

## Dear Church

### Look to Jesus - Revelation 1

The Book of Revelation is very different to most of the other books we find in the Bible. We know how to read the stories of the gospels and the letters to the churches but what about Revelation?

*Take time to share how you feel about reading Revelation. Do you feel intimidated, confused or do you have fixed ideas of its interpretation? What is your experience of reading the book?*

Revelation is a letter written to seven churches within the Roman province of Asia. In the early chapters we find a personalized letter to each of these churches. In this series we will focus primarily on these letters, what they meant to the original readers and what they say to us today. Revelation refers back to the Old Testament around 250 times so we will also read the book in the context of the whole Bible.

It is written in the age of the Spirit, after Jesus' death and resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all believers. The best way to understand Revelation is to first ask the Holy Spirit to help your understanding and to remember that the book is:

1. God's word
2. a letter written to churches; and
3. all about Jesus

*Read the first chapter of Revelation aloud.*

#### God's Word

1. Trace the passage of these words from the origin of the revelation to us? What does this say about God? (Rev 1: 1-2, 11)
2. The book of Revelation is prophecy. Prophecy is God's message to a specific group of people, usually about judgement and salvation. What is this prophecy about? Is it relevant to us today? (Rev 1:19)
3. What are we encouraged to do with the prophecy in this book? (Rev 1:3)

#### A letter to the churches

4. Prophecy is normally spoken and perhaps later recorded. How does this book differ from the norm of prophecy? (Rev 1:11; 22:18-19)
5. What do we learn about the author and intended recipients of this letter? Rev 1:9-11
6. This book was written after Jesus' death and resurrection, when Christians had spread throughout the Roman empire. Urbanisation had grown but the distribution of wealth was not equal. The seven churches lived under Roman rule when the emperor was considered to be divine in the region of Asia. Thinking about the context we live in what ways might we

relate to the original readers of Revelation? In what ways is our context different?

### All about Jesus

7. The book of Revelation is also written in an apocalyptic genre. Most books of the Bible use images that are real (eg salt, lamps, fig trees etc) but apocalyptic books use images that are symbolic and have a hidden meaning. Read Rev 1: 12-16 again. What is the overall impression you get of Jesus from this imagery?
8. What else can we learn about Jesus in the first chapter of Revelation? (Rev 1: 5-7; 17)
9. What do we learn about God? (Rev 1:4, 8, 17) What encouragement does that give us today?

### Pray Together

Take time to praise God who has revealed himself to us through Jesus and his word. Praise Jesus, magnificent in victory over death, alive forever. Praise the godhead, 'who was, who is and is to come'.

## Dear Church

### Don't forsake you first love - Revelation 2: 1-7

Even though the letters to individual churches are within the larger letter of Revelation each one follows a similar format and reads like a letter.

#### Greeting

1. Get out your phone/computer/travel diary etc. and do a quick search to see what you can learn about the ancient city of Ephesus. (See also Acts 19)

#### Title for Jesus

2. How is Jesus described in v1? (See also Rev 1:12-17) What does this description mean for us today?

#### What the church is doing well

3. What do we learn about the strengths of the Ephesian church? (v 2-3, 6)
4. Compare the Ephesian church with St Johns. What would Jesus commend us for?

#### Critique

5. What does a church look like that has lost its love for Jesus? (v4) How does St Johns measure up?
6. What does a church look like that has lost its love for each other and for people outside the church? (v4) How does St Johns measure up?

#### Warning

7. What three things does Jesus ask the church to do? (v5)

#### Promise

8. What is the promise Jesus gives if the Ephesians take the critique to heart and follow through? (v7) What is the significance of this promise for the Ephesians and for us today? (See also Gen 2: 8-9; Rev 22:14)

#### Pray Together

Take time to consider anything you think Jesus might be critiquing us as a community and as individuals for and bring them to God in repentance for his forgiveness and grace to change. Pray for his protection over us that all our acts of worship and service might be done in love.