



STORY 101

Jesus Writes a Letter

REVELATION 1–3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Revelation 1–3.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

The end is coming! The end of what? The world? Maybe. The end of our lessons—for sure. Only four more lessons to go. We have reached the end of the Bible, the book of Revelation. Revelation is sometimes called the Apocalypse, which is the Greek word for when something is made known, uncovered, or revealed. The book of Revelation *reveals* truths about Jesus, and it does so in a very interesting way. It does so through visions and images, signs and symbols. Maybe you'll even recognize some of these images from the Old Testament (like plagues or gardens or snakes). The visions tell us about the past—like when Jesus died to redeem us. They tell us about the present—like how the church is suffering for believing in Jesus. And they tell us about the future—like how King

Jesus will return to judge evildoers and save all who trust in him. Most of all, the visions reveal Jesus. And the mighty Jesus of Revelation begins the book by writing letters to seven churches. Sounds pretty important! Want to hear more?

TELL THE STORY

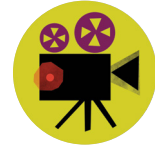
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Jesus warns and encourages the church to keep following him.

In the first chapter of this last book Jesus appears to the apostle John. John is now an old man and he has been exiled to an island called Patmos between Greece and Turkey (not greasy turkey, for the record). There, on Sunday (“the Lord’s Day,” as John calls Sunday), he heard “a loud voice like a trumpet” (Rev. 1:10). That voice was Jesus’s!

When Jesus reveals himself to John, he commands him to write what he sees. And then John saw some strange things—like “a woman sitting on a scarlet beast [that] . . . had seven heads and ten horns” (17:3). What? Wow! John is also to write about Jesus, whom he describes in a strange way too. Jesus is “clothed with a long robe . . . with a golden sash around his chest” (1:13). His hair looks “like white wool” and his eyes “like a flame of fire” and his face “like the sun shining in full strength” (1:14, 16). And he is given titles like “him who is and who was and who is to come” (1:4), “the ruler of kings on earth” (1:5), and “the living one” (1:18).

That powerful and shining Jesus tells the seven churches—whom he loves and has freed from their sins “by his blood” (1:5)—to serve him as priests, that is, to sacrifice their lives as they hold to the truth and share it with others. The seven letters to the seven churches are written to keep them (and us!) on mission. Because Jesus loves the church, he encourages us to believe the right things, keep working hard, continue to be patient, and stand strong through suffering.

He also, in love, corrects and warns us to return to the truth, remember to love God first, and repent of sins. And he promises us that if we listen to what the Spirit is saying through Jesus's words, we will receive gifts that are out-of-this-world amazing! We will live with Jesus and feast with him in paradise forever. Forever food. Forever fellowship. Forever happiness!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Jesus's letters to the seven churches are like receiving a report card. Have you ever received a report card? If you receive a good report card—A after A and nice remark ("Good job!") after nice remark ("A joy to teach")—you feel good; but if you receive a bad report card—failing grades and instruction ("Needs improvement") after instruction ("Needs to stop hitting others!")—you feel bad. Feeling bad isn't always bad. A kind teacher tells you where you fall short because she wants to help you grow, not because she wants you simply to feel bad. Jesus is a lot better than the kindest teacher. He loves his church so much that he died for each and every Christian. He loves the church so much that he continues to tell us the truth about ourselves—so that he can help us grow. The way we become a Christian and join the church—turning *from* sin and *to* God—is what we need to do over and over throughout our Christian lives. Repent. Follow Jesus. Keep repenting and keep following Jesus. Jesus saved us once and for all. But Jesus also saved us so that he could change us, helping us pursue goodness day by day until the day he takes us home.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Have you ever had to cover your eyes because someone wanted to surprise you with something? When you opened your eyes, what was revealed? What is being revealed to John by Jesus in the last book of the Bible?

TAKEAWAY: In Revelation Jesus shows John what is and what will be in the future.

2. **QUESTION:** Do any of you remember the visions Joseph had or what they meant? How about the visions that Daniel interpreted for the kings? How are

3

Engage

visions different from real life? What big truth do the visions in Revelation reveal to encourage the church?

TAKEAWAY: No matter what happens, Jesus will defeat evil and rescue his people.

Memory Verse

Fear not, I am
the first and the
last, and the living
one. I died, and
behold I am alive
forevermore, and
I have the keys of
Death and Hades.

REVELATION 1:17-18

3. **QUESTION:** How many churches did the letter address? What were some of the things the churches were doing wrong? What were they doing right? What things do you need to keep doing or stop doing?

TAKEAWAY: The letter to the seven churches warns them and encourages them to keep following Jesus no matter what.

4. **QUESTION:** Have your parents ever promised you good things if you obey them? Does that help you when you're tempted to disobey them? What amazing things does Jesus promise us if we listen to and obey his words? How can that help you when you're tempted to disobey his words?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus promises us that if we listen to his words, we will receive blessings beyond what we can imagine.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10-15 minutes}

K-2nd

Option 1: Trumpet Tag

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write Jesus on a piece of paper and tape it to a wall in the room.

Choose one child to be "It," and begin a game of tag. When a child is tagged, he must freeze. When the teacher makes a trumpet sound, every child must run to the sign that says *Jesus*. The last child to get to the sign is the new "It." Remind children that when John was given the visions of Revelation, he heard a voice like a trumpet.

Option 2: Keys Game

Supply List: chairs, set of keys

Before Class: Gather supplies. Scatter chairs randomly around the room (one chair less than the number of children).

Have everyone sit on a chair. The child without a chair is the leader. Give the leader a set of keys that jingle. The leader walks through the chairs and grabs someone's hand, lifting him up to walk with him. That person then grabs another child's hand, who does the same. Children continue to join the train until the leader drops the keys. When the keys drop, everyone standing must run to sit in a chair. The child who does not get a chair is the leader for the next round. Remind children that Jesus holds the keys—he has authority over everything, even “Death and Hades” (Rev. 1:18).

3rd–5th

Option 1: Pass the Letter Game

Supply List: toilet paper (one roll per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Divide children into two teams, and have teams line up single file. Distribute a roll of toilet paper to each team. On “Go” the first child holds the end of the toilet paper and passes the roll over her shoulder to the child behind her. The next person continues to unroll the toilet paper as he passes it under his legs to the child behind him. This pattern continues (shoulder/legs/shoulder/legs) until the end of the line. The last child wraps the toilet paper around her waist and starts it back the opposite way. The first team to use up their roll of toilet paper wins. If at any point the toilet paper rips, the team is responsible for keeping it from touching the ground for the remainder of the game. Remind children that the letters were to be passed from one church to the next.

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CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Ear Headband

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, paper, scissors, tape, crayons, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a left ear and a right ear. Cut construction paper into 2-inch wide strips. Staple two strips together to form one long strip (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Place copies, stapled strips, and remaining supplies on tables. Children color and cut out the ears, then tape them upright to a stapled strip. Have children write “He who has an ear, let him hear” on the headband. Help children to fit the headband around their heads like a crown and then to staple the ends together. Remind children that the phrase “He who has an ear, let him hear” is repeated in the letters to the churches in Revelation.

Option 2: Jesus Holds the Keys

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, crayons, hole punches, binder rings

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, make copies of a large key (three keys per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child three key papers. Set remaining supplies on tables. Help children write one phrase about Jesus's authority on each key (e.g., Jesus holds the keys to

death, Jesus holds the keys to life, Jesus holds the keys to my heart, Jesus holds the keys to salvation. Jesus holds the keys to heaven). Children color and cut out the keys. Help children to punch a hole in the top of each key and then to put them together on a binder ring. Remind children that Jesus holds the keys. He has authority over all things!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Revelation 3:20 Door

Supply List: paper, scissors, colored pencils, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make copies of Revelation 3:20 centered on a piece of paper (one per child): “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” Make copies of double doors that are larger than the words of the verse (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a verse paper and door paper. Place remaining supplies on tables. Children color the doors and cut them out separately. Then they glue the far ends of the doors over the verse so that the doors meet in the middle and can open to reveal the verse.

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Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.