

# *Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today*

2010–2011 *Horizons* Bible Study by Barbara Rossing

## Workshop for Leaders

By Joyce MacKichan Walker

---

### **What Is This?**

A lesson plan for leaders to use in introducing *Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today* to Presbyterian Women or any group that plans to use this study

### **Who Is This For, and Why?**

- Bible study leaders can use this workshop at a gathering of Presbyterian Women or any group in the congregation, to introduce the study and generate interest and enthusiasm for upcoming study sessions.
- Bible study leaders also can use this workshop at a gathering of Presbyterian Women in the presbytery, to introduce the study to leaders at the congregational level.

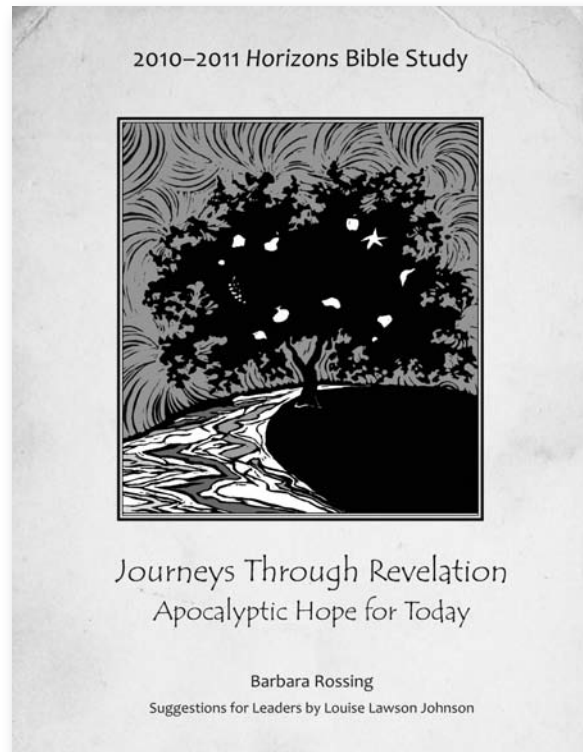
### **Main Idea**

This workshop will introduce participants to the breadth, depth, and usefulness of the book of *Revelation* as revealed by the 2010–2011 *Horizons* Bible study. The book of *Revelation* often is discounted because of its lesser-understood genre and the great variety of interpretations and uses made of it over time and in various cultures. Yet the author of our Bible study presents *Revelation* as a book of hope-filled vision. This workshop introduces an outline, an organizational chart of the main features of each lesson and activities that will help participants encounter this book contextually and faithfully. This workshop will prepare them to enter the study anticipating encouragement and understanding. Both the workshop and the study are written to help participants discover more about God and God's great love for the whole world, especially as encountered in challenging and difficult times.

### **What Will Participants Learn During This Workshop?**

Depending on the teaching activities selected, participants will

1. recall and visualize images from *Revelation*;
2. examine key contextual questions about *Revelation*;
3. explore a chapter by chapter outline of *Revelation*, looking for the good news to be found;
4. survey a summary chart of the lessons, their content, and interpretation of *Revelation*;
5. review the guiding principles of this study of *Revelation*; and
6. discover resources and helps contained in the study book and on the *Horizons* web site.



## Materials Needed

- Hymnals
- Newsprint and markers
- Copies of “Suggested Hymns” handout
- Copies of “Study Lesson and Chapter Chart”
- One copy of the 2010–2011 *Horizons* Bible study per person

## Plan for a Day to Encounter *Revelation*

In the Introduction to the study, the author tells us, “This book was written to be read out loud, in public, at a church service, or with other Christians.” She strongly encourages study groups to do just that, with participants simply listening or following along. Notice that she also suggests beginning at the end, with *Revelation* 21 and 22. If you do that, read those two chapters at the end also, thus framing your experience with this glorious vision of future hope. *Revelation* 1:3 tells us “the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy” will be blessed, as will “those who hear and who keep what is written in it.” Accordingly, consider offering this introductory workshop in the context of a day to encounter *Revelation*. A sample plan is offered here, but create one that works best in your context. Invite readers, and assign their respective sections of *Revelation* ahead of time, so they have an opportunity to practice reading their chapters aloud.

9:30–10:00 AM

Gathering hospitality

10:00 AM –12:00 PM

Host a read-aloud of the entire book of *Revelation*

12:00–1:00 PM

Lunch

1:00–2:30 PM

Use this workshop plan to offer an introduction to the 2010–2011 *Horizons* Bible study, *Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today* by Barbara Rossing

## Lesson Plan

### 1. Images from *Revelation*

1A. Invite participants to close their eyes and recall images from the book of *Revelation*, then to say them aloud. Quickly list them on newsprint. Don’t worry about accuracy or detail. Simply fill the sheet for the effect of the overwhelming number of images remembered. If your group has just heard the book read aloud, this will be a rich and full list!

OR

1B. Post a long sheet of mural paper or newsprint on a wall. Invite participants, all at the same time, to take markers and draw one or two of the images they recollect. Assure them that they need not worry about accuracy of detail or aesthetic value, as they are simply drawing pictures from someone else’s descriptive imagination.

Say, “In the Introduction, the author tells us, ‘Images in *Revelation* are windows into a vision; they are not equations or code.’ The author, John of Patmos, intends to encourage Christian communities of his time to courageously claim and live out their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord of all, despite the challenges of the repressive ruling empire of Rome. The strong warnings, even threats, of *Revelation* are meant to call churches to repentance and faithful living. As we study *Revelation*, we will attempt to see and hear, through the window of these visions and John’s fantastic words, the warnings, encouragement, and hope offered to early Christian communities—and through them to us.”

### 2. Key Contextual Questions

Ask participants to turn toward two or three others and answer the question, “What are some impressions you have of *Revelation* from your own encounters with it or from what you have heard others say about it?” Allow a couple of minutes for conversations, then ask for some examples of their impressions.

Tell the group that every time we study a book of the Bible, understanding its context is crucial to help us know what the book was intended to do for the people for whom it was written, *when* it was written. Ask participants to keep their impressions in mind as you outline the important contextual categories below with reference to *Revelation*. Use information from the Introduction and Lesson One as your guide. Depending on the time available to you, you may choose to offer descriptions and examples. Participants will encounter much of this information in Lesson One, however. Remember that this workshop is simply an overview, as they begin to enter into this challenging book.

Review the following important contextual questions from the Introduction and Lesson One:

- **What kind of book is this?**
  - ♦ Overall, the book is an apocalypse, written to reveal a deep truth about the world

- ♦ The book also is prophecy, written to proclaim God’s message of salvation and judgment
- ♦ The book also is a letter, written to specific Christian communities, and intended to be read aloud in worship or with other Christians

• **Who wrote it?**

- ♦ John of Patmos, who likely was of Jewish background
- ♦ Not John the Baptist or the apostle John or the writer of the Gospel of *John*

• **When was it written?**

- ♦ Around 95–96 AD, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian

• **Where was it written?**

- ♦ Patmos, a small island off the coast of modern Turkey

• **What was going on at the time?**

- ♦ Rome had destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. Christian communities existed under Roman rule, which meant experiencing hardships, abuse of power, and unjust policies. Christians were sometimes faced with choosing between worshipping God and the Roman emperor.

• **To whom was it written?**

- ♦ Christian churches in Asia

• **For what purpose was it written?**

- ♦ To prod Christians in congregational communities to wake up, repent, and act faithfully and justly, despite the bleak situation caused by Roman rule
- ♦ To encourage believers to have hope in God’s future, and to see that future breaking into the present
- ♦ To offer an urgent warning that God will judge evil, injustice, inaction, and worship of Roman culture and the Roman emperor; God alone receives worship
- ♦ To inspire and encourage Christians to become witnesses to God’s way of life, through Jesus Christ
- ♦ To answer the question, “Who is the true God?”

Ask participants to turn to a neighbor and tell each other what of this is new information for them. Then ask the whole group, “How might this information affect the way we will talk about and understand *Revelation*?” Allow a few minutes for group discussion.

**3. Revelation Outline**

Make copies of the outline below or display it electronically. Use it to offer a big picture look at the book of *Revelation*. Then ask, “What good news do you see in this outline?”

Chapter 1	Introduction of the author and his task as given by Jesus Christ
Chapters 2–3	Letters to seven churches in Asia
Chapter 4	A vision of Christ worshipped on the throne
Chapter 5	A vision of Christ as the Lamb, worthy of worship
Chapter 6	A vision of Christ opening the first six seals of the scroll
Chapter 7	Interlude (A pause so the saints can be “sealed” and worship God)
Chapters 8–11	A vision of the opening of the seventh seal, followed by the plagues of the seven trumpets and an interlude
Chapter 12	A vision of Satan defeated through witness and testimony, and thrown out of heaven
Chapter 13	A vision of two beasts who represent the evil power of the Roman empire
Chapter 14	A vision of God’s just judgment
Chapters 15–16	A vision of the seven bowls of God’s wrath
Chapters 17–18	A vision of the judgment of the evil city of Babylon (Rome)
Chapters 19–20	A vision of the final battle fought by a heavenly army, and already won by the blood of Christ
Chapters 21–22	A vision of the New Jerusalem, in which God dwells with humanity

Highlight the chapters that are omitted from the lessons in the study (chapters 8–11 and 20), and offer the author’s explanation in the Introduction of needing to choose chapters that highlight themes, address the tough challenges of the book, and focus on the message of hope.

#### 4. Study Lesson and Chapter Chart Overview

Provide each participant with a copy of the chart, “Study Lesson and Chapter Chart for *Journeys Through Revelation*.”

Go over it with them, explaining the contents from left to right, by column, as follows:

- “Lesson”—identifies Lessons One–Nine in the study
- “Text”—identifies the chapters of *Revelation* assigned to each lesson
- “Main Focus”—identifies the theme of the lesson
- “Major Texts of the Hebrew Scriptures”—identifies citations from the Hebrew scriptures referenced in each lesson
- “Major Images Introduced”—identifies key images in each lesson
- “Likely Meaning of Images”—identifies the explanation of various images offered in each lesson
- “Hymns in *Revelation*”—identifies the hymns found in various places in *Revelation* that are referenced in particular lessons. There are fifteen hymns in *Revelation* total, but not all are referenced in the study.
- “Major New Terms”—identifies key terms explained in each lesson

Encourage participants to keep this summary in their Bible study to serve as a key to each lesson, as well as a quick reference guide for recollection of images and terms. Note that it only contains those chapters of *Revelation* the study includes.

#### 5. Guiding Principles

Direct participants to the list of “Guiding Principles of this Study” in the Introduction. Review them and encourage participants to focus on the big picture purpose of the book.

#### 6. Resources and Additional Helps

Invite participants to follow along in their study books as you show them important features of the study that will help them throughout its use. Make sure they find:

- A. The Opening Devotion at the beginning of each “Suggestions for Leaders” section—you will find important words of praise from *Revelation* in each of these sections
- B. The section, “Where Is the Hope?” found at the end of each “Suggestions for Leaders” section—this will remind participants of hope, the main purpose of this apocalypse

- C. The Additional Information section in the back of the study
- D. The glossary of terms in the back of the study
- E. Questions in each lesson to aid in reflection on the lesson content
- F. Descriptions of the additional supplements offered by PW available for purchase to enhance Bible study experience
  - 1) *Eyewitness News—Revelation Edition: Live Interviews with John of Patmos* by Dale Lindsay Morgan
  - 2) *Revelation in Context* by Karen Russell
- G. Resources provided on the web site, [www.pcusa.org/horizons](http://www.pcusa.org/horizons), such as
  - 1) Lesson handouts to accompany the Suggestions for Leaders lesson plans
  - 2) Lesson outlines and summaries prepared by Louise Lawson Johnson, the Suggestions for Leaders author
  - 3) *Revelation in Context* by Karen Russell

To conclude this Workshop for Leaders lesson plan, have someone in your group read *Revelation 7:9–12* as a closing psalm of praise. Invite all participants to read in unison the sentences within quotation marks (*Rev. 7:10b* and *12b*).

#### Additional Activities

Invite participants to select one piece of art from the study book and examine it for connections to images from the book of *Revelation*. How does your selection enhance the word images offered by John? How might depicting the vivid word pictures using actual images limit the ability of the words to convey a less-than-literal message?

Have copies of *The Presbyterian Hymnal* available. Invite someone to play the hymns suggested for each lesson, and have an informal hymn sing as people gather, or as you end the lesson. Mention that these hymns have been chosen because they use texts from *Revelation* and convey the ideas of their paired lesson. Make copies of the handout of hymns and encourage participants to sing these hymns or ones of their own choosing with each lesson.

# Suggested Hymns\*

For each lesson of the 2010–2011 *Horizons* Bible study,  
*Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today*

## **Lesson One: An Apocalypse, an Author, and a Witness** PH 431, “O Lord, You Gave Your Servant John”

Use this hymn as a sung or spoken prayer in your group, as you begin exploring *The Revelation to John* (of Patmos). You might invite participants to list evils and injustices that plague our world, then to make copies of the list for all participants, and invite them to pray each month about an item on the list that particularly brings them sorrow or pain.

## **Lesson Two: Seven Letters to Seven Churches** PH 382, “Somebody’s Knocking at Your Door”

After singing this spiritual, wonder aloud with your group why the writer uses the words, “knocks like Jesus.” How might Jesus knock? Might Jesus knock in different ways depending on what we are thinking or doing? How have you experienced Jesus knocking at your door?

## **Lesson Three: Worshipping God and the Lamb: The Heavenly Journey Begins** PH 138, “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!”

Before singing this hymn, read *Revelation 4:1–11* aloud, then invite participants to listen for the words and phrases from that text. Ask, “What new ideas does the hymn writer introduce? Why might sinfulness prevent us from seeing God’s glory?”

## **Lesson Four: Diagnosing the Crises of Empire** PH 142, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name!”

You might sing this hymn at the end of the lesson, and reflect on the power of Jesus to save “every kindred, every tribe, on this terrestrial ball.” How might God’s judgment as symbolized in this lesson contribute to the “ransom” of humanity and recognition of Jesus’ power to save us by grace? Do you think it is possible for the most evil empire you can think of to be moved by God’s judgment and saved by grace?

## **Lesson Five: Singing Hymns of Hope: Interludes of Salvation for God’s People** PH 151, “Crown Him with Many Crowns”

To crown the Lamb on the throne is to publicly acknowledge the Lordship of Christ personally. It is also to acknowledge that Christ has the power to bestow salvation at will, on “a great multitude . . . from every nation, from all tribes and

peoples and languages . . .” (*Rev. 7:9*). Does this recognition bring you joy, or is it hard to accept? Why?

## **Lesson Six: Witness to Hope: The Woman, the Dragon, and Earth’s Daring Rescue** PH 289, “O God of Every Nation”

Visions of war in heaven and on earth in *Revelation 12* remind us that the whole earth, indeed the whole universe, is in need of redemption. Invite your group to sing this hymn listening for images of contemporary sinfulness and its effect on nations. What visions might you claim from this chapter and this hymn that give hope for every nation? What role are you called to play in reaching for the realization of this vision?

## **Lesson Seven: Rapture, Violence, and Exodus** “There Is Power in the Blood”

[http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/There\\_Is\\_Power\\_in\\_the\\_Blood/](http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/There_Is_Power_in_the_Blood/)

Hymns about the blood of Jesus often are avoided in worship. However, the author of our Bible study reminds us that the blood of Jesus symbolizes “the power of God’s vulnerable, nonviolent love to change the world.” This web site will provide you with the words of this old hymn and a recording of the music, both of which are in the public domain.

## **Lesson Eight: The Empire Has Fallen! Evacuate Now!** PH 153, “He Is King of Kings”

Although this lesson focuses on unjust empires, this hymn reminds us that Jesus already reigns, and continually calls us to faithfulness. Oppressive kingdoms cannot stand in the face of his power; he is always working on our behalf, ultimately blessing his saints everywhere.

## **Lesson Nine: Journey Into the New Jerusalem** PH 453, “O Holy City, Seen of John”

This hymn serves as a wonderful summary of this Bible study and as a challenge for our response. Invite participants to sing it or read it in unison, listening for the challenge to act. Then ask, “What will you do now that we have explored *The Revelation to John* (of Patmos)? Can we remain the same?”

\*from *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999)

## Study Lesson and Chapter Chart for *Journeys Through Revelation*

Lesson	Text	Main Focus	Major Texts of the Hebrew Scriptures
One	<i>Revelation 1</i>	Forms of writing Author/context Call to witness	<i>Daniel 7:13–14</i> <i>Exodus 19:6</i> <i>Jonah 3:10</i>
Two	<i>Revelation 2–3</i>	Wake-up call to the seven churches and to us	<i>Numbers 22; 31:16</i> <i>Hosea 1–2</i> <i>Ezekiel 16</i> <i>1 Kings 18:19</i>
Three	<i>Revelation 4–5</i>	Jesus, the Lamb, holds the true power	<i>Exodus 12:1–27</i> <i>Isaiah 53:7</i>
Four	<i>Revelation 6</i>	Dangers of an unjust empire	<i>Zechariah 1:7–11</i> <i>Psalms 13:1; 35:17</i> <i>Isaiah 13:9–10</i> <i>Joel 2:30–31</i> <i>Amos 8:9</i>
Five	<i>Revelation 7–8:5 14</i>	God-given hope	<i>Isaiah 1:16–18</i> <i>Exodus 40:34</i> <i>Ezekiel 37:27</i> <i>Isaiah 49:10</i> <i>Psalms 46:10</i>
Six	<i>Revelation 12</i>	Two stories that proclaim Jesus is Lord	<i>Genesis 3</i> <i>Genesis 21:14–21</i> <i>Daniel 10:21; 12:1</i> <i>Exodus 15:12</i> <i>Psalms 2</i>
Seven	<i>Revelation 13</i> <i>Revelation 15–16</i> <i>Revelation 19</i>	<i>Revelation</i> reflects the story of exodus and liberation	<i>Exodus 12–14</i> <i>Exodus 15</i> <i>Isaiah 63:1–3</i> <i>Judges 5:19</i> <i>2 Kings 23:29–30</i>
Eight	<i>Revelation 17–18</i>	Judgment of the Roman empire and all evil empires	<i>Ezekiel 16, 33</i> <i>Hosea</i> <i>Isaiah 23:15–18; 47:8</i> <i>Jeremiah 51:63–64</i>
Nine	<i>Revelation 21–22</i>	Renewal and joy for the universe	<i>Isaiah 54</i> <i>Ezekiel 37:27</i> <i>Genesis 2:9</i> <i>Ezekiel 47:1–12</i> <i>Isaiah 43:19</i> <i>Isaiah 65:17</i>

<b>Major Images Introduced</b>	<b>Likely Meaning of Images</b>	<b>Hymns in Revelation</b>	<b>Major New Terms</b>
Seven golden lampstands Son of Man	The seven churches of Asia Minor Jesus	<i>Rev. 1:5b-7</i>	Apocalypse Prophecy Empire Witness
The angel of each church Jesus knocking at the door	The corporate spirit of each congregation Possibly a reference to the Lord's Supper		Conqueror (from the Greek <i>nike</i> )—not militaristic nor triumphal but encouraging and hopeful; follower of the Lamb
Throne Four living creatures Elders Scroll with seven seals Lion/Lamb	God's power The cosmos, the four directions, the whole world Some who have witnessed to Christ Pictures of reality in the world Jesus	<i>Rev. 4:8-11</i> <i>Rev. 5:8-14</i>	Visionary journey—standard feature of apocalyptic literature, involving time and space travel Heaven—offers a divine perspective on earth events
Six of the seven seals The four horsemen	Pictures of evil in the world Threats of God's judgment		Day of the Lord—judgment against evil
The 144,000	White-robed martyrs led by the Shepherd	<i>Rev. 7:9-12</i>	
Pregnant woman Red dragon Heroic mouth	Israel/the people of God Evil personified/Devil/Satan Earth	<i>Rev. 12:10-12</i>	
666 Beast from the sea Beast from the land Bowl plagues Rider on white horse	Falling short of perfection Government of Rome Local leaders in Asia Threats to bring about repentance Jesus—"The Word of God" ( <i>19:13</i> )	<i>Rev. 15:2-4</i> <i>Rev. 19:1-8</i>	"Rapture" theology Armageddon
Babylon—the great whore ( <i>17:1</i> ) "My people" ( <i>18:4</i> )	Rome's wealth and power The Church		
New Jerusalem—a bride of the Lamb (Jesus) Tree of Life River of Life	God's Holy City Healing for the nations Renewal for all	<i>Rev. 21:3-4</i>	

# Order Form

To order, call Presbyterian Distribution Service—800/524-2612 (9 AM–7 PM, EST, Monday–Friday)—or complete and mail in the order form below.

TITLE	PDS#	QTY	PRICE	SUBTOTAL
2010–2011 <i>Horizons</i> Bible study <i>Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today</i> by Barbara Rossing with Suggestions for Leaders by Louise Lawson Johnson	HZN-10-100		\$8.00	\$
Audio CD edition— <i>Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today</i> Slightly abridged version; no Suggestions for Leaders (available summer 2010)	HZN-10-172		\$15.00	\$
Ecumenical edition— <i>Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today</i>	HZN-10-102		\$8.00	\$
Spanish edition— <i>Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today</i> (available summer 2010)	HZN-10-110		\$8.00	\$
Korean edition— <i>Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today</i> (available summer 2010)	HZN-10-120		\$8.00	\$
Large print edition— <i>Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today</i>	HZN-10-150		\$12.00	\$
<i>Eyewitness News—Revelation Edition: Live Interviews with John of Patmos</i> by Dale Lindsay Morgan (available spring 2010)	HZN-10-103		\$7.50	\$
<i>Revelation in Context</i> by Karen Russell (available spring 2010)	Available for free download only at <a href="http://www.pcusa.org/horizons">www.pcusa.org/horizons</a>			
Workshop for Leaders— <i>Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today</i> An introduction to this Bible study by Joyce MacKichan Walker	HZN-10-101		free	
Promotional poster— <i>Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today</i>	HZN-10-410		free	
Pendant/charm— <i>Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today</i> (available spring 2010)	HZN-10-300		\$10.00	\$
Worship bulletin cover (8 1/2" x 11")	Available for free download only at <a href="http://www.pcusa.org/horizons">www.pcusa.org/horizons</a>			
<i>Horizons</i> magazine	Call 866/802-3635 or subscribe online at <a href="http://www.pcusa.org/horizons">www.pcusa.org/horizons</a> .			
				SUBTOTAL
				Sales tax (CA 7.25%, individuals only)
				Shipping and handling (10% of order total, \$5.25 minimum, \$65.00 maximum)
				TOTAL

Complete this order form and mail to

**Presbyterian Church**  
**PDS Prepaid Processing**  
**PO Box 643674**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3674**  
**Or call 800/524-2612**

ORDERED BY

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

CREDIT CARD INFO

Name on credit card \_\_\_\_\_  
 Credit card no. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Visa     MasterCard  
 American Express     Discover

SHIP TO (Please use a street address—UPS cannot deliver to a PO box.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**Please use item numbers when ordering. If paying by check,  
 make payable to Presbyterian Women and include with your order.**