

Session 1: The Unveiling of Jesus Christ

What We Found

The book's own name, *apokalypsis*, means unveiling, and the first thing unveiled is not a timeline but a Person: the risen Jesus Christ. The blessing of Revelation 1:3 falls on one who reads aloud and on those who hear: this book's wording strongly suggests birth in the Church's gathered worship, and John received it on the Lord's Day, traditionally understood as Sunday. The vision of the Son of Man (1:12–18) is painted from Daniel 7 and 10: Jesus carries the marks of both the son of man and the Ancient of Days, a claim of his divinity made in pure image. He interprets himself with Isaiah's divine title and with the only credential that matters to a suffering church: I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. And he stands among the lampstands: whatever is coming in this book, Christ is already in the midst of his churches.

Four Ways Christians Have Read This Book

- *Preterist*: the visions chiefly concern the first-century crisis of the early Church.
- *Historicist*: the visions map the sweep of Church history.
- *Futurist*: the visions chiefly concern the final crisis at the end of history.
- *Idealist*: the visions portray the timeless battle between Christ and evil in every age.

The Catholic Church has not canonized any one school; her instinct is a both-and, drawing on each approach only insofar as it squares with Catholic doctrine and sound reading. This study will keep all four on the table and will always tell you what is of faith and what is permitted opinion.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Jerome · *Letter 53, to Paulinus*

St. Jerome wrote that the Apocalypse of John has as many mysteries as it has words, and that in each of its words lie hidden manifold meanings. Approach this book with patient, humble digging rather than confident decoding.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Justin Martyr · *Dialogue with Trypho, ch. 81*

Writing around the middle of the second century, St. Justin testifies that a man among the Christians named John, one of the apostles of Christ, prophesied by a revelation made to him: our earliest clear witness to this book.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons · *Against Heresies, Book 5*

St. Irenaeus reports that the apocalyptic vision was seen almost in his own generation, toward the end of Domitian's reign: the anchor of the traditional dating, about A.D. 95.

Live It This Week

- Once this week, read Revelation 1:1–8 aloud, even if you are alone: the book blesses the voice that reads and the ears that hear (1:3). Receive the blessing on purpose.
- Read Revelation 1 once more slowly, and read Daniel 7:9–14 beside it.
- Memorize the memory verse.

Memory Verse

Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. (Revelation 1:17–18, RSV2CE)

MY GUESS (WRITE, THEN SEAL)

Later in this study we will meet this verse: And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (Revelation 12:1, RSV2CE)

Who do you think the woman is? Write your guess below, fold this sheet, seal or staple it, and put your name on the outside. We will open these together mid-study. No wrong answers; honest guesses only.

My guess: _____

MY SUNDAY GUESS (WRITE, THEN SEAL)

One sentence: what do you predict this book will turn out to have to do with what Christians do on Sunday morning?

Write your guess below, fold this corner over it, and do not revise it. This seal opens in Session 9.

My Sunday guess: _____

Before Next Session

Read Revelation 2.

Catechism references from this session: CCC 115–118; 128–130.