Study Questions
THE REVELATION OF JOHN
by William Barclay

Introduction:

Kick-off
Introduction to the Revelation of John (page 1)

Meeting
up to but not including

God’s Revelation (page 25)
1. What is the most common form of literature written between the time of the Old and New Testaments?
2. What are the main characteristics of this literature?
3. Why is this form of literature inevitably cryptic and difficult to understand?
4. What were the two ages that the Jews had divided time into? Can you describe them?
5. Why were the Old Testament Apocalypses written under pseudo names?
6. What is the key difference between the literature of the prophets and apocolyptists?
7. What is the connection the Gentiles have with apocalyptic literature?
8. What are the blessings of the age to come?
10. Why were Christians persecuted during the time in which the Revelation of John was written?
11. Why was Caesar worship at it’s height during the time in which the Revelation of John was written?
12. Ultimately, what is the message that this form of literature is trying to convey to the original audience? To us?

The Revelation of John:

Lesson 1
God’s Revelation (page 25)

up to but not including

Through Tribulation to the Kingdom (page 45)
v. 1:1-9

1. What does Apocalypse mean in Greek?
2. What is Truth? (See “The Means of God’s Revelation” on page 27)
3. What key words in verses 1-3, when translated correctly give evidence for when the events in the book will occur?
4. Barclay discusses the Greek and Hebrew words Doulos and ebedh extensively. What do those words mean? What can we learn from those people for which it was used?
5. Why should hearing the Word of God be considered a privilege?
6. Why is it considered that the Revelation of John is written to the whole Church and not just the Seven Churches mentioned in the letter?
7. Barclay discusses, at some length on page 35, the Greek used by John for “him, who is” and “from Him who was.” From all the discussion, what should we take away?
8. Right out of the gate in v 1:4-6, John stats with the imagery. Barclay discusses 3 possible explanations for the apparent conflict between the Trinity and the Seven Spirits. What are they and what helps you the most to understand? Why?
9. What are the great titles given to Jesus Christ? What are we to learn from their use? i.e.
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how can Jess be the first born if he always existed?
10. What is significant of the tenses that John uses for the love Jesus has for us? See “What Jesus Did for Us” on page 39.
11. What is significant about the Royal Priesthood in comparison to the Jewish Priesthood?
12. In verse 1:7, if we strip away the imagery, what are we left with?
13. What is the significance of “alpha and omega” and “aleph to tau” when talking about God?

Lesson 2

Through Tribulation to the Kingdom (page 45)

The Letter to Ephesus (page 64)

v. 1:9-20

1. What are we to learn from Barclay’s discussion of the Greek word Hupomonē from verse 1:8? Is this understanding applicable to your walk with Christ?
2. How did John’s time on the island of Patmos influence his writing?
3. What does the reference to the “Lord’s Day” in v1:10-11 refer to?
4. What is significant about being in “the Spirit” on the “Lord’s Day.”
5. What is significant about how the “one like the son of man” is dressed? What 3 things is John trying to convey in the imagery of the “one like the son of man.”?
6. v1:14-19 is packed with still more imagery of the “one like the son of man.” Re-read Barclay’s explanation on pages 54-61. What are you able to take away from the discussion?
7. In the first part of the discussion in “The Titles of the Risen Lord” (page 56-58), what remarkable thing does John reveal about the right hand of Christ?
8. Many have said that study of scripture and in particular the gospels has convicted their hearts and helped them to improve themselves. What title of the Risen Lord in v1:14-19 speaks to the “penetrating quality of the word of God”?
9. Why did John fall at the feet of Christ? Who else in scripture fell at God’s feet? Have you either physically or spiritually fallen at the feet of Christ?
10. Why is the use of a lamp stand significant for the imagery of the Church? Why aren’t the churches called light?
The Letter to Ephesus (page 64)

1. Each letter is addressed to a specific city. However, each letter is ended with a general warning. Who is being warned?
2. In “Ephesus: Christ and his Church” Barclay makes note of what John meant by Christ holding the seven stars in his hand. What does John mean by this imagery?
3. What does the Greek word “Kopos” mean and how is it used in reference to Ephesus and elsewhere in the New Testament?
4. What may have Christ meant when he told the Ephesians that they “had lost their first love.”? Do you agree or disagree with Barclay’s final position? See pages 70-72.
6. From a practical point of view, why was the Nicolaition heresy the most dangerous?

The Letter to Smyrna (page 80)

1. What was Smyrna on trial for?
2. What was the cause of the trouble?
3. What was Christ’s claim and his demand to the Smyrnians?
4. How is the crown of life promised by Christ especially significant to the Smyrnians?

The Letter to Pergamum (page 95)

1. Why is Pergamum called “Satan’s Seat”? Of the three possible explanations for Christ which one is the most likely in your eyes? Why?
2. What is significant about Christ calling Antipas his faithful martyr?
3. Who is Christ going to ware with in the letter to Pergamum? What is mean when it is said that Christ will go to war with the sword of his mouth?
4. Is the reward for abstaining from the sin of the world the Eucharist? See pages 104-105.
5. There are several interpretations for the “White Stone” and the new name. Which one rings true for you? Why?
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The Letter to Thyatira (page 110)

Lesson 6  up to but not including  v2:18-29

The Letter to Sardis (page 122)

1. From the discussion in “Thyatira: The Source of the Error” starting on page 115, who do you think Jezebel was and why?
2. What was one of the great problems of the Christian Church? What were the repercussions for the Christians of Thyatira?
3. What were the three teachings of Jezebel?
4. Several pages (117-120) are devoted to what the teaching of Jezebel could have been. In the end, what is Christ trying to warn Thyatira and us about?
5. There are several explanations for what Christ means by “I will give him the morning star.” What do you think is meant by the morning star?

The Letter to Sardis (page 122)

Lesson 7  up to but not including  v3:1-6

The Letter to Philadelphia (page 135)

1. What do the Seven Spirits signify with respect to the gifts of the Holy Spirit?
2. Why is Sardis a lifeless church? How is this a warning for you? For St. Joseph’s Christianity?
3. In “Sardis: The Imperatives of the Risen Lord”, Barclay translates/paraphrases “Remember how you received and heard the gospel” as “keep on remembering; never allow yourself to forget.” It is easy for us to forget and fall into old habits. How do you keep remembering and not allowing yourself to forget?

The Letter to Philadelphia (page 135)

Lesson 8  up to but not including  v3:7-13

The Letter to Laodicea (page 148)

1. What was special about Philadelphia?
2. What especially suited Philadelphia to the next great missionary journey?
3. What is most striking about Philadelphia, even now?
4. What is the translation for the Greek word for Holy (Hagios)? What is the significance of the use of the word Holy in reference to Jesus?
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Lesson 9

The Letter to Laodicea (page 148) up to but not including v3:7-22

1. What is interesting about Laodicea when reading scripture and comparing the criticism from Jesus and the facts about the city that Barclay provides? What does it tell you about the author of Revelation?

2. Why does Jesus refer to himself as the “Amen” in the letter to the Laodiceans?

3. What are the three explanations that Barclay provides for the verse “I know your works; I know that your neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are tepid and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.” See “Laodicea: Neither One Thing nor Another” (page 154).

4. How does the risen Christ turn Laodicea’s wealth into poverty? How does that reflect on Christianity today? How does it reflect on our society?

5. What is significant about the Greek word for love that the risen Christ uses in v3:19. See page 157.

6. In “Laodicea: Disciplined out of Love” Barclay explains what is meant by the rebuke in v3:19. What is the explanation for the rebuke? Do you agree with the explanation? Why or why not?

7. Given the discussion in “Laodicea: Disciplined out of Love”, which explanation for v3:20 in “Laodicea: The Christ Who Knocks” appeals to you? If you had an opinion before, has it changed?

Lesson 10

The Opening Heavens and the Opening Door (page 162) up to but not including v4:1-11

The Roll in the Hand of God (page 180)

1. What significant details about the God and his throne do you find most interesting?

2. There are several explanations for the 24 elders surrounding the throne of God. Which one do you prefer? Why?

3. What is the source of the symbols for the four creatures that surround the throne of God? Does this de-mystify what you may have heard before about the creatures?

4. What do the four creatures represent?

5. Barclay discusses 3 aspects of the “Song of Praise” of the 4 living creatures on page 177. What about them is new to you? Any changes in your interpretation for you?

6. What is familiar about the “unending hymn” or “Song of Praise”?

7. How is the use of the Greek phrase kurios kai theos in direct opposition to the emperor?
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Lesson 11  The Roll in the Hand of God (page 180) to the End of Vol. 1  v5:1-14

1. What is the significance of the fact that the scroll in God’s hand was written on the front and back?
2. What do the seals on the roll in God’s hand signify?
3. Why does John weep sorrowfully?
4. What are the titles given to Christ in v5:5? What are their significance?
5. What are the 3 songs of praise? Who sings them? What is the significance of each group and why they are singing?
6. Barclay proposes something that may be quite controversial on pages 198-199. What is his assertion and do you agree or disagree? Why?

The Opening of the Seven Seals (1)

Lesson 12  Rescue and Reward (page 20) up to but not including  v6:1-17

1. What is the origin of the vision of the Four Horsemen?
2. On page 3 of Volume 2, Barclay outlines the method of interpretation for the Four Horsemen. i.e. that they are the “forces of destruction known to John at the time.” Do you agree or disagree with Barclay? Why or why not?
3. What is the significance of each of the following details associated with the opening of the first seal: the white horse, bow, and crown?
4. What is first among the tragic terrors of the end times?
5. John seems to summarize/use many of the Old Testament Apocalyptic books concerning the end times. Do you think he is plagiarizing? Or is something else at work here?
6. What is the significance of the color (red) of the 2nd horse?
7. What are the three main crops of Palestine? Why is this significant in regards to the 3rd horse?
8. How much was a denarius? How much was a choinix? What then is the significance of a “…measure of wheat for a denarius…” in v6:5-6?
9. What is the relevance of the souls of the martyrs under the altar? What is relevant about this to a Catholic Church?
10. Barclay shows us that the images in v6:12-14 are firmly rooted in the Old Testament and other works written before the New Testament. What really matters in regards to the vision associated with the opening of the sixth seal?
11. What is unique about the wrath of the Lamb?
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Rescue and Reward (page 20)
Lesson 13 up to but not including v7:1-17

The Silence and the Thunder of Prayer (page 44)
1. At the end of “Rescue and Reward” on page 20, Barclay lists 3 elements in the vision. What form of literature are these elements usually found?
2. What do you find interesting concerning the discussion in “Winds of God”? Why?
3. On pages 24-25 there are several ideas concerning the “the living God”. Which one(s) do you most closely identify with?
4. What was the significance of a “seal” or “sealing something” to the people of the time? What is the significance to the Church?
5. Why do those who have come “out of the great tribulation” have white robes?
6. For the Jews of the time, what would be the significance of the “blood of the Lamb”?
7. Given the discussion in “The Saints Who Have Washed Their Robes in the Blood of the Lamb”, what can you say about the saints?

The Silence and the Thunder of Prayer (page 44)
Lesson 14 up to but not including v8:1-10:11

AntiChrist (page 65)
1. In “The Silence and the Thunder of Prayer”, Barclay describes two reasons for the silence before the thunder. What are the reasons? Which do you agree with and why?
2. Does the historical explanation on the use of incense in the Temple give you a better understanding of the use if it during Mass?
3. There were angels standing in the presence of God. What special honor and responsibility did the angels have?
4. What 3 things did a trumpet blast symbolize? What is the relevance of the trumpets in v8:2 and v8:6.
5. What is the “abyss” in v9:1-2. What do you think of Barclay’s discussion concerning the development of the idea of the abyss?
6. What does Barclay say is the point of the visions of the fifth trumpet blast.
8. Why was John told to eat the scroll in v10:8-11? What is the relevant about it being sweet to taste but bitter for the stomach?
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**Lesson 15**  
*AntiChrist* (page 65)  
*The Woman and the Beast* (page 83)  

1. What does the “Antichrist” stand for?  
2. Who is Satan? How is the antichrist different then Satan?  
3. How does the idea of Satan manifest themselves in the Gospels? Hint there are 5 images.  
4. Chapter 11 is widely regarded as one of the most difficult to understand. What does Barclay say is important to remember about Chapter 11? Do you agree or disagree?  
5. Visions having to do with measuring have a couple of meanings. What are they? What is the significance of measuring in chapter 11 according to Barclay? Do you agree or disagree?  
6. What does the Temple stand for in chapter 11?  
7. Why, according to Barclay, is the length of the terror 42 months? What Old Testament Book is this drawn from?  
8. Who are the two witnesses in chapter 11?  
9. Barclay says that the conversion of the Jews in chapter 11 is similar to another event in salvation history. What is the event? Why is it similar?  

**Lesson 16**  
*The Woman and the Beast* (page 83)  

1. Do you think that John meant for the stars around the pregnant woman’s head to be the zodiac or something else? If something else, what?  
2. Do you agree with Barclay’s assertion that the Church is the pregnant woman in chapter 12? See pages 85-87.  
3. What is the significance of the Dragon’s 7 heads?  
4. Why does John omit any reference to the earthly life of Jesus Christ?  
5. What, if anything, do you find interesting about Barclay’s history of the concept of Satan?  
6. Why, according to Barclay in “The Song of the Martyrs in Glory”, is the victory of the martyrs won through the blood of the Lamb?  
7. If the victory of God over Satan is a foregone conclusion, why doesn’t he just give up? What is it about his essence that he still fights against God?  
8. Why does the dragon go after the woman?  

**Lesson 17**  
*The Power of the Beast* (page 98)  

1. Why was it natural for the Jews to utilize images of wild animals to represent a satanic empire?  
2. In “The Power of the Beast” Barclay provides an explanation of what the beast represents. What does it represent?  
3. What is the “Insult to God”?  
4. What are “Christianity’s Only Weapons”?  
5. Barclay provides 5 explanations of what the mark of the might be. What are they? Which of the 5 do you think it might stand for? Why?  
6. What do you think of the discussion concerning the number of the beast? What do you think the number stands for?
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**Lesson 18**

*The Father’s Own* (page 116)

*The Seven Bowls of the Wrath of God* (page 139)

1. Describe the voice of God.
2. What is a “static” Christian? See page 119. Are you one?
3. Who is the “one like a son of man”? Who is the angel reaping in to the wine press of God’s wrath? How are these two images supported/based by the Old Testament?
4. What is the significance of the fire mixed with the sea of glass in v15:1-2?
5. What, if anything, do you find interesting about the songs sung by the martyrs in v15:3-4?
6. Barclay talks about the angels coming out of the temple of the tent of witness. What is the tent of witness and why is it significant that the angels are coming out if it?
7. Why does one of the four creatures hand over the seven bowls? Do you agree or disagree with Barclay’s discussion? Why or why not?

**Lesson 19**

*The Seven Bowls of the Wrath of God* (page 139)

*Drunk with the Blood of the Saints and the Martyrs* (Rev.17:6) (page 164)

1. Barclay, in “The Forces from the East”, points out something interesting about the Old Testament and water drying up. What is it?
2. What do the beast and the false prophet represent?
3. What is the significance of the phrase “…it was, and is not, and will come” in v17:8.
4. Is there anything in particular concerning Barclay’s discussion of the harlot that interests you?
5. What does it mean that the beast is full of blasphemous names? See Barclay’s discussion on the beast on page 156.
6. What does it mean to be carried away in the Spirit?

**Lesson 20**

*Drunk with the Blood of the Saints and the Martyrs* (Rev.17:6) (page 164)

*The Angels Praise God* (page 189)

1. Why does John say that Rome is drunk with the blood of the saints?
2. What are the purposes of the world? What are the purposes of God? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. What is a “Doom song”?
4. What does Barclay say is the point of the Lamentations of the Kings, Shipmasters, and Merchants?
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The Angels Praise God

Lesson 21  up to but not including

The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ and the Saints

v19

1. What part of the Mass does v19:9, “And he said to me: Write! Blessed are those who are invited to the feast of the marriage of the lamb!” remind you of?
2. What is meant when John writes “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophesy”? See v19:10b.
3. What are the symbols used in v19:11 and what meaning would they have to the readers at the time?
4. Who is the rider on the white horse?
5. What are the Greek words for faithful and true and what are their definitions?
6. What is the relevance of the Christ wearing many crowns? Why would this image make sense to the readers of the time?
7. Why does no one know the names on the crowns on Christ’s head?
8. John calls the warrior Christ “the Word of God”. What does he mean? Is this in contrast to the concept of the Word of God the Gospel of John?
9. There are many points explaining what is meant by the text in v19:16: “… - King of Kings and Lord of Lords” written on the warrior Christ’s robe and thigh. Regardless of the reason it is written, why is it visible?

The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ and the Saints

Lesson 22  up to but not including

Fellowship with God (1)

v20:1-21:2

1. What is Millenarianism and what is its historical basis? Do you believe in Millenarianism or do you side with St. Augustine?
2. How is the Greek word for thousand used in v20:3? What is Barclay’s basis for this assertion? Do you agree or disagree?
3. Why does H.B. Swete suggest Satan was let loose after the 1,000 year period? Does this put the “Our Father” in a different light?
4. What are the two terms used for those who suffered persecution? What is the difference between the two?
5. For those who suffered through the persecution or were martyred, what was their special reward? Does this reward remind you of a particular element of apocalyptic literature? Which one?
6. Why must the final judgment begin with the passing away of the earth?
7. What does it mean not to have your name in the Book of Life?
8. Barclay cites three essential elements of the New Creation at the bottom of page 222. What are they?
9. Why is the dream/concept of a New Jerusalem a sign of faith for the Jewish People and Christians alike?
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Lesson 23  Fellowship with God (1) (page 227)  up to but not including Lesson 23

The River of Life (page 247)  v21:3-27

1. What is the special significance of the Greek words skēne and shechinah?
2. What does the new fellowship with God remove from the human experience?
3. What are the Greek words for beginning and end? What are their definitions? Do you now have a better understanding of 21:5-6?
4. According to v21:7-8, what happens to those that do not take up their cross and follow Christ?
5. Why does the angel that brought one of the seven plagues and the vision of the whore also show John the New Jerusalem?
6. What are the two things to note about the 12 gates of the New Jerusalem? Which do you subscribe to?
7. What interpretation for the gates on each side of the New Jerusalem does Barclay provide? Through which gate have you entered?
8. Why is the New Jerusalem in the shape of cube?
9. What are we to take away from the size of the New Jerusalem and the height of it’s walls?
10. What part of the discussion in “The Precious Stones of the City” do you find most interesting?
11. What element of apocalyptic literature does chapter 21 epitomize?

Lesson 24  The River of Life (page 247) to the end of Vol. 2  v22

1. Barclay provides several explanations for what the “river of the water of life” means. What are they? Which one appeals to you the most? Why?
2. How does v22:3-5 provide the “icing on the cake” for the description of the New Jerusalem?
3. What lesson are we to take away from Barclay’s discussion concerning v22:14-15 on page 255?
4. Who is the “morning star”?  

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