

## Bible Reading Challenge 49: THE CHURCH – ON TO GLORY!

**Key Verse:** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.” Rev. 21:3a

**Main Idea/Out Loud Intro:** In what we'll read today, the year is about A.D. 95. (That's 95 years after Jesus was born and about 60 years after Jesus died and rose again.) John, who was probably one of the youngest of the twelve apostles, is now a very old man. All of his fellow apostles have been killed, some in terrible ways, for preaching the gospel. Peter, Matthew, Thomas, the mighty Paul, all gone . . . The city of Jerusalem, with its beautiful temple, has been destroyed by Roman armies. John himself is a prisoner on the tiny, rocky Island of Patmos where he is kept in a cave. He might be grateful he's still alive, because times are dark for the church. The devil still seems to be in charge. The Roman Emperor Domitian is now trying to kill Christians or make them be silent, and believers are chased into the hills or thrown to hungry lions in the arena. But of course, the Holy Spirit hasn't rested since the day He came on Pentecost, and even with all the persecution, more and more people are becoming Christians.

One Sunday John was at prayer when suddenly—well, here's how he puts it: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, Write what you see! . . .” Turning around, John saw a number of visions and wrote them down for us to see too. Many Christians disagree about what Revelation says about the future, but some things are clear: the devil is finally and fully defeated, a new Jerusalem replaces the old, Christ is reunited with his church (the Bride) and “now the dwelling place of God is with man.” All the places God used to come and be with us in the Bible—a lush garden, a tent in the desert, two grand and one not-so-grand temples—aren't needed anymore. God's people have reached their promised land—they have reached Him. No more wandering: we'll be home at last.

**Reading for This Week:** I John 2:18-3:3, Revelation 18-22

**Further References:** Psalm 102:25-28, Ezek. 37:27, 47:12

### Questions to Think and Talk about:

1. What will we be like in heaven? (see I John 3:1-3)
2. What is the book of life? (Rev. 21:12, 15) What do you have to do to get your name written there? How will those not in the book be judged?
3. What two cities frame Revelation 18 and 21? How are they described? What is the origin of each?
4. Compare Genesis 2:9 with Rev. 22:2 (see also Ezek. 47:12): why is there no tree of knowledge in New Jerusalem? Why no temple? Why no sun?
5. What's the meaning of fire and smoke in Babylon? What's the meaning of water in New Jerusalem?
6. What is Jesus' last message and who is it directed to? What is the Spirit's (and the Bride's) last message and who is it directed to? What does that tell us about the church's business in these “last days”?

### Activities:

- **String It:** Tape a string to the wall. Then cut pieces of paper with words or drawings of each of the dwelling places God used to be with His people. Start with Eden and then Moses' tabernacle, etc. Talk about how God is with us now but we will be fully with Him when He makes the new heaven and new earth referred to in Revelation.
- **Build It:** Use blocks or legos to build the new Jerusalem. Be sure to talk about how it will be different or similar to cities like the old Jerusalem or even your city. You can also talk about why [Rev. 21:22](#) says there will be no temple.

- **Draw it:** Look up the Greek letters for Alpha and Omega and use them in a poster design or use the description in Rev. 21:10-27 to draw a diagram of the Holy City.