

LifeChange

A NAVPRESS BIBLE STUDY SERIES

*A life-changing
encounter with God's Word*

REVELATION

Apocalyptic visions and timeless principles.

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Revelation

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SERIES EDITOR: KAREN LEE-THORP

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Objectives

Most guides in the LIFECHANGE series of Bible studies cover one book of the Bible. Although the LIFECHANGE guides vary with the books they explore, they share some common goals:

1. To provide you with a firm foundation of understanding and a thirst to return to the book
 2. To teach you by example how to study a book of the Bible without structured guides
 3. To give you all the historical background, word definitions, and explanatory notes you need so that your only other reference is the Bible
 4. To help you grasp the message of the book as a whole
 5. To teach you how to let God's Word transform you into Christ's image
- Each lesson in this study is designed to take sixty to ninety minutes to complete on your own. The guide is based on the assumption that you are completing one lesson per week, but if time is limited you can do half a lesson per week or whatever amount allows you to be thorough.

Flexibility

LIFECHANGE guides are flexible, allowing you to adjust the quantity and depth of your study to meet your individual needs. The guide offers many optional questions in addition to the regular numbered questions. The optional questions, which appear in the margins of the study pages, include the following:

Optional Application. Nearly all application questions are optional; we hope you will do as many as you can without overcommitting yourself.

For Thought and Discussion. Beginning Bible students should be able to handle these, but even advanced students need to think about them. These

questions frequently deal with ethical issues and other biblical principles. They often offer cross-references to spark thought, but the references do not give obvious answers. They are good for group discussions.

For Further Study. These include: (a) cross-references that shed light on a topic the book discusses, and (b) questions that delve deeper into the passage. You can omit them to shorten a lesson without missing a major point of the passage.

If you are meeting in a group, decide together which optional questions to prepare for each lesson, and how much of the lesson you will cover at the next meeting. Normally, the group leader should make this decision, but you might let each member choose his or her own application questions.

As you grow in your walk with God, you will find the LIFECHANGE guide growing with you—a helpful reference on a topic, a continuing challenge for application, a source of questions for many levels of growth.

Overview and details

The study begins with an overview of Revelation. The key to interpretation is context—what is the whole passage or book *about*?—and the key to context is purpose—what is the author’s *aim* for the whole work? In lesson one you will lay the foundation for your study of Revelation by asking yourself, *Why did the author (and God) write the book? What did they want to accomplish? What is the book about?*

In lessons 2 through 14, you will analyze successive passages of Revelation in detail. Thinking about how a paragraph fits into the overall goal of the book will help you to see its purpose. Its purpose will help you see its meaning. Frequently reviewing a chart or outline of the book will enable you to make these connections.

In lesson 15, you will review Revelation, returning to the big picture to see whether your view of it has changed after closer study. Review will also strengthen your grasp of major issues and give you an idea of how you have grown from your study.

Kinds of questions

Bible study on your own—without a structured guide—follows a progression. First you observe: What does the passage *say*? Then you interpret: What does the passage *mean*? Lastly you apply: How does this truth *affect* my life?

Some of the “how” and “why” questions will take some creative thinking, even prayer, to answer. Some are opinion questions without clear-cut right answers; these will lend themselves to discussions and side studies.

Don’t let your study become an exercise in knowledge alone. Treat the passage as God’s Word, and stay in dialogue with Him as you study. Pray, “Lord, what do You want me to see here?” “Father, why is this true?” “Lord, how does this apply to my life?”

It is important that you write down your answers. The act of writing clarifies your thinking and helps you to remember.

Study aids

A list of reference materials, including a few notes of explanation to help you make good use of them, begins on page 169. This guide is designed to include enough background to let you interpret with just your Bible and the guide. Still, if you want more information on a subject or want to study a book on your own, try the references listed.

Memorizing and meditating

A psalmist wrote, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). If you write down a verse or passage that challenges or encourages you and reflect on it often for a week or more, you will find it beginning to affect your motives and actions. We forget quickly what we read once; we remember what we ponder.

When you find a significant verse or passage, you might copy it onto a card to keep with you. Set aside five minutes during each day just to think about what the passage might mean in your life. Recite it over to yourself, exploring its meaning. Then, return to your passage as often as you can during your day, for a brief review. You will soon find it coming to mind spontaneously.

For group study

A group of four to ten people allows the richest discussions, but you can adapt this guide for other sized groups. It will suit a wide range of group types, such as home Bible studies, growth groups, youth groups, and businessmen’s studies. Both new and experienced Bible students, and new and mature Christians, will benefit from the guide. You can omit or leave for later years any questions you find too easy or too hard.

The guide is intended to lead a group through one lesson per week. However, feel free to split lessons if you want to discuss them more thoroughly. Or, omit some questions in a lesson if preparation or discussion time is limited. You can always return to this guide for personal study later. You will be able to discuss only a few questions at length, so choose some for discussion and others for background. Make time at each discussion for members to ask about anything they didn’t understand.

Each lesson in the guide ends with a section called “For the group.” These sections give advice on how to focus a discussion, how you might apply the lesson in your group, how you might shorten a lesson, and so on. The group leader should read each “For the group” at least a week ahead so that he or she can tell the group how to prepare for the next lesson.

Each member should prepare for a meeting by writing answers for all of the background and discussion questions to be covered. If the group decides not to take an hour per week for private preparation, then expect to take at least two meetings per lesson to work through the questions. Application will be very difficult, however, without private thought and prayer.

Two reasons for studying in a group are accountability and support. When each member commits in front of the rest to seek growth in an area of life, you can pray with one another, listen jointly for God's guidance, help one another to resist temptation, assure each other that the other's growth matters to you, use the group to practice spiritual principles, and so on. Pray about one another's commitments and needs at most meetings. Spend the first few minutes of each meeting sharing any results from applications prompted by previous lessons. Then discuss new applications toward the end of the meeting. Follow such sharing with prayer for these and other needs.

If you write down each other's applications and prayer requests, you are more likely to remember to pray for them during the week, ask about them at the next meeting, and notice answered prayers. You might want to get a notebook for prayer requests and discussion notes.

Notes taken during discussion will help you to remember, follow up on ideas, stay on the subject, and clarify a total view of an issue. But don't let note-taking keep you from participating. Some groups choose one member at each meeting to take notes. Then someone copies the notes and distributes them at the next meeting.

Page 173 lists some good sources of counsel for leading group studies.

OVERVIEW

The Revelation

Map of Asia



Jesus' resurrection was about sixty-five years ago. Most of the people who knew Him personally are dead, and a second generation of Christians has grown up. The gospel asserts that Jesus is King of the world and is coming back soon to claim His domain. But the years pass, and still He does not come. Now a madman has become emperor of Rome who actually believes the poets' praises that he is a god incarnate. He likes to be addressed as "Our Lord and God."¹ He has decreed that anyone who holds public office, anyone who testifies in court—practically everyone—must offer a pinch of incense to the emperor's guardian spirit and declare "Caesar is Lord." If a person refuses to worship the emperor, he may lose his job, his home, even his life.

This is not the only threat to Christians in AD 95. Within the churches are some members who want to take control and twist the gospel to suit themselves. Danger without and danger within—*is God really in control?* In part to answer this question for embattled Christians in the first century and every century since, God gave a series of visions to someone named John. It is called “The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place” (Revelation 1:1).

Controversy and agreement

The book of Revelation was not written as a riddle for well-fed Christians to amuse themselves with. Rather, it was given for believers under a lot of pressure from the state, religious institutions, the economy, and even their fellow church members. It was not meant to be so difficult that ordinary Christians would be afraid to study and apply it for themselves without an authority to explain the puzzle. In fact, it is the only book of the Bible that states an explicit blessing just for reading it (see 1:3) and another for acting on it (see 22:7)! If God expects believers to read, take to heart, and apply the Revelation to their lives, then He must not have intended it to be a closed book. And indeed, although Bible-believing Christians differ widely on how to interpret many of the book’s details, they agree on many of its main issues and applications for today.

If you’ve been in Christian circles awhile, you’ve probably heard people talk about “the Millennium,” “the Rapture,” “the Beast,” and “666.” Because the LIFECHANGE series is intended to help you discover the truths of Scripture for yourself, we will try to let you make up your own mind about these things. We will not attempt to interpret every detail of the visions; the commentaries do an excellent job of this from a variety of viewpoints. But we will try to outline some of the major approaches to different passages, giving you the benefits of several views. You will find references to the first-century setting to help you understand how John’s first readers would have understood his visions. You will also find questions that ask what a passage tells you about the end times. (We’ll leave it to you to decide whether “the end times” are the last years before the Second Coming, or all of history since the Resurrection, or both.)

Our focus will always be on how you should respond to what the book says: “Blessed is the one who keeps [acts on] the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.” (22:7). We will be less concerned with the precise meaning of each symbol than with the timeless truths you learn and how they are relevant to your life. In most cases, the present applications of the book are the same whatever you conclude about predictions of the future.

One of the reasons Revelation seems so difficult to modern readers is that it draws heavily upon images of nearly every book of the Old Testament (and several of the New). In fact, Revelation has been described as a lens that draws together and brings into focus the whole rest of the Bible. The notes in each lesson will explain many of these biblical references and suggest others for you to pursue if you want to delve deeper.

Themes

Christians of many viewpoints agree on these great issues of the book:

God—His character, nature, and attributes. How can Revelation help us know, love, trust, and obey Him better?

Christ—His work and its results. How can Revelation help us know Him better?

Ultimate reality—What is the universe’s true meaning and purpose?

Power—Who has it, and who only seems to?

Evil—Its source and nature. Why do Christians suffer?

The kingdom of God—What is it really about?

Our response—How should Christians respond to their situations in light of these truths?

Apocalypse

John calls his book “the revelation from Jesus Christ” (1:1). The word “revelation” is *apokalypsis* in Greek, which means “unveiling” or “disclosure.” John’s book records the unveiling of the goals and truths of history. Because Revelation is similar to a whole genre of Jewish literature written between 200 BC and AD 100, modern scholars call that genre “apocalyptic.” If we compare the Revelation to other apocalypses, we can see some similarities that help us understand what John was doing, as well as some crucial differences that set his work apart.²

In general, an apocalypse purports to be a revelation from God through a heavenly intermediary (such as an angel) to a great figure of the past (like Moses or Enoch). The message often uses gripping symbolism to show that God will intervene in history to bring evil to an end. The latter half of the book of Daniel is the model for this genre. But the apocalyptic form became popular several centuries after Daniel, when Israel ceased to have living prophets to speak God’s current word. The people needed to understand what God was doing when the voice of the prophets was silent and the nation’s suffering was intense.

In fact, apocalypse has been called “the child of prophecy.”³ The prophets did use highly colored language to describe the coming day of the Lord and the kingdom of God (see Isaiah 35:1-10; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 1:4), and these visions are the seeds of apocalypse. Yet there are differences. First, while prophecy was oral preaching later written down, apocalypses were literature from the beginning. Second, the prophets were concerned with ethics, how people should act alongside God in resisting evil. The apocalyptists did not discuss ethics, for they believed that nothing short of divine intervention could do anything about the world’s evil. Third, while the prophets usually spoke to their contemporaries and saw the end of the world as somewhat more distant, the apocalyptists focused on the end time cataclysm, which they expected any day. “Speaking generally, the prophets foretold the future that should arise out of the present, while the apocalyptists foretold the

future that should break into the present.”⁴ This is a generalization, for even in the prophets we find God breaking into history (see Isaiah 63:1-6).

Apocalyptists were dualists. That is, they saw two supernatural powers in conflict: God and Satan. But unlike their Persian counterparts who thought the opposites were equal, the Jewish apocalyptists believed that Satan was created by and subordinate to God. Corresponding to the two powers were two worlds or ages: the present one, which is temporal, evil, and under Satan’s control; and the coming one, which is timeless, perfect, and under God’s direct rule. To an apocalyptist, there was nothing man or anyone else could do to fight the evils in this world, nor anything Satan or anyone else could do to prevent God from ultimately destroying the evil world. History is determined.

The symbols of apocalypses were often fantastic, but a common stock grew up over the years. Today, political cartoons around the world share certain symbols that readers recognize: the eagle for the United States, the bear for Russia, the lion for Britain, the dragon for China. In the same way, for instance, first-century readers recognized the sea monster as representing the great enemy of God.⁵

A typical apocalypse would claim to be an ancient person’s vision of the history between his time and the end. That history would be portrayed in vivid pictures abounding in strange creatures. The events would be fairly recognizable up until the time of the real author (who had simply cast past history as predictive prophecy), but would become vague thereafter.

Prophecy

We can see how Revelation is like apocalypse. It uses the same kinds of symbols. It promises that God will break into history to bring the new heavens and earth. There is a cosmic struggle between God and Satan. Many of the revelations come through angels. But the differences are crucial:

1. Every other known apocalypse is written under the name of some ancient illustrious person. This lent authority to the book that the author did not claim to possess. But John writes Revelation under his own name, as though he has Christ’s authority to declare what will be.

2. Along the same lines, the apocalyptists knew they were writing during a time when the voice of prophecy was silent. But John claims to be writing prophecy (see 1:3; 22:7,10,18-19), even “the word of God” (1:2).

3. Fittingly, we find throughout Revelation the prophetic concern for moral action that is absent in other apocalypses (see 2:1–3:22; 16:15; 21:8). John does not share the apocalyptic pessimism that there can be anything good in the present.

4. While the apocalypses look exclusively to the future for deliverance, Revelation focuses on a decisive work that has already been accomplished: the Lamb has already been slain and has already redeemed for Himself a people (see 5:6-10). The apocalypses await a future Messiah; John asserts that He has already come and won His great victory through death and resurrection.

5. John does not retrace past history in the guise of prophecy, but as a true prophet declares what he has really seen of the present and the future.

6. Just as the Old Testament prophets saw real present situations as types of end time ones, so does John. For example, it is often hard to tell whether Isaiah is talking about the redemption of Israel from exile in Babylon or about the redemption of God's people in the last days. The contemporary historical event foreshadows the ultimate event. Likewise, it is often hard to tell whether John is talking about Rome or the ultimate evil empire, since God showed him the ultimate in terms he could understand—for John, Rome embodied the spirit of the ultimate evil empire.

7. The visions in apocalypses are often so strange that the words depend on interpretations by the heavenly guide. This happens in Revelation (see 17:7-18), but more often John simply leaves the reader to interpret the vision.

Clearly, John's book is both apocalypse and prophecy. The emphasis is not on satisfying idle curiosity (the Revelation raises more speculative questions than it answers) but on motivating people to live a certain way. The blessing in 22:7 is for acting on the prophecy, and one cannot act on a mere forecast. Contrary to what many people believe, the chief feature of prophecy is not foretelling the future (although it may do that) but telling forth God's message (warning, promise, command, encouragement) to believers in their current situations.⁶

Epistle

It is easy to overlook the fact that this prophecy is also a letter from a prominent church figure to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. Like all the New Testament Epistles, this one is for all Christians in all generations, but there is equally a note of urgency and immediacy in a letter sent to seven particular groups of believers.

This is why we ask when and by whom a letter was written: the more we know about the original circumstances, the better we can grasp what the writer was getting at. The author was a Jewish Christian named John, someone highly respected among the churches of the Roman province of Asia (now part of Turkey). Tradition has it that this was the apostle John. This tradition has been challenged, but it still seems to be the best conclusion from the evidence.⁷

John was on Patmos, a little island off the coast of Asia, because of the persecution. (Patmos held a Roman penal colony; John was either imprisoned there or ministering to those who were.) It was probably the end of the reign of Domitian (about AD 95) or possibly in the reign of Nero (about AD 68).⁸

First impressions

This introduction may have given you more information than you can handle at this point. If so, disregard it. The best way to begin studying a book of the Bible is to read it through to gather your own impressions. Revelation

may seem long and confusing, but remember that God has attached both a blessing and an urgency to reading it (see 1:3). So, try to read the whole book in one or two sittings—not stopping to unravel the details but absorbing the overall flavor. As you read, jot notes under questions 1 through 3.

1. What are your first impressions about John’s style of writing? (Does it seem more like a documentary, a theater production, cartoon animation, a logical essay? Is it fun or difficult? Why?) What are your impressions of his tone or mood (optimistic, pessimistic, angry, joyful, fearful, calm, cynical, excited)?

2. Repetition is a clue to the ideas an author wants to emphasize. What words and phrases recur often in Revelation?

3. What questions about the book arise from your first reading? What would you like to find out more about as you study in detail? Also, what questions do you have about the introductory material?

4. The next step in an overview is to break the book into major sections, then break those sections into parts. This gives you a working outline to see how the book is put together. To save you time, we have suggested some divisions in the following text. Go back through the material, and make up a title for each major and secondary section. (Feel free to alter the divisions; they are arbitrary in some places.)

If you have trouble making up titles for all of these passages now, do only the main sections and fill in the subsections as you study each lesson.

1:1-20 _____

1:1-8 _____

1:9-20 _____

2:1-3:22 _____

2:1-7 _____

2:8-11 _____

2:12-17 _____

2:18-29 _____

3:1-6 _____

3:7-13 _____

3:14-22 _____

4:1-5:14 _____

4:1-11 _____

5:1-14 _____

6:1-8:5 _____

6:1-17 _____

7:1-8 _____

7:9-17 _____

8:1-5 _____

8:6-11:19 _____

8:6-9:21 _____

10:1-11 _____

Lesson One

11:1-13 _____

11:14-19 _____

12:1-14:20 _____

12:1-17 _____

13:1-10 _____

13:11-18 _____

14:1-5 _____

14:6-13 _____

14:14-20 _____

15:1-16:21 _____

15:1-8 _____

16:1-21 _____

17:1-19:5 _____

17:1-18 _____

18:1-24 _____

19:1-5 _____

19:6-22:5 _____

19:6-10 _____

19:11-21 _____

20:1-6 _____

20:7-15 _____

21:1-22:5 _____

22:6-21 _____

22:6-11 _____

22:12-17 _____

22:18-21 _____

5. From your first reading of Revelation, what would you say the book is about? What is its major message, or what are its chief themes?

Study Skill—Application

A blessing is offered to those who not only read Revelation but “take to heart what is written in it” (1:3) and keep the lessons it teaches (see 22:7). Therefore, the last step of every study of this book should always be to ask yourself, “What difference should this passage make to my life? How should it make me want to think or act?” Application will require time, thought, prayer, and perhaps even discussion with another person.

At times you may find it most productive to concentrate on one specific application, giving it careful thought and prayer. At other times you may want to list many implications a passage of Scripture has for your life, meditating on them all for several days before you choose one for concentrated prayer and action. Use whatever method helps you take to heart and act on what the passage says.

6. Did your first reading suggest anything that you would like to take to heart and act on during the coming week? If so, what is it, and what do you plan to do about it?

For the group

This “For the group” section and the ones in later lessons are intended to suggest ways of structuring your discussions. Feel free to select what suits your group and ignore the rest. The main goals of this lesson are to get to know Revelation as a whole and the people with whom you are going to study it.

Worship. Some groups like to begin with prayer and/or singing. Some share requests for prayer at the beginning, but leave the actual prayer until after the study. Others prefer just to chat and have refreshments for a while and then move to the study, leaving worship until the end. It is a good idea to start with at least a brief prayer for the Holy Spirit’s guidance and some silence to help everyone change focus from the day’s busyness to the Scripture.

Revelation contains more hymns and scenes of worship than any other New Testament book. As you go through it, you might plan to choose songs and prayers that reflect the passage being studied. Many of the hymns of Revelation have been set to music countless times over the past two thousand years, and modern folk and hymn arrangements are available.

Warm-up. The beginning of a new study is a good time to lay a foundation for honest sharing of ideas, to get comfortable with each other, and to encourage a sense of common purpose. One way to establish common ground is to talk about what each group member hopes to get out of your group—out of your study of Revelation, and out of any prayer, singing, sharing, outreach, or anything else you might do together. Why do you want to study the Bible, and Revelation in particular? If you have someone write down each member’s hopes and expectations, then you can look back at these goals later to see if they are being met. Allow about fifteen minutes for this discussion so that it does not degenerate into vague chatting.

How to use this study. If the group has never used a LIFECHANGE study guide before, you might take a whole meeting to get acquainted, discuss your goals, and go over the “How to Use This Study” section. Then you can take a second meeting to discuss the overview. This will assure that everyone understands the study and will give you more time to read all of Revelation and answer the overview questions.

Go over the parts of the “How to Use This Study” section that you think the group should especially notice. For example, point out the optional questions in the margins. These are available as group discussion questions, ideas for application, and suggestions for further study. It is unlikely that anyone will have the time or desire to answer all the optional questions. A person might do one “Optional Application” for any given lesson. You might choose one or two “For Thought and Discussion” questions for your group discussion, or you might spend all your time on the numbered questions. If someone wants to write answers to the optional questions, suggest that he or she use a separate notebook. It will also be helpful for discussion notes, prayer requests, answers to prayers, application plans, and so on.

Invite everyone to ask questions about how to use the study guide and how your discussions will go.

Reading. It is often helpful to refresh everyone’s memory by reading the passage aloud before discussing the questions. Reading all of Revelation is probably out of the question, but you might ask someone to read chapter 1, using the tones of voice he or she thinks John and Jesus would have used. Try to make the chapter sound like living people talking.

Introduction. Ask some questions to bring out the important points of the background. Here are some examples:

1. How is your situation like the first-century situation in which John wrote Revelation? How is it different?
2. What seems important to know about apocalyptic writing? In what ways is Revelation like other writings called apocalypses? In what ways is it different?
3. What do you think people need to know about biblical prophecy? (Is it strictly foretelling the future?) What features mark Revelation as a prophecy?
4. Why is it important that Revelation is an epistle (a letter)?

First impressions. The introduction gives some elements of John’s style that you might want to point out. But question 1 is meant primarily to draw out group members’ reactions to this unusual book.

Compare your answers to question 4. You might also look together at some outlines of Revelation in study Bibles or commentaries. Remember that there is no one right way to title a passage.

Question 5—a basic statement of what the book is about—is crucial. The introduction suggests some ideas, and your first reading should offer others.

Give everyone a chance to share questions about the introduction and the book. It is good to clear up any confusion as early as possible. However, don’t answer any questions that deal with specific passages. Write those down and let the group answer them when you get to the passages.

If you have time and are reasonably comfortable with one another, you might each tell briefly how you were raised to interpret Revelation. You don’t want to start off with an argument, but you might want to know where everyone is “coming from.” Somehow, you need to establish an atmosphere where no reasonable interpretation is taboo, where group members are allowed to critique each other’s views with humility and kindness, and where outrageous interpretations can be gently neutralized.

We have deliberately said nothing about the millenium, the rapture, or the tribulation. These issues will come up in later lessons, and you’ll get a chance to draw your own conclusions.

Application. If application is new to some group members, you might make up some sample applications together. Choose a paragraph or verse and think of how it is relevant to you and some specific things you could each do about it. Share your answers to question 6. If there is real confusion about application, see the box “Study Skill—Application.”

Wrap-up. The group leader should have read lesson two and its “For the group” section. At this point, he or she might give a short summary of what members can expect in that lesson and the coming meeting. This is a chance to whet everyone’s appetite, assign any optional questions, omit any numbered questions, or forewarn members of possible difficulties.

Encourage any members who found the overview especially difficult. Some people are better at seeing the big picture than others. Some are best at analyzing a particular verse or paragraph, while others are strongest at seeing how a passage applies to their lives. Urge members to give thanks for their own and others’ strengths, and to give and request help when needed. The group is a place to learn from each other. Later lessons will draw on the gifts of close analyzers as well as overviews and appliers, practical as well as theoretical thinkers.

Worship. Many groups like to end with singing and/or prayer. This can include songs and prayers that respond to what you’ve learned in Revelation or prayers for specific needs of group members. Some people are shy about sharing personal needs or praying aloud in groups, especially before they know the other people well. If this is true of your group, then a song and/or some silent prayer, and a short closing prayer spoken by the leader, might be an appropriate end. You could also share requests and pray in pairs.

1. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 38.
2. The material on “apocalyptic” is from Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 18–25; Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 22–25; Beasley-Murray, 14–19.
3. Beasley-Murray, 14.
4. H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (New York: Association Press, 1963), 38, quoted in Mounce, 20.
5. Some people believe that the dragons and bears in Scripture correspond to China and Russia because of their modern meanings. But over the centuries, dragons, bears, lions, and eagles have represented many nations. The eagle was Rome’s emblem, for instance, and the dragon represents Wales. We should be careful about reading our familiar symbols back into a book written 1,900 years ago.
6. Gerhard Friedrich, “Prophets,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 849–850, quoted in Beasley-Murray, 22.
7. Readers interested in the debate about authorship should see the appropriate sections in any of the commentaries listed on pages 169–170. Those will refer you to other sources.
8. See the appropriate sections in the commentaries.