Gospel and the book of Revelation call Jesus “the Word of God” (ὁ λόγος του θεου). Additionally, both volumes draw heavily upon series of “sevens,” a liturgical or festal calendar, and use numbers in a highly symbolic sense.

TIME, SPACE, PLACE

Stepping into the pages of Revelation is like passing through the magical wardrobe in C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*. The reader enters a land of magical creatures and frightening figures. Though these images were familiar to the first hearers of Revelation (given their study of the Old Testament), they remain a visual obstacle to most of us. It is important to realize that these images were designed to deepen believers’ understanding of the message of Revelation, not to distract, confuse, or frighten them. We will help you journey back in time and unveil these images for you so you can feel the full force they would have had on their first-century audience.

As you study the book of Revelation, it might be helpful to take off your watch as a reminder that you are entering not just a different time, but a different treatment of time. Revelation does not follow a simple, linear succession of events from beginning to end. It is a different way of storytelling that comes from a different vision of history. This approach is called “recapitulative history.” This was recognized by St. Victorinus, who wrote the earliest existing Catholic commentary on Revelation. It means simply that the book returns to the events recounted earlier to tell about them in a different way, each time portraying them with greater intensity. We will show you how this works as you go through the study.

DATE AND SETTING

Both the book itself and the earliest sources of information about it (St. Irenaeus, St. Victorinus, St. Jerome, and Eusebius) set John’s vision on the island of Patmos off the coast of present-day Turkey. The visions that he received occurred on the Lord’s Day—an early identifier of Sunday, the day celebrating Christ’s resurrection.

Establishing the date of composition is a more difficult task. There are two major positions. Most scholars, following the lead of St. Irenaeus, place the historical setting during the reign of Roman emperor Domitian (AD 81–96). The difficulty with this position is that there is growing evidence that there was no significant persecution during his reign. An emerging and convincing minority position places the setting of Revelation before the fall of Jerusalem (AD 60s) during the violent persecutions of Emperor Nero. (Saints Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome during this time.) Although this is an ongoing discussion among scholars, an increasing number are shifting to the earlier dating of the book. This study assumes an earlier composition of Revelation. For participants who wish to pursue this issue in more detail, see Kenneth Gentry’s *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation: An Exegetical and Historical Argument for a Pre-AD 70 Composition*.

THEMES

There are dozens of themes one could trace through the book of Revelation. We have selected the ones we believe will have the most relevance to the twenty-first century Catholic. There are three primary themes to keep in mind as you study this book.

- **Revelation as a “book of liturgy”:** One of the things that most surprises those who begin their study of Revelation is that it is a book about worship. In it we will see the heavenly liturgy and hear the chorus of elders, angels, and martyrs in heaven. (Note: For a deeper look at parallels between the Liturgy of the Mass and the book of Revelation, see *The Lamb’s Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* by Scott Hahn.)
- **Revelation as a “handbook of discipleship”:** Revelation is a book about what it means to fully and faithfully follow Christ. Woven through its images and events are many key texts on how to live as a disciple in a world that is increasingly hostile to Christianity.
- **Revelation as the “final exodus of the people of God”:** In Revelation, John dabs liberally from the palette of the book of Exodus to paint the final exodus of the people of God. While he uses the familiar colors of the Exodus narratives, he employs them in creative and beautiful ways to paint a landscape that is uniquely his own. You will see allusions to such events from the book of Exodus as the plagues of Egypt and the manifestation of God on Sinai.

APPROACHES TO INTERPRETING THE EVENTS OF REVELATION

There are four approaches scholars use to interpret the events recounted in the book of Revelation. These are: “historicist,” “preterist,” “futurist,” and “idealist.” Let’s look at each of these briefly.

- **Historicist:** This approach argues that the events of Revelation are fulfilled throughout the centuries-long history of the Church, over successive “dispensations.” Until recently, this was one of the most common Protestant interpretations of Revelation.
- **Preterist:** This approach argues that the majority of the events in Revelation occurred within the lifetime of the book’s original audience, since the book itself tells us in the opening verse that it will reveal “what must soon take place.” Some preterists agree that the final chapters of the book have not yet been fulfilled (e.g., the return of Christ and the final destruction of sin, death, and evil).
- **Futurist:** This approach argues that virtually none of the events described in Revelation have occurred yet but will be fulfilled soon. This is the most popular approach today in Protestant circles, thanks to the popularity of “end-times” fiction.
- **Idealist:** This approach is sometimes called the “symbolic” approach. It argues that the book of Revelation is a symbolic drama depicting purely spiritual realities rather than historic events and, therefore, can be applied to every age.

Although the Church does not place itself within artificial “boxes” or approaches to interpreting John’s visions, the authors of this study believe that the preterist approach is the closest to the teachings of the Church. We believe that while most of the events described in Revelation happened within the first century (e.g., the destruction of the Temple), there remains to come a final trial, which will shake the faith of many and will include religious deception, the spirit of antichrist, and a painful Passover the Church must go through in order to enter the resurrection of Christ (see CCC 675–676).

At the same time, there are things to learn from the futurist and idealist approaches. Elements of the book of Revelation can be seen in the unfolding events of the Church's history, and the book is full of spiritual principles that apply to every generation.

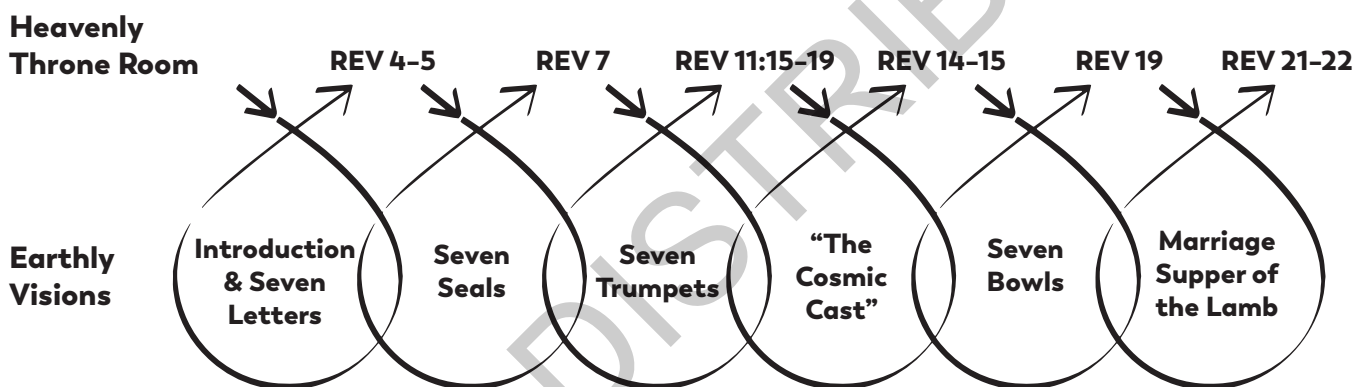
The Seven Churches of Revelation



STRUCTURE

The book of Revelation is laid out in an orderly fashion. Getting an overview of the structure will help you follow along and understand what is happening. At the start, John is taken up into the heavenly throne room where he sees Jesus in the midst of the churches. Next, he receives a series of visions. He is given messages to seven churches and three times sees judgment poured out on the wicked in a sevenfold series of either broken seals, sounding trumpets, or emptied bowls. He is shown who the key players on the heavenly battlefield are, and he sees a vision of the final battle, God's ultimate victory, and the final state of Christ's bride—the Church—in eternity.

These sets of “earthly visions” are intense. Between each, some relief and an eternal perspective on the events is provided as John is again taken up into the heavenly throne room and the worship of the saints. The following diagram illustrates this. Starting from the top left: In the heavenly throne room, John looks down onto earth to deliver the seven letters to the churches before seeing an open door in heaven and returning there to witness God's glory and heavenly worship. He then hears about the earthly vision he will view next. This cycle continues in a spiraling fashion across the diagram, which appears at the start of each session so you can place yourself in the overall drama as you read.



STUDY OUTLINE

Session	Topic	Scripture Covered
One	Introduction and Inaugural Vision	Revelation 1
Two	Letters to the Seven Churches	Revelation 2–3
Three	Creation and Redemption	Revelation 4–5
Four	Opening the Seals	Revelation 6–7
Five	The Seventh Seal Unleashes Seven Trumpets	Revelation 8–11
Six	The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly	Revelation 12–13
Seven	Praising the Lamb	Revelation 14–15
Eight	Seven Bowls of Judgment and the Fall of Babylon	Revelation 16–18
Nine	The Marriage Supper and the Great Judgment	Revelation 19–20
Ten	A New Heaven and a New Earth	Revelation 21–22

KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NUMBERS, COLORS, AND ANIMALS IN REVELATION

The book of Revelation is full of images and a rich symbolism unfamiliar to most readers today. As you read, use this key to help unlock the meaning and relevance of these.

Numbers

ONE (Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 22:13)	Primacy, greatness, God himself
TWO (Revelation 11:3; 2 Corinthians 13:1)	Two witnesses needed to judge a crime
ONE-HALF; THREE-AND-A-HALF (Revelation 8:7, 9:15, 12:4)	Limited or restricted time frame
FOUR (Revelation 4:6, 7:1, 9:14, 20:8)	Cosmos, creation, creatures: four animals, four winds, four corners
SIX (Revelation 13:18)	Imperfection
SEVEN (Revelation 1:4, 1:12, 2:1, 3:1, 4:5, 5:1, 8:2)	Completeness, covenant
TEN (Revelation 2:10, 9:16, 12:3, 13:1, 17:3, 17:7, 17:12, 17:16)	Shortness, incompleteness, limitation
ONE THOUSAND (Revelation 5:11, 9:16, 11:13, 20:2-3)	As the product of 10x10x10, one thousand represents a long time, but still a finite time
TWELVE (Revelation 7:5-8, 12:1, 21:12, 21:14, 21:16, 21:21, 22:2)	Continuity with the twelve tribes of Israel (for example, the twelve apostles in the New Israel)
144,000 (Revelation 7:4, 11:2, 13:5, 14:1, 21:17)	As the product of 12x12x1,000, the number 144,000 represents all of God's people in union with him

Colors (Chromatic Symbolism)

WHITE (Revelation 1:14, 2:17, 3:4-5, 6:11, 7:9, 7:13, 14:14, 19:14)	Victory, purity, dignity
BLACK (Revelation 6:5, 6:12)	Death, disaster, distress
RED (Revelation 6:4, 9:17, 12:3)	Bloodshed, violence
GREEN (literally, "pale") (Revelation 6:8)	Impending death
PURPLE AND SCARLET (Revelation 17:4, 18:12, 18:16)	Immorality

Other Symbols

BABYLON (Revelation 14:8)	Place of exile; the greatest threat to Israel and its freedom to worship
BEASTS (Revelation 11:7, 13:11, 14:9, 14:11)	Foreign nations opposed to God's people
CROWNS (Revelation 4:4, 4:10, 6:2, 9:7)	Authority
DRAGON, SERPENT (Revelation 12 and 13)	Satan
EYES, FULL OF (Revelation 4:6, 4:8)	All-seeing, all-knowing power
EGYPT (Revelation 11:8)	Oppressor of God's people
EAGLE, OX, LION, MAN (Revelation 4:7, 8:13, 9:17)	The four mightiest creatures
HORNS (Revelation 5:6, 12:3, 13:1, 13:11)	Power
JEWELS (Revelation 4:3, 21:11, 21:19)	Unique, rare, and precious
KEY OF DAVID (Revelation 3:7)	Power to open or shut God's kingdom
PALM BRANCHES (Revelation 7:9)	Joy, victory
RIGHT HAND (Revelation 1:16-20, 5:1, 5:7)	Power, authority
SEALS, TRUMPETS, BOWLS (Revelation 1:10, 4:1, and Revelation 5, 6, 8, 16)	Liturgical images used in Revelation to call for repentance, to announce and dispense judgment
SODOM (Revelation 11:8)	Immorality
SPIRITS (Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6)	Angels
THUNDER (Revelation 4:5, 6:1, 8:5, 10:3-4, 14:2)	God's voice

SHARED ELEMENTS IN THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION(From *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* by Scott Hahn, pages 119–120)

SUNDAY WORSHIP	1:10
HIGH PRIEST	1:13
AN ALTAR	8:3-4, 11:1, 14:18
PRIESTS	4:4, 11:15, 14:3, 19:4
VESTMENTS	1:13, 4:4, 6:11, 7:9, 15:6, 19:13-14
CONSECRATED CELIBACY	14:4
LAMPSTANDS (MENORAH)	1:12, 2:5
PENITENCE	Chapters 2–3
INCENSE	5:8, 8:3-5
THE BOOK OR SCROLL	5:1
THE EUCHARISTIC HOST	2:17
CHALICES	15:7, Chapter 16, 21:9
THE SIGN OF THE CROSS (THE TAU)	7:3, 14:1, 22:4
THE GLORIA	15:3-4
THE ALLELUIA	19:1, 19:3, 19:4, 19:6
LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS	11:12
THE “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY”	4:8
THE AMEN	19:4, 22:21
THE LAMB OF GOD	5:6 and throughout
THE PROMINENCE OF THE VIRGIN MARY	12:1-6, 12:13-17
INTERCESSION OF ANGELS AND SAINTS	5:8, 6:9-10, 8:3-4
DEVOTION TO ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL	12:7
ANTIPHONAL CHANT	4:8-11, 5:9-14, 7:10-12, 18:1-8
READING FROM SCRIPTURE	Chapters 2–3, 5, 8:2-11
THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE FAITHFUL	1:6, 20:6
CATHOLICITY (OR UNIVERSALITY)	7:9
SILENT CONTEMPLATION	8:1
THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB	19:9, 19:17

INTRODUCTION TALK NOTES

I. Overview

A. Which Bible?

1. *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*, an RSV-2CE Bible
2. New American Bible (used in Liturgy of the Word at Mass)

B. Greek *apokalypsis* = “revelation” = an unveiling, uncovering

C. Jewish apocalyptic literature – 200 BC to AD 100

1. See Daniel 7–12
2. Wedding imagery: Revelation as an invitation to intimacy
 - a. Revelation 1–11: Jesus as the Bridegroom
 - b. Revelation 12–22: The Church as the bride

D. Revelation in the context of *The Bible Timeline*

E. Important historic events – the Ninth of the Month of Av

1. 587 BC – destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians
2. AD 70 – destruction of Herod’s temple by the Romans

II. Catholic Approach to Bible Study (CCC 112–117)

A. Guidelines for interpretation

1. Context and unity of the whole Scripture (CCC 112)
2. Living Tradition of the Church (CCC 113)
3. Analogy of faith – coherence of truths (CCC 114)

B. Senses of Scripture (Latin *quadrige* – fourfold senses)

1. Literal
2. Spiritual
 - a. Allegorical (Christ)
 - b. Moral (me)
 - c. Anagogical (future)

III. Background of the Book of Revelation

A. Author

1. John the Apostle
2. Similarities to the Gospel of John

B. Date

1. Reign of Domitian (AD 81–96?)
2. Reign of Nero (AD 54–68?)
 - a. Matthew 24:34 – “This generation will not pass away till all these things take place”

C. Intended audience – differing views

1. Historicist
2. Preterist (Latin *praeter* = past)
3. Futurist
4. Idealist
5. All of the above

IV. Some Keys to Understanding Revelation

A. Harlot city destroyed by fire – Jerusalem (Revelation 19)

B. Structure of the book – covenant lawsuit brings judgment (Hosea)

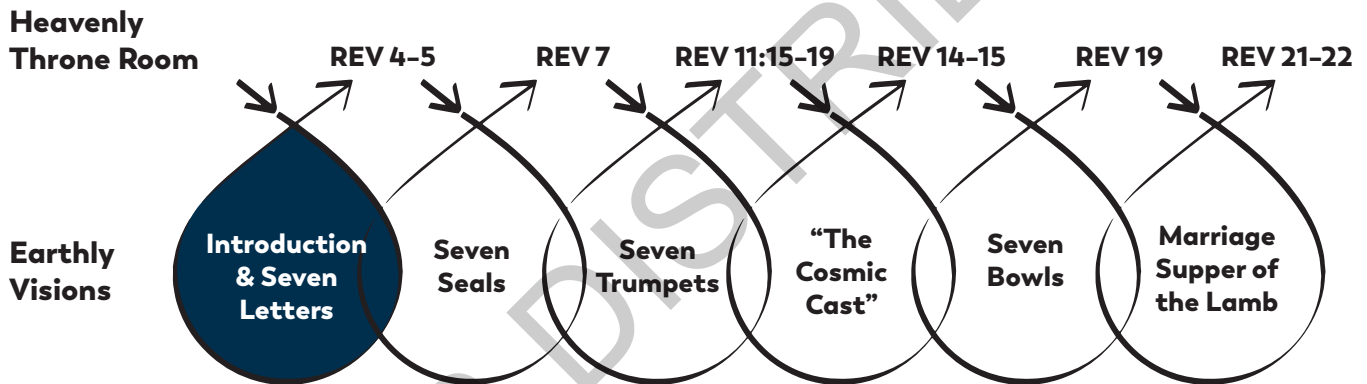
1. Preamble
2. Historical prologue
3. Ethical stipulations
4. Sanctions
5. Succession (Matthew 21)

C. Revelation as a “book of liturgy”

1. Marriage Supper of the Lamb = Liturgy of the Eucharist
2. Earthly liturgy as participation in the heavenly liturgy
 - a. Scott Hahn – *The Lamb’s Supper*
3. Greek *parousia* = “presence” – the real presence in the Eucharist

Session One

Revelation 1: Introduction and Inaugural Vision



A. Establish the Context

If you have not read the Introduction, please do so to get the “big picture.” The diagram on page 5 is reproduced here and at the beginning of each session to help you keep the chapters of the book of Revelation in context.

In this session, we will focus on Revelation 1, which serves as an introduction to the many images and themes encountered throughout the book of Revelation. You will be introduced to the titles and characteristics it uses for Jesus; the seven churches that formed Revelation’s first audience; and the language of liturgy used in the scenes of praise and worship that appear in this Bible book.

Revelation 1 not only anticipates what is to come; it also assumes some knowledge of what came centuries before. For example, the title “Son of man” in Revelation 1:13 is a term first used in Daniel 7:13. Most people are not as familiar with the Old Testament prophets as they are with the Gospels, so this study will help you discover the connection with, and the ancient context of, the prophetic tradition that would have been familiar to the first-century churches to which the book is addressed.

Finally, some scholars believe that Revelation 1:19 is a microcosm of the whole book. These scholars identify the three-part command in this verse with three divisions of the book of Revelation: Write (1) “what you see” (the vision described immediately before this verse), (2) “what is” (the then-present condition of the seven churches in Revelation 2:1–3:22), and (3) “what must take place after this” (the visions that follow in Revelation 4:1–22:21).

This initial vision in Revelation 1, which is sometimes called the “inaugural vision” because it begins the series of visions recorded in the book, provides a special word of hope to a suffering Church. It is a reminder to the Church that it is not alone; Jesus is in its midst. In that sense it is not recounting a past reality, but a present one: God is with us in every circumstance of life.

B. Read the Story

Carefully read Revelation 1. Ask yourself the questions *Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?*

As always, pray before you read.

C. Take a Deeper Look

Answering the following questions will draw you into the heart of the story. If you do not understand something, make a note to bring it up in the discussion.

1. None of us approaches the book of Revelation with a clean slate. We all enter this text with preconceptions, expectations, and maybe even some fear. As we begin to study Revelation, list one or more adjectives you would use to describe this book.
 - a. What are some of the social, cultural, or religious influences that have helped form your perception of Revelation?
 - b. Now, take your perspective and offer it to God as you begin this study. Express to the Father your willingness to be open to whatever he chooses to reveal to you by his Spirit as you study this amazing text. Ask for the special intercession of St. John to aid you in your study of this great book.
Heavenly Father, Revelation offers a blessing to all those who hear this book. Help me by your grace to truly hear the message and meaning of the book of Revelation. Through the intercession of St. John the Apostle, may this study deepen my relationship with you, increase my appreciation of the Mass, and prepare me to meet you “face to face.” In Jesus’ powerful name. Amen.

PROLOGUE AND GREETINGS (REVELATION 1:1-8)

2. a. According to Revelation 1:1-4, five persons are involved in transmitting the prophetic words recorded in the book. Beginning with God as the first, identify them.
 - b. Who are the intended recipients of this letter? (See also Revelation 1:11.)

3. Revelation 1:3 contains the only explicit blessing attached to reading a book of Scripture.
 - a. What are the things one must do to inherit this special blessing of God?
 - b. What additional insights do Luke 11:27-28 and James 1:22-25 give into how best to respond to God's Word?
4. You might be surprised to learn that the book of Revelation contains not just one but seven beatitudes, or blessings.
 - a. Read CCC 16 and 1719–1723. What is the significance of beatitude for us?
 - b. In question 3, you identified the first blessing, or beatitude. Now look up the remaining verses and record other circumstances or characteristics that lead to blessedness.
 - Revelation 14:13:
 - Revelation 16:15:
 - Revelation 19:9:
 - Revelation 20:6:
 - Revelation 22:7, 22:14:
5. The *Catechism* reminds us that “God reveals himself progressively and under different names to his people” (CCC 204). Every title given to Jesus in Revelation is pregnant with meaning for its first audience. Each name is an *apokalypsis* (unveiling) of Jesus’ nature, character, or multifaceted role in God’s plan. After carefully studying Revelation 1, write all the titles given for Jesus. Which title strikes you the most, and why?

6. One of the most common titles for Jesus in the book of Revelation is “the Alpha and the Omega.” (In English, we might say, “He is the A to Z,” or, “He is from the beginning to the end.”) Sometimes it is translated: “the first and the last.” This is not a new title for God. Isaiah used it long before St. John did.
 - a. Read Isaiah 44:6-8. What broader idea does this title indicate about God?
 - b. In light of this, what does the fact that Jesus uses this title for himself reveal about his own nature?

INAUGURAL VISION (REVELATION 1:9-20)

7. The book of Revelation was communicated to a real person in a real historical moment in time. According to Revelation 1:9-10, where is John when he receives the vision? What day is it?

PATMOS

Patmos is one of a chain of small islands in the Aegean Sea, just off the coast of present-day Turkey about thirty-five miles southwest of the great harbor city of Ephesus. It may have been one of several penal colonies established by the Romans for political prisoners. According to early Church historian Eusebius, St. John was banished to this rocky, volcanic island by the Roman emperor. Given that the emperor demanded his subjects recognize him as the only “lord and god” of the Empire, the early Christian witness was a serious and sometimes capital crime. John’s exile was the result of his faithful testimony to the Word of God in Christ. We do not know how long John was on Patmos, but he likely returned to Ephesus later in his life.

8. In what is called the “inaugural” (first, initial) vision in Revelation 1, St. John sees a striking figure and falls “at his feet as though dead” (Revelation 1:17)—a sign of great awe and respect for the terrifying majesty before him. What word of comfort does the figure give John?

9. In Revelation 1:13-16, the reader is given several characteristics of this person.
 - a. List them. Based on what you have read in Scripture already, what does each of these images symbolize? (See the key on pages 6–7 for help.)
 - b. Who do you think John is seeing? What is the significance of this?
10. In John's first vision, Jesus is standing "in the midst of" (among) seven golden lampstands and is holding seven stars in his right hand.
 - a. According to Revelation 1:20, what do the lampstands and stars represent?
 - b. According to the key on page 6, what does the number seven represent? What does this tell you about the broader intended audience of this book?

D. Application

This question will help you apply one of the key themes of the session to your life. After meditating on it, respond to God with a brief written prayer if you choose.

Before John is shown the series of sobering, if not terrifying, visions that make up the bulk of the book of Revelation, he is given the assurance of Jesus' power over death and his everlasting authority and dominion. The ultimate outcome of the battles John is about to see is not in question. How can what you have learned of Jesus in Revelation 1 help you to face challenges that loom in the future?

Dear Lord ...

SESSION ONE TALK NOTES

Revelation 1: Introduction and Inaugural Vision

I. Revelation 1

- A. Themes and titles for Jesus
- B. Liturgy, especially the Mass
- C. Inaugural vision

II. Revelation 1:1-3

- A. Reveals Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1)
- B. To be read aloud – liturgy (Revelation 1:3)
- C. Time is near
 - 1. Final days – 2 Peter 3:7-10
 - 2. Four kingdoms (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome) destroyed by a fifth (the Church) – Daniel 2:1-45

III. Revelation 1:4-8

- A. Coming of the Lord – encouragement
- B. “Who is and who was and who is to come”
 - 1. Jesus Christ as faithful witness (Gk., *martus* = “martyr”)
- C. Seven Churches of Asia symbolic of entire Church
 - 1. Exodus 19:6
 - 2. CCC 1546
- D. *Remez* = “to hint” – rabbinic method
 - 1. “Coming with the clouds” (Revelation 1:7)
 - a. Daniel 7:13-14
 - b. Matthew 26:64
 - 2. “Will wail on account of him” (Revelation 1:7)
 - a. Zechariah 12:10
 - 3. “Alpha and the Omega” – Greek alphabet (Revelation 1:8)
 - a. “I AM WHO AM,” YHWH *Adonai* – Exodus 3:13-14
 - b. First and last – Isaiah 44:6
 - c. Truth = Hebrew, *emet* (*alef, mem, tav*) – John 14:6, 8:32

IV. Revelation 1:9-20 – Inaugural Vision

- A.** John shares tribulation, kingdom, patient endurance
- B.** Lord's Day
 - 1.** Sunday – Resurrection, Eucharist – Acts 20:7
 - 2.** Mass as participation in the heavenly liturgy – *Sacrosanctum Concilium*
- C.** Trumpet (Revelation 1:10) as symbol of:
 - 1.** Judgment
 - 2.** Worship
 - 3.** Warfare
- D.** Son of Man (Revelation 1:13-16) = highest title
 - 1.** White hair = wisdom – Daniel 7:9, 10:5-6
 - 2.** Sharp two-edged sword – Isaiah 11:4 – rod of mouth
 - 3.** Seven stars = angels of the seven cities
 - 4.** Seven lampstands = seven churches
- E.** “Fear not” (Revelation 1:17)
 - 1.** Liturgy as warfare
 - 2.** Unique power of Mass is Christ in our midst
 - 3.** Lamb of God ultimately triumphs

V. Overview of Structure of Book of Revelation

- A.** Cycles between heavenly and earthly views
- B.** “Recapitulative history”