



## Welcome to Men's Bible Fellowship, 2010-2011 Future Lessons for Today's Living - The Book of Revelation Inductive

Welcome, brothers, to Harvest Christian Fellowship's 2010-2011 Men's Bible Fellowship. We have a tremendous challenge this season as we embark on a 25-week study of the Book of Revelation.

There is a lot going on these days, not only in our country but also around the world. The question is: How do you perceive these times we find ourselves in? Do the events of the day bother you, do you have a tendency to want to run away from it all or block out all information coming at you at the speed of light, are you ready to give up due to the pressures this world has to offer? Or, is this how you would describe these times: I am excited to keep up with the events of the day, sharing with family and friends what is going on around us and the world! Are you always ready to spend time in the Word as you compare current events with what Scripture has to say about the issues of the day? If you find yourself in the first set of questions then you're not alone. Many of us from time to time can be overwhelmed by all the drama this world continually manufactures. As Christians we will always face those times when it feels like we can't deal with it anymore. In view of this we must cultivate a healthy biblical worldview of who controls this world system and who controls all of eternity. In other words, good overcoming evil. That's the great and powerful part of understanding the Book of Revelation: in the end God has vengeance against the enemy and we have victory in Christ. We are living in exciting times, the last days before Christ's return. As you study the Book of Revelation and understand for yourself His imminent return, praise Him for what He has done and will continue to do for His glory.

Without a doubt this particular book of the Bible is the most studied piece of prophetic literature ever written. Believers and non-believers alike have been intrigued for centuries by the accuracy of the predictions already realized. Webster's New World Dictionary defines *prophecy* this way: "To declare or predict (something) by or as by the influence of divine guidance." Revelation is the last book of the canonized books of God's Word that we know today as the Bible. As a matter of fact all 66 books of the Bible represent a revelation. They are all the revealed Word of God to mankind. Other books of the Bible do contain prophecy but not to the extent of Revelation concerning the end times or the end of days. The big draw to this book is that it tells us how God plans to end this period of time we live in known in biblical terms as the age of grace. How do we know that what is laid out in this book can be trusted? First we know by facts of prophecy already fulfilled, by our own experiences, and of course by faith. Are you a "doubting Thomas?" Is "seeing is believing" your guide to truth? Then most certainly this book is for you too.

These 66 books of the Bible are to be taken in context, in relationship to one another for a complete understanding of God's plan and purpose for each person who chooses to live by biblical principles, precepts, and power. You may ask, "What is God's reasoning and purpose to speak to us this way?" God wanted to memorialize for eternity His tremendous love for us even in our fallen condition and His desire for us to know Him personally through His Son

Jesus Christ. Through God's grace He has given His Son both as an example of how to live our lives according to God's will and most importantly as a sacrifice for our sins. In short the Bible in its purest form is about redemption and how an individual person can find redemption through God's perfect gift of salvation in Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Some of you attending this study are not Christians as yet and not certain how Jesus fits into this whole thing. We are excited that you are considering this time of study with us. We welcome you and pray that you will understand the gift God has freely offered you as He is revealed to you through the inspired writings of the Bible. We look forward to speaking with you as the study progresses. We want to also let you know that believers in Jesus Christ are called to reach out to people who have questions about the Christian faith with respect and love. That is what we're all about here at Harvest Christian Fellowship—knowing God and making Him known. If you're looking for the way and the truth we invite you to make a commitment to follow Christ, to commit your life to Him by faith, and to let God speak to you as His child while you study the Book of Revelation.

Writing under direction and divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit the apostle John attempts to give us an idea of the incredible wonders of what life will be like when we are at home with Christ in Heaven. This Book of Revelation is about prophecy, to be sure, but it is so much more about God's love for every person who needs to know His Son. Throughout our study in Revelation God will be revealing what will come without Christ in our life: eternal separation from Him. Scripture says it best regarding God and His great desire and sacrifice for you to be saved. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16–17). For those of us who are Christians already, Christ's own words will cause us to reflect on who we are as His followers both personally and corporately as His church. The first four chapters are a wake-up call to the seven main churches in the region at the time Revelation was written. These are not only a wake-up call to the churches but to those believers attending anyone of those seven churches. The incredible thing about God's Word is that the admonishment and encouragement Christ gave to the believers at the time it was written He also gives to the churches and believers of today. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Much of what we will be studying this year will be challenging to interpret or understand. The apostle John himself was challenged when describing the incredible wonders Christ was revealing to him at that time. We will be looking at this study not necessarily subjectively or guessing at what certain things mean, but objectively or in other words understanding literally God's point of view concerning the last days. Some details we just won't understand until we are standing face to face with the author of Revelation, Jesus Christ. Our pastors will give us sound, clear teaching regarding this very special gift and blessing for those who read this prophetic book of God's Word and take it to heart. "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (Revelation 1:3).

These are, as Harvest Christian Fellowship believes, the last days on the prophetic calendar before the rapture. Knowing this, we pray that as you understand more of the Book of Revelation you will not be silent as the revealed Word of the end times and God's Spirit motivate you to be His instrument as you testify to others about His saving grace. As each of

us understands the Book of Revelation we pray that we will be emboldened to tell those in our sphere of influence how Christ freed us from the chains of eternal separation from God to the everlasting communion with Him in Heaven.

Many books of the Bible are full of dramatic events. The books that seem to have the most drama are those that tell the story of man's failure before a Holy God and the redemption that is found only in His saving grace. Satan works overtime to create drama and most likely he is the inventor of it. As in so many books of the Bible, the Book of Esther is one example containing high drama, so much so that the entire Jewish population of Persia was in jeopardy of extermination. Understanding the dire situation at hand, Mordecai asks his niece, Esther, the Queen of Persia, this challenging question "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14) Esther's courageous reply is riveting. "Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" (Esther 4:15–16) Esther's story turns from a rags-to-riches tale to a monumental decision with an ensuing struggle between good and evil to save the entire Jewish race from mass genocide. Esther's choice was a brave decision, letting Mordecai know without a doubt that she knew its importance. When faced with death, Esther had no regard for herself but chose to stand in the gap for God and she came through with flying colors. This is but one example of the repeated theme of redemption throughout God's Word.

After we have studied the Book of Revelation we should accept the challenge just like Esther did. Knowing these incredible things to come, do we also dare to stand in the gap for God? The Book of Esther was about redemption and so too is the Book of Revelation. God is telling each of us that He is the Redeemer but we also have our part to play in the process of salvation. What an incredible choice we have, to assist God in this process or to walk away from His invitation to participate in His gospel message of salvation by faith through God's grace. "If anyone has an ear, let him hear" (Revelation 13:9).

Finally, brethren, we know that many of you are experiencing trials and tribulation, some more intense than others. Harvest's Men's Bible Fellowship leadership is here, ready to help you through fellowship and prayer. The time we spend together each week to be sure is for studying God's Word, sharpening our swords (God's Word), but also to pray with you and lift up your requests to God with whatever is concerning you. As Christians we are held to the royal law which is, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37–40). With that said, welcome and we look forward to seeing you in late September!

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.'

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." (Revelation 22:20–21)

