

Tutorial Guide: Seeing Clearly in Strange Times – Apocalyptic Literature in the New Testament

Session Length: 1 hour

Audience: Mixed knowledge

Facilitator Role: Use summaries and discussion questions to guide reflective conversation. No theological expertise required.



Session Overview

Time	Section	Topic
0–5 min	Welcome & Introduction	What does “apocalypse” make you think of?
5–20 min	What is Apocalyptic Literature?	Symbols, struggle, and spiritual insight
20–40 min	The Book of Revelation	Worship, resistance, and hope
40–55 min	Apocalyptic Themes in Jesus and Paul	Staying awake, staying faithful
55–60 min	Wrap-Up	Final thoughts and reflection



1. Welcome & Introduction (0–5 min)

Say:

“Today we’re exploring a part of the Bible that can be confusing, fascinating, or even a bit frightening: apocalyptic literature. But the word ‘apocalypse’ doesn’t mean disaster. It means uncovering or revelation — seeing what’s really going on behind the scenes.”

Ask: - What comes to mind when you hear “apocalypse”? - Have you read parts of Revelation or Jesus’ end-time teaching before? What was your reaction?



2. What Is Apocalyptic Literature? (5–20 min)

Summary:

Apocalyptic writing appears in both Old and New Testaments. It uses vivid imagery to reveal the spiritual meaning of history. Written in times of persecution, apocalyptic literature reassures the faithful that God sees, God reigns, and God will act.

Key Features: - Symbolic, often surreal imagery (beasts, stars falling, scrolls, dragons) - Visionary experience (dreams or heavenly scenes) - Cosmic conflict between good and evil - Reveals God's perspective on human events - Calls for faithfulness in suffering

Old Testament roots: Daniel 7–12, Ezekiel, Isaiah 24–27, Zechariah

Discussion Prompts: - Why do you think people use symbols and visions during difficult times? - Can apocalyptic writing reveal truth that history or law might miss?

3. The Book of Revelation (20–40 min)

Summary:

Revelation is the only full apocalyptic book in the New Testament. Written by John of Patmos to seven churches under pressure, it portrays Jesus as the Lamb who reigns, even as evil seems powerful. The message: don't give up. Jesus is Lord.

Structure Highlights: - Ch. 1–3: Letters to seven churches - Ch. 4–11: Heavenly visions, seals, and trumpets - Ch. 12–14: Cosmic battle between the woman, the dragon, and the Lamb - Ch. 15–19: Judgment of evil - Ch. 20–22: New creation and eternal light

Key Themes: - God is on the throne - Evil is exposed and judged - Worship shapes perspective - Jesus conquers by suffering, not force - Hope: God will make all things new

Discussion Prompts: - Which image from Revelation is most memorable or strange to you? - What does Revelation offer people going through hardship or persecution? - How does the end of the book (Rev 21–22) shape your view of the future?

4. Apocalyptic Themes in Jesus and Paul (40–55 min)

Summary:

Apocalyptic thinking shaped the teachings of Jesus and Paul. They spoke of God breaking in, of judgment and renewal, and of a new age arriving through Jesus himself.

In the Gospels: - Matthew 24 / Mark 13 / Luke 21: wars, signs, and the “Son of Man” - Parables about readiness (e.g. bridesmaids, thief in the night) - Language from Daniel and the prophets

In Paul's Letters: - 1 Thessalonians 4–5: The Lord will return suddenly - Romans 8: Creation groans for redemption - 1 Corinthians 15: Resurrection as the beginning of the new world

Discussion Prompts: - What does it mean to “stay awake” or “be ready” in Jesus' teaching? - Why might early Christians have found apocalyptic hope comforting? - How might we need a similar imagination today?

5. Wrap-Up (55–60 min)

Closing Thought:

Apocalyptic literature isn't just about the end of the world. It's about seeing reality from God's perspective, holding onto hope, and staying faithful when things look dark.

Ask: - What image or idea from today's discussion stuck with you? - Does apocalyptic literature feel more approachable now? - How might these visions shape our lives today?