Table Host Discussion Guide

Week 1: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

This week's teaching introduces Revelation by allowing the book itself to establish the framework for how we will read it. Revelation is an **unveiling**—the Greek word *apokalypsis* means revealing rather than concealing—and John describes a pictorial vision filled with symbols that continually draw from the Old Testament (Revelation 1:1–3, 11, 19–20). The opening verses also emphasize that these things "must soon take place" and that "the time is near," reminding us that Revelation first spoke directly to real first-century churches experiencing growing pressure because of their allegiance to Jesus (Revelation 1:1, 3, 9–11). Most importantly, chapter 1 begins by revealing **Jesus**. John describes Him using imagery from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Exodus, Micah, and other Scriptures: the Son of Man, the Ancient of Days, our reigning High Priest, righteous Judge, victorious King, and Living One who conquered death. Yet this glorious Christ is not distant from His suffering people—He is standing **among the lampstands**, which Jesus identifies as His churches (Revelation 1:12–20).

Discussion Questions

1. What does Revelation 1 teach us about how we should approach the book of Revelation?

Answer: Revelation begins by identifying itself as an *apokalypsis*—an unveiling or revealing—and says that Jesus gave the revelation to John to **show** His servants what must soon take place (Revelation 1:1). John repeatedly describes what he "saw" and was commanded to "write what you see" (Revelation 1:11, 19). Jesus even interprets some of the imagery for us, explaining that the lampstands represent churches and the stars represent their angels or messengers (Revelation 1:20). This teaches us to read Revelation as a pictorial and symbolic vision while allowing Scripture—especially the Old Testament—to help interpret its images.

Application: What assumptions about Revelation have you brought into this study? What would it look like for you to hold those assumptions loosely and let Scripture shape your understanding over the next thirteen weeks?

2. Why are the phrases "must soon take place" and "the time is near" important for understanding Revelation?

Answer: John places both statements at the very beginning of the book (Revelation 1:1, 3), showing that Revelation was immediately relevant to its original audience. These were real Christians in real churches who were already experiencing pressure

and would face further suffering because of their allegiance to Jesus (Revelation 1:9–11; 2:10, 13). The book certainly continues to speak to the church today, but we should first ask what its message meant to the people who originally heard it.

Application: Why can it be tempting to read Revelation primarily through current events rather than through its original context and the rest of Scripture? How might beginning with the first-century audience change the way you read the book?

3. What does John's situation on Patmos teach us about faithfulness and suffering?

Answer: John describes himself not by emphasizing his apostolic authority, but as a "brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus" (Revelation 1:9). He is on Patmos because of "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," yet that hardship does not mean Jesus has abandoned him. Like Ezekiel receiving a vision while in exile (Ezekiel 1:1–3; 37:1), John encounters God in a place of isolation and suffering. Faithfulness does not guarantee freedom from hardship, but hardship does not mean the absence of Christ.

Application: Have you ever interpreted a difficult season as evidence that God was distant from you? How does John's experience challenge that assumption?

4. What do the Old Testament images in Revelation 1 teach us about the identity of Jesus?

Answer: John builds his portrait of Jesus from imagery his readers would recognize from Scripture. Jesus is the **Son of Man** who receives everlasting dominion in Daniel 7:13–14. His white hair recalls the **Ancient of Days** in Daniel 7:9, identifying Him with divine glory. His robe and sash reflect priestly and heavenly authority (Exodus 28:4; Daniel 10:5). His voice like rushing waters echoes the glory of God in Ezekiel 43:2. His feet picture victorious judgment, and the sword from His mouth reflects the judging power of His Word (Isaiah 11:4; Hebrews 4:12). John is showing us that the risen Jesus is fully divine, reigning, holy, powerful, and victorious.

Application: Which description of Jesus in Revelation 1 most changes or enlarges the way you normally picture Him? Why?

5. Why is it significant that Jesus is standing among the lampstands?

Answer: Jesus explains that "the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Revelation 1:20). The glorious Christ John has just described—the King, Priest, Judge, Living One, and conqueror of death—is standing **in the midst of His churches**. These believers may have felt vulnerable under persecution, but they were neither forgotten nor abandoned. Jesus was present with them, fulfilling the promise He gave His disciples: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Application: How would your response to fear, suffering, cultural pressure, or uncertainty change if you lived with a deeper awareness that the risen Jesus is present with His church? Where do you most need to hear His words, “Do not be afraid” (Revelation 1:17), right now?

Prayer Prompts

1. **To see Jesus clearly:**
   Jesus, help us see You as Scripture reveals You, not merely through tradition, assumptions, or familiarity. Give us a greater awareness of Your holiness, authority, glory, and love as we study Revelation. (Revelation 1:12–18)

2. **For faithful endurance:**
   Lord, when faithfulness becomes difficult, help us remain patient and steadfast. Remind us that belonging to Your kingdom is worth whatever obedience may cost us. (Revelation 1:9; 2:10)

3. **For confidence in Christ’s presence:**
   Jesus, thank You that You have not abandoned Your church. Help us trust that You are present among Your people, that You hold us securely in Your hand, and that even death cannot defeat those who belong to You. (Revelation 1:16–18, 20; Matthew 28:20)