Contents

Reading Schedule …… 3
Bibliography …….. 4
Spiritual Disciplines …… 5
Map of the Seven Churches …….. 7
Timeline …… 9
Opening Thoughts …… 11
Introduction …….. 13
- Author
- Date
- Genre
- Setting
- Methods of Interpretation

Rethinking the Rapture …… 19
Breakdown of Revelation …… 23
Chapter Titles …… 25
Study Guide Notes for Class …… 27
- Week 1
- Week 2
- Week 3
- Week 4
- Week 5
- Week 6
- Week 7
- Week 8
- Week 9
- Week 10
- Week 11
- Week 12

Worksheets …… 53
- Initial Impressions
- Reflections on Revelation
- Worship
- Thrones and Theophany
- Seven Churches
- Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls

Cover image by Jason Watson

CLASS & READING SCHEDULE

1.	September 8	Introduction to Class and receive materials Reading: N/A
2.	September 15	Background and Revelation 1 Reading: Revelation 1, Daniel 2 & 7, Opening thoughts, Introduction
3.	September 22	Revelation 2-3 Reading: Revelation 2-3, Rethinking the Rapture
4.	September 29	Revelation 4-5; Ezekiel 1; Isaiah 6; Exodus 12; Rethinking the Rapture Reading: Revelation 4-5; Ezekiel 1; Isaiah 6; Exodus 12;
5.	October 6	Revelation 6-7 Reading: Revelation 6-7; Zechariah 1
6.	October 13	Revelation 8, 9, 10 Reading: Revelation 8, 9, 10; Exodus 7.14 – 10.29; Joel 2; Ezekiel 2.1-3.3
7.	October 20	***No Class pastor gone***
8.	October 27	Revelation 11-12 Reading: Revelation 11-12; Zechariah 4, Isaiah 66.5-13
9.	November 3	Revelation 13-14 Reading: Revelation 13-14, Daniel 7, Isaiah 63.1-6
10.	November 10	Revelation 15-16 Reading: Revelation 15-16, Exodus 15.1-19, Wrath and Chaos
11.	November 17	Revelation 17-18 Reading: Revelation 17-18; Jeremiah 51.1-19
12.	November 24	**No Class Thanksgiving Week**
13.	December 1	Revelation 19-20 Reading: Revelation 19-20; Joel 3; Ezekiel 38.17–39.20
14.	December 8	Revelation 21-22 Reading: Revelation 21-22, Isaiah 60.19-22; 65.17-25; Ezekiel 47.1-12; Romans 8.18-25
15.	December 15	Close and reflect

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bauckham, Richard, "The Theology of the Book of Revelation." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
As the title suggests, this book covers the theology of Revelation. It is a fairly short book (164 pgs.) that examines theological threads in Revelation in a very powerful way. It is highly recommended for anyone interested in this area.

Beale, G.K., "The Book of Revelation" NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1999.
This is a very detailed commentary on Revelation that is an excellent resource for very in depth studies of Revelation. It deals somewhat with the Greek, but the real strength of this commentary is the tremendous insight and attention it gives to Old Testament influences and references found in Revelation. The introduction is very helpful in examining some of the big issues of the book, including the structure, use of the Old Testament, and the interpretation of symbolism.

Beasley-Murray, G.R. "Revelation" The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

Boring, M. Eugene, "Revelation" Interpretation. Louisville: John Knox, 1989.

Daley, Brian E. "The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology" Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991.

Fee, Gordon D. "Revelation" New Covenant Commentary Series. Eugene, OR. Cascade Books, 2011

Hanson, Paul D. "Old Testament Apocalyptic." Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987.

Koester, Craig R, "Revelation and the End of All Things." Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing Company, 2001.
This is a wonderful little commentary that would be a good beginning resource for those who are looking to study Revelation a bit more in depth on their own.

Mangina, Joseph L. "Revelation" Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010.

Metzger, Bruce M. "Breaking the Code." Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

Mounce, Robert H. "The Book of Revelation" NICNT. Rev ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Osborne, Grant R., Mulholland, M. Robert Jr. "James, 1-2 Peter, Jude, Revelation" Cornerstone Biblical Commentary. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011

Peterson, Eugene H. "Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination." San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.

Witherington, Ben. "Revelation" The New Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
This commentary is focuses on the social and rhetorical influences on Revelation and would be a good commentary for those who are looking to study Revelation a bit more in depth on their own.

Spiritual Disciplines while reading Revelation

Prayer

Prayers from the Daily Office

1. Hasten, O Father, the coming of your kingdom; and grant that all who now live by your faith, may with joy behold your Son at his coming in glorious majesty; even Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

2. Grant me, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while I am placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

3. Lord God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ, triumphed over the powers of death and prepared for us our place in the new Jerusalem: Grant that I, who have this day given thanks for his resurrection, may praise you in the City of which he is the light, and where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

4. Advent prayer:
   Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in that last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Prayer focus:

How could you pray for Christians who are under persecution?

What idols compete for your heart?

Songs

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessèd Trinity!

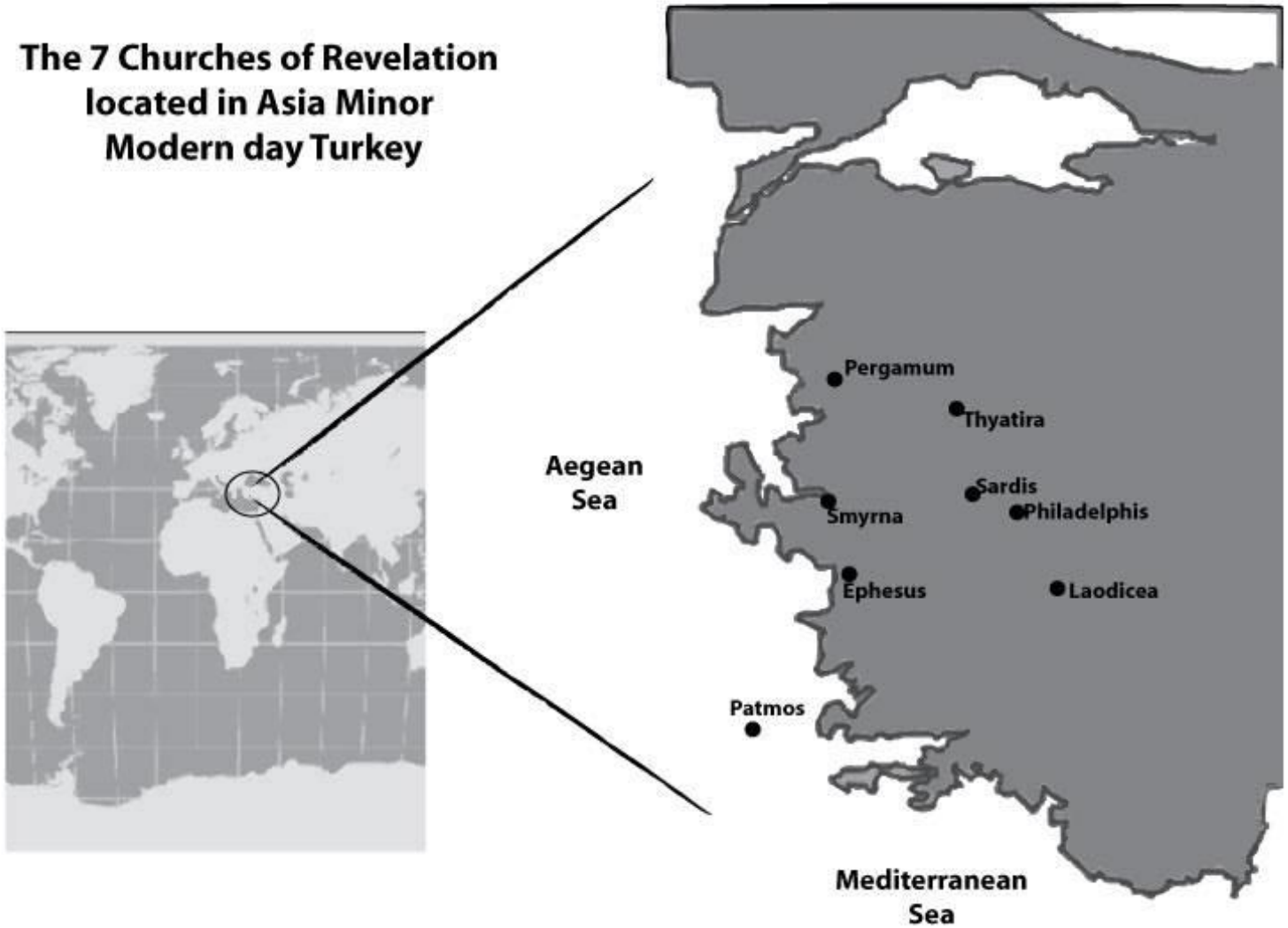
Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul and sing of him who died for thee,
And hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

Here are some verses from Revelation that may be helpful to meditate upon:

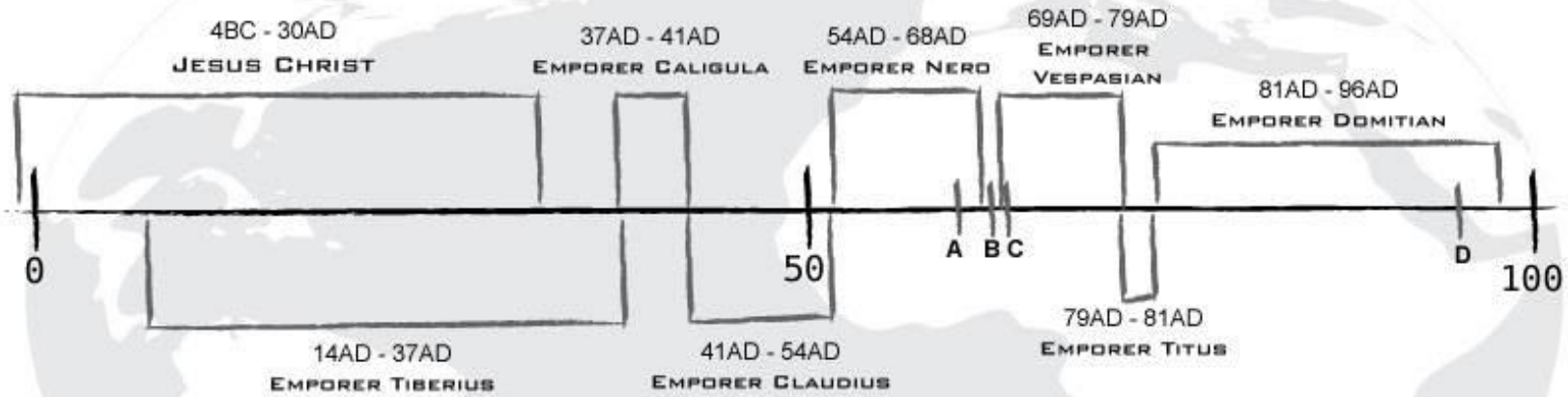
Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.
You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power,
For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.
Revelation 4.8b, 11

For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
Revelation 7.15-17

See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.
Revelation 21.3-4


The 7 Churches of Revelation
located in Asia Minor
Modern day Turkey
Pergamum
Thyatira
Aegean
Sea
Sardis
Smyrna
Philadelphis
Ephesus
Laodicea
Patmos
Mediterranean
Sea

TIMELINE



A - 64AD The great fire in Rome followed by persecution of Christians in Rome by Nero
This may have been when Paul and Peter were killed

B - 69AD The "year of four emporers." There were four emporers in this year: Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and finally Vespasian.

C - 70AD The sacking of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple by the Romans (led by Titus)

D - 90AD Somewhere around this time Revelation was most likely written

OPENING THOUGHTS

In our study of the Revelation to John, I am going to ask you to do something that may be difficult. I am going to ask you to read Revelation in a way that you may not have done before, but I believe in the way the book was meant to be read. That is the issue after all, isn't it? How is this book supposed to be read? Almost everyone agrees that it is a difficult and foreign book. Most of us have not read anything like it before or after, but here it is in the Bible and we have to figure out not only what to do with it, but how is God speaking to his church through it.

Most people in this day and age have read Revelation one certain way. We've read it almost like it was a history book written in advance. This is known as dispensationalism, and you may know it from books like the Left Behind series or teaching from Hal Lindsey or John Hagee. In fact, you may not even be aware that many Christians have not understood the book of Revelation or "End Times Prophecy" quite the same as the dispensationalists. Furthermore, you may not even have considered that this would be an issue.

My first understanding of Revelation was dispensational. I learned that there would be a rapture that would take Christians away into heaven and then that would be followed by seven really terrible years called, "the Tribulation." There are many other parts to this teaching that you may be familiar with. The outcome of this teaching was that we were to look for signs that the world was entering into these last days. When political movements happened in Europe or the Middle East, then they could be the beginnings of the end. Perhaps the leader that was going to falsely unite the world was already alive and we were just years away from Armageddon?

I began to wonder though, is this the way Revelation was meant to be read? Is this what God had in mind? That's an important question, isn't it? What exactly does God intend to communicate to us through Revelation? The thing that really became the key issue in my reading Revelation in a new way was my becoming convinced that this book, Revelation, was written to Christians in seven churches almost 2,000 years ago and on the other side of the world and **it must have meant something to them**. I wasn't sure how visions of Russia uniting with the European Union under the guidance of a Czechoslovakian born leader who utilized Apache helicopters, computer systems, and nuclear war would have made any sense or have been of any use to people in Asia Minor living under Roman rule in the first century. Wasn't God speaking a word to his people then? Wasn't he speaking a word to his people in 500 AD? And 1,000 AD? Isn't Revelation more than a word to 20th and 21st Century Western Christians? That bothered me.

Then I discovered that Christians for centuries had been reading Revelation in much different ways. I am not saying that everyone else agreed how to read it, but rather that there were ways that people understood Revelation that seemed to take into consideration that this was God's word to people in the first century as well as today. I also learned something else that was both surprising, but also made a lot of sense. When people say that they are reading Revelation in its plainest sense, what they are really doing is reading Revelation in its plainest sense to them. How we see the world has been shaped by the time and culture in which we live. In 21st century America, we may expect much different meaning from a book of visions than someone in 1st century Asia. So, we are back to the question of how this book is supposed to be read.

In the section that follows we are going to consider some important parts of Revelation that have to do with its setting. This means that we have to consider what sort of people first heard this message, why this would have been given to them, and what sort of genre Revelation is. After considering these things I have come to believe very strongly that we are not to read Revelation as if it were a history book in reverse. This is not because I have a problem with the

strange visions or the wrath of God. I simply believe that the book was not written to be read in this way. And if I am right (along with many Biblical scholars), that God did not intend for us to read it this way, then we absolutely must try to hear this book on its own terms and not ours, no matter how uncomfortable it is.

What exactly I do mean by this new way of reading Revelation will be best explained as we study the text together, but I will ask you to begin by considering this. Perhaps we should first take Revelation, specifically chapters 4-22 as a series of visions. The order that we read about the visions is the order that John gives them to us. The order of the visions is not necessarily telling us anything at all about the chronological order of events at the end of time. When we read, "After this I saw," or "After this I heard," then we should understand that we are reading about the next vision, not necessarily the next event on the world's timeline. What we do have are visions that are telling us something about God, Jesus Christ, God's people, God's judgment, God's enemies, God's redeeming work, and God's ultimate plan for his creation. We must consider the possibility that people come to scripture with questions that the text is not addressing. Perhaps we are asking questions such as, "when will the end come," and "how will the end come," when God is answering questions of "Who is the center of history," and "what is he up to?"

I will close this section by stating two things. First, I am not proposing a reading of Revelation that takes us outside of the orthodox Christian faith by any means. In fact, I would suggest that this understanding of Revelation is at the heart of orthodoxy. Second, while I may believe that the dispensational reading of Revelation is incorrect, I am not at all questioning whether dispensational believers are Christian. Because of this, while this study may touch on a few points of the dispensationalist interpretation, the main thrust of the study will be our interpreting the text together. This is not a point by point comparative study. Rather it is simply an attempt to better understand this book of the Bible. It is a study of the apocalypse: John's visions and our decisions.

INTRODUCTION

When one approaches new territory it is always helpful to get a lay of the land in order to help you on your journey. The purpose of this introduction is to help us establish just a bit of the lay of the land by examining some of the setting and purpose of Revelation.

Author

In some ways the identity of the author of Revelation is simple and straight forward. We discover immediately, in chapter 1, that it is John (1:1,4,9). On the other hand, we don't know much beyond this. Is it the apostle John? Is it another John that has not been mentioned in scripture up to this point? Scholarship is unclear as to exactly who John is. It is known that he was respected enough to have been an important voice for the churches in Asia Minor. John also tells us himself that he was exiled on the island of Patmos because of his faith in Christ (1:9). However, John of Patmos makes no claims to apostleship, nor does he use the title the elder or beloved disciple (found in John's letters and the Gospel of John). Perhaps we know all that we are supposed to know. After all, Revelation is not about John, he is only the messenger. It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Date

In determining the date of the writing of a particular part of scripture, in this case the book of Revelation, scholars weigh several factors in order to give the best approximation as to when it occurred. Context clues throughout the book are examined as well as church tradition such as from the earliest church fathers. There are two possible dates that have the acceptance of most contemporary biblical scholars. The first and earlier date would be at towards the end or immediately after the reign of Caesar Nero (AD 54 – 68). The second date is at some point towards the end of the reign of Caesar Domitian (AD 81-96).

This book study will operate from the assumption that the second date is more accurate as there appears to be stronger evidence to support this. Some of the most important pieces of evidence for the later date are:

- referring to Rome as Babylon
- Persecution of Christians outside of Rome
- The description of Domitian's Emperor cult matches Revelation better

The reference to Rome as Babylon makes more sense after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. In 70 AD the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple just as the Babylonians had done centuries earlier. Therefore a parallel was drawn between Rome and Babylon. There was persecution of Christians during Nero's reign (most notably following the great fire of 64 AD), but that persecution was within the city of Rome. There is, however, evidence of sporadic persecution of Christians during the reign of Domitian (see below) and that fits better with the picture given in Revelation.

Genre

Initially it may come as a bit of a surprise to some that biblical study calls for us to consider the genre of a book of the Bible. However, in everyday life we consider the genre of most everything else we read. For example, if you receive a letter from the love of your life, then you have certain expectations for what is contained and how you should read it. If the letter states that you stole this person's heart, you understand what that means. The meaning can change drastically though with a change of genre. A police report stating that you stole someone's heart

may mean something very different. The reader's expectations change, as do accepted rules applying to meaning and form based upon the genre. The form and style of a script for a play are much different than of a novel or biography. Works of fiction have different rules and expectations than works of non-fiction. Much of the time readers expectations and understanding shift subconsciously according to the genre they are reading, but what if the genres are unfamiliar? Or, what if the reader is assuming one genre, but the writer used a different one? These things can easily happen with the book of Revelation. Therefore, it is important for us to take a moment to examine the genres at work.

There are three genres of writing at work in the book of Revelation: apocalyptic, prophecy, and epistle (a letter). The first verse states that this is the apocalypse (revelation) of Jesus Christ as given to John. The Greek word "apocalypse" is translated "revelation" and this gives us a sense of what it means. Something is being revealed or uncovered. It is not this first verse alone, however, that determines that this is an apocalyptic work. Revelation's use of vivid imagery, the visions delivered by an other-worldly being that grant insight, depictions of the end times, these are all common to the apocalyptic genre. Apocalyptic writing was used from about the 2nd Century BC until the 2nd Century AD. Part of the difficulty today in properly interpreting this book lies in the fact that it was written in a style that fell out of usage roughly 1800 years ago. This brings us to an important point that will be emphasized below. It is important for the contemporary reader of Revelation to keep firmly in mind that this is a piece of literature written towards the end of the first century, for people who lived at that time, and in a culture vastly different than ours. How exactly this affects interpretation may be debated, but it should affect interpretation because God chose to reveal himself in that particular context and today's reader should honor that.

Revelation is not simply apocalyptic, but also prophetic (1:3). In fact, John understands himself as standing in a long line of prophets spanning back through the Old Testament. This becomes evident not only stylistically, but also in 22:9 an angel says he is a comrade with John and his fellow prophets. Furthermore, among the many other Old Testament allusions is the one found in chapter 10 where John is instructed to eat a scroll just as the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 2 and 3. What is meant by prophecy though? This is an important point. In many popular contemporary Christian discussions of prophecy one may be led to believe that prophecy basically means predicting the future accurately. Predicting future events was a part of prophecy as found in the Old Testament, but there is more involved in prophecy than that. In fact, the prediction of the future is not the end in and of itself. It served a purpose within the greater scheme of prophetic works. Prophets spoke as the mouth piece of God. Throughout the prophetic books we read about the Word of the Lord coming to the prophet. Prophets were often the ones who spoke truth to those in power. The story of the prophet Nathan speaking truth to King David in 2 Samuel 12 is an example of this. Therefore, when we read in Revelation 1:3 that the one who reads this "prophecy" aloud is blessed, we must keep in mind what is meant by the term prophecy. Furthermore, we must now ask how the prophetic and the apocalyptic interact. Ben Witherington proposes that we understand the work as that of "apocalyptic prophecy" where the "apocalyptic symbols and ideas serve the cause of the prophetic interpretation of numerous OT texts."[1]

Finally, it must be noted that this is an epistle, or a letter, written "to the seven churches that are in Asia" (1:4). Again, if we are going to take this seriously, then we must recognize that there was an intended audience for this piece of literature, and they lived in a very different time and place than we do. Furthermore, it must be understood that this letter must have meant

1 Witherington, *Revelation* (2003), p.12

something to the original audience. It will be the position of this book study that taking 1:4 seriously means that today's reader of Revelation cannot simply treat everything from chapter 4 on as a prediction of the future that could only be deciphered nearly 2,000 years later. This cannot be stressed enough. Revelation is written from John, to the seven churches that are in Asia.

The consideration of genre is an important one for the serious reader of the book of Revelation. As a letter to 7 churches in the first century, this literary work has a time and place, or a context that is outside of our own. Furthermore, it uses one genre, apocalyptic, that is foreign to us, and another, prophecy, that is often misunderstood. This does not doom us to failure, rather it warns us that we may very well have to set aside some preconceived notions we have if we are going to hear this book on its own terms. Revelation was written to 7 churches that were in various spiritual states, as well as in various levels of safety in regards to their relationship with Rome. It is in the form of apocalyptic, which suggests that it is using powerful, colorful, and sometimes shocking imagery to "unveil" what is really occurring in history from God's point of view. In fact, being prophecy it is a word from the Lord. And, consistent with Old Testament prophetic tradition, this word from the Lord tends to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comforted.

A final and crucial word is in order in regards to reading Revelation. We consider the genre of the book because we take very seriously the integrity of the book. In other words, the book of Revelation, just like any book in scripture, was written as a literary unit and should be read that way. The Bible should not be treated as a jigsaw puzzle, mixing and matching individual verses, or 2 to 3 verse chunks with each other in order to find a big picture. When readers piece together verses into a big picture the result has been shaped by that person as opposed to scripture shaping the reader. The text is not ours to mold. Instead we will work hard to understand the message of the scripture itself and on its own terms and then place our faith in the Holy Spirit to shape us. This may be a difficult task, but it is a worthwhile one. If we are to be a people who take seriously the inspiration of scripture, then we should also take very seriously the task of interpretation and understanding scripture in such a way that it impacts our lives.

Setting

The seven churches that received this letter from John were located in Asia Minor in the area that is modern day Turkey. Asia Minor was a part of the Roman Empire, but what was its relationship to Rome like? What was the cultural situation and political climate? The book of Revelation has some powerful critiques of Rome, so these questions are important ones.

Ben Witherington has some very helpful insights as to the social setting in Asia Minor in his socio-rhetorical commentary on Revelation[2]. The residents of Western Asia Minor did not consider themselves as oppressed subjects of Rome. There were no legions stationed there, and no rebellions during this time. Furthermore, years earlier, Caesar Augustus had canceled all the debt that this area owed to Rome. The political structure of Asia Minor was set up so that the elite class would maintain power. Honorable families became members for life of the ruling council. Because of these things, society was set up in a hierarchy according to politics and wealth. Asia Minor contained some of the largest and most important cities in the Empire at the time. All of these factors combine to solidify the relationship between the Roman Empire and the people in Asia Minor. If anything disturbed the relationship, then people within Asia Minor had something to lose.

[2] The following observations are drawn from p.22-23 of Witherington, *Revelation* (2003)

One of the most important ways that Asia Minor stayed connected to Rome was by means of something known as the imperial cult. The imperial cult was the means that citizens would worship emperors through things like sacrificial meals, prayers, gifts, and rituals. It is important to remember that the religious scene for people in this time and place was much different than it is today. For people who believed that there were many different gods, worshipping one more was not a religious taboo as we might see it. In fact, it would have been seen as a wise thing to do politically. Asia Minor was on the cutting edge of the imperial cult. All seven cities mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 had a connection to this form of worship, whether by an active Imperial Cult, an Imperial Altar, or an Imperial Priest[3]. If Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian, then emperor worship is even more relevant. While emperors had encouraged worship of themselves prior to his reign, Domitian went even further by insisting on greater divine titles for himself, such as "Lord and God."[4] The worship of the emperor was a common bond for the citizens in this time. Therefore, those people who did not join in worship of the Emperor would not simply be pressured by the authorities. Instead it was pressure from within the population that affected Christians in Asia Minor. To refuse to worship the Caesar was to refuse fellowship with one's neighbors. It was anti-social and unpatriotic.[5]

Besides the political pressures to conform to the demands of the imperial cult, there were also financial pressures. In this culture, temples served many functions that were connected with the financial areas of life. They were storage places for property and even loaned out money.[6] Trade guilds within cities also had gods that they viewed as their patrons. In other words, these guilds would see themselves connected with these minor gods and this connection would be a part of their fellowship with one another. When the trade guilds would have dinners to honor their gods, which also included the proper worship of the emperor, then people participating in the guilds would be expected to pay proper respect and participate in the festivities.[7] With these two aspects of the financial lives of people in Asia Minor at this time, it is easy to see how great financial pressure could be applied to anyone who refused to worship more than one God.

All of this leads us up to a consideration of what persecution would have been like for the Christians addressed in Revelation. There is no evidence to suggest systemic persecution by the Roman Empire against the Christians at that time. However, there is evidence that Christians were occasionally turned over to the government and given the choice of worshipping the Emperor or execution.[8] This means that along with the pressures detailed above, the possibility of exile (as in John's case 1:9), there was also the possibility of execution (see also 2:13). Many scholars believe that there is good evidence to suggest that many Christians did lose their lives. Further compounding the situation is the strain that developed between those of Jewish faith and those of the Christian faith. In the Roman Empire it was only legal to worship another god in the homeland of that religion. The only exception to this rule was for those of Jewish faith, which means they could worship Yahweh outside of Palestine. For some time there was little distinction made between Judaism and Christianity by those on the outside of the faith (with Christianity beginning as a movement within Judaism).[9] However, at some point, some Jewish believers began reporting Christians as being outside of Judaism in order to get them in trouble with the authorities. Overall, persecution during this time appears to have been sporadic, but the climate would have been

---

[3] Ibid., p.24-25
[4] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, (1999), p.6, 10 and Witherington, *Revelation* (2003) p. 5-6
[5] Witherington, Revelation (2003), p.24
[6] Ibid., p.24
[7] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, (1999), p.30
[8] Ibid., p.28-29
[9] Ibid., p.30-31

dangerously antagonistic and the future unsure for Christians. The pressure was to conform and compromise in order to stay safe and live. In fact, there were Christian teachers who were apparently encouraging compromise, and it is these teachings we hear addressed in some of the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3.

Methods of Interpretation

From early on in the Christian movement, Christians have wrestled with the question of how exactly to understand Revelation. Is it a book that predicts the future? Or, is it a book that describes timeless truths to the people in the church? The early interpretations that understood Revelation as referring to future events, focused on the justice and faithfulness of God. Christian writers such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus believed that God was going to redeem creation, so that Revelation was interpreting God's work on the earth at some point in history. These writers focused on the prophets, such as Isaiah, in their understanding of the Biblical message teaching that God would work in creation. Other scholars, such as Jerome, tended to focus on the message being more abstract and timeless. Revelation was seen to be teaching Christians to overcome worldly temptations and to exhibit self control. It is important for anyone studying this book to realize that Revelation has been understood and interpreted in a variety of ways. Modern study of Revelation has broken these methods of interpretation into four categories: Preterist, Historicist, Futurist, and Idealist. These categories will be helpful in giving us insights as we approach this book.

Preterist: The preterist understanding of Revelation sees the book as only referring to events in the past. The preterists understand Revelation being fulfilled either in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD or in the fall of Rome in the 5th century AD.

Historicist: The historicist interpretation comes in many forms because it tends to understand Revelation as describing the events of church history leading directly up to the time of the person interpreting it. The historicist interprets much of Revelation be fulfilled up to their particular point in history. So, for example, some interpreters during the Protestant Reformation understood Revelation in light of the events in the church at that time. This led to interpretations of Revelation 13 where the beast was understood to be the Pope. As you can imagine, the historicist interpretation of Revelation changed in Europe during the 1940's.

Futurist: The futurist interpretation holds that much of the book (4:1 – 22:5) refers to a point in the future just before the end of history. There are two types of futurist: dispensational and modified. The dispensational futurist holds to an interpretation of Revelation that is most common in popular Christian teaching on the end times and prophecy. The dispensational interpretation of scripture includes a secret rapture of the church prior to the tribulation, and it also interprets Revelation in a pretty literal manner. The dispensational interpretation also interprets scripture as teaching that God's people are currently in two groups, Israel and the church. The modified futurist interpretation holds to more symbolism in Revelation, does not include the secret rapture, and it understands the church as the new Israel.

Idealist: The idealist interpretation of Revelation takes a more symbolic and timeless understanding. For the idealist interpretation, Revelation describes the conflict between good and evil through history.

In this book study the approach will affirm things from these approaches, but not necessarily stick strictly to any one of them. We can affirm that Revelation spoke to people in the first century and therefore it addresses things that occurred around that time historically as the preterists teach. However, there is still a portion of the book that is to occur in the future, namely

the return of Christ and the new heaven and new earth. Being a part of Holy Scripture, Revelation has in it some themes and instruction that apply to us today, as the historicist would claim. Finally, while we can not remove Revelation's message from the context of history, as the idealist approach may do, we can still see that Revelation does speak to us about the greater battle between good and evil, between God and Satan. With these things in mind we approach Revelation asking, "What message does Jesus Christ wish to reveal to us, his church, today?"

RETHINKING THE RAPTURE

It may come as a surprise to some people that not all Christians believe that there will be a secret rapture of the church. It may also be a surprise to some that there are many Bible believing Christians who do not believe that the secret rapture is taught in scripture. There are contemporary Christian songs about the rapture, as well as books and movies that portray the end times with a rapture of the Church as a central element. The dominant voice (or at least the loudest) in North American Christianity in regards to interpreting Revelation and eschatology (the end times) is dispensationalist. Therefore, this is the teaching about the end times that most people are familiar with. How did we get to this cultural moment in Biblical interpretation? Is that the only stance on the secret rapture? These are the sorts of questions to which we now turn.

As we begin to explore the development of the rapture theory, it is important to examine the context in which the rapture came to be taught. The teaching of the rapture was developed and rose to prominence in the 1800's in the United States. During this time period there were two developments that particularly shaped the culture in which the rapture first came to be taught. These were the rise of Protestant Liberalism and the birth of several religious groups focused on eschatology.

There was a tension rising between a philosophical rationalism that increasingly denied the supernatural and those who held to a more orthodox understanding of scripture. This was evident in the rational deism of some of the Founding Fathers, such as Thomas Jefferson's "Jefferson Bible" where he removed references to events he deemed as supernatural. It can also be seen in the struggle and debate surrounding the rise of Darwinism and evolutionary theory. One way the church responded to the rise in rationalism was in theological liberalism (which means something very different than American political liberalism). Within the Protestant Liberal movement came a study of scripture known as historical criticism, which cast doubt on the historical authenticity of many books of the Bible. The response to 19th Century Protestant Liberalism was Fundamentalism. One of the main contentions of the fundamentalist movement was that the theological liberalism of the day was a grave threat to orthodox Christian faith. Fundamentalists formally adopted their 5 fundamentals of the faith in 1895, with the inerrancy of scripture as one of them. This understanding of scripture ended up shaping how the Bible was read. The fundamentalists were affected by the rise of rationalism as they read scripture as well. Historian Justo Gonzalez writes,

> "On the other hand, it is significant to note that, while fundamentalism declared itself a defender of traditional orthodoxy, it gave rise to new interpretations of the Bible. Its emphasis on biblical inerrancy and its rejection of many of the conclusions of biblical scholars made it possible to juxtapose texts from many different books of Scripture, and thus to develop a number of schemes outlining and explaining God's actions, past, present, and future. The most successful of these schemes were those of the 'dispensationalists' – of which there were several. The most popular dispensationalist scheme was developed by Cyrus Scofield, who divided human history into seven 'dispensations' – the present one being the sixth." [10]

Gonzalez then points out that fundamentalism became closely tied with dispensationalism. It was in dispensationalism that the teaching of the rapture was found. One of the main ways dispensational theology spread was through the Scofield Bible, a Bible with study notes that detailed the dispensational interpretation. The Scofield study bible was the bible of choice among

[10] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity. Vol.2.* (1985). pp.257.

those in the fundamentalist movement[11]. While dispensational theology may not be a requirement of those who are more theologically conservative, it is easy to see how it became closely associated with those on the conservative end of the theological spectrum in many churches. Furthermore, it became associated with an approach to theology that held scripture in a high view. Therefore, for some, a rejection of dispensational theology can emotionally feel like a deeper rejection of conservative understandings of scripture and orthodox belief.

In the 1800's there were several movements that demonstrate a cultural mindset particularly susceptible to a new teaching such as the end-times rapture of the church. There was a rise in revivalistic movements, first found in the Cane Ridge camp meeting revival in Kentucky, in 1801 and through the inner city revivals of Dwight Moody. These emphasized the emotional and experiential aspects of faith. There were movements that predicted the end of the world or the coming of Christ, such as the Seventh Day Adventists, whose founder, William Miller proclaimed the return of Christ would occur in 1843. The Jehovah's Witnesses were founded by Charles T. Russell, who said Christ's second coming occurred in 1872 and that the end of the world would be in 1914. Others claimed to either have experienced the return of Christ as well. The Shakers were a religious group in the 19th century founded by Mother Ann Lee Stanley, who claimed to be the second incarnation of Christ. The Shakers lived communally, and believed that sex was the root of all evil. Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science church, believed that the second coming of Christ came in the inspiration of her book, "Science and Health with a Key to Scripture." She was not the only one who claimed divine inspiration for her writings. Joseph Smith founded the Mormons, or Church of Latter Day Saints, after claiming an angel named Moroni showed him the secret location of golden tablets that only Smith could translate with the help of "seer stones" he also found. Smith translated the tablets hidden behind a curtain, while others wrote it down and this became the Book of Mormon. This is the setting in which the rapture was born. It is a time when people were focused on the end of the world. It is a time when charismatic leaders challenged the authority and traditional teachings of the church and claimed to have discovered the true teachings of God. This is not to say that the rapture is the equivalent to a cult, but rather to point out that there were some things going on during the time the rapture came to be taught that could easily shape the understanding of scripture at the time. We would be wise to be aware of this.

The teaching of the "pre-tribulation" rapture of the church claims the return of Jesus Christ will come in two parts. First, Jesus will secretly come (with trumpet sounds that only the faithful will hear) and Christians will be snatched up and away from the earth to meet Christ in the air. From there, Christ and the church will return to heaven, leaving many confused and distressed people on the earth. After the rapture, the world will go through a 7 year period called the great tribulation. Finally, Christ will return again to reign. There are a couple of questions that should arise from this account of things. First off, does the Bible really teach that Jesus will return twice? Second, how did this interpretation of things come about?

The beginnings of the secret rapture theory occurred in 1830 in Glasgow, Scotland, when Margaret MacDonald attended a healing service. During the service she received a vision of a two part return of Christ. A preacher named John Nelson Darby heard the story and began to teach and expound upon this theory of a two part return of Christ. Part of this expansion was to clarify the first part of Christ's two part return as the secret rapture of the church. The term "rapture" comes from the Latin "raptus" which was used to translate the Greek word "arpadzo," which is

[11] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity. Vol.2.* (1985). pp.256-257.

"caught up" in English. Darby taught about the rapture and made many trips to America during the Civil War period (1859 – 1877). Darby became the founder of the Plymouth Brethren, and perhaps the rapture would have been a teaching limited to that group, if not for Dwight Moody. Moody became a big believer in this theology and began spreading it in America and abroad. Moody, of course, was also the founder of the very influential Moody Bible Institute, Moody Press and Radio Network. In 1909, a Moody trained Bible teacher named Cyrus Scofield published a reference Bible that contained not only theology on the rapture, but also the breakdown of history and prophecy into 7 eras, or dispensations. Thus, dispensationalism was born. Dispensationalist theology arose out of a legitimate concern for understanding prophecy. It came to life in an era when the culture that seems to have been fascinated with the end times. As mentioned above, there were numerous groups in the 19th and early 20th century in the United States that arose around a concern for the end of time. Furthermore, it became intimately connected with a larger movement, Fundamentalism, and therefore part of a larger and more emotionally charged debate. Is it what the bible teaches though?

While the rapture of the church is most often associated with the book of Revelation, it really is not mentioned there. Dispensationalists may point to Revelation 4:1 as suggesting the rapture, but it is a suggestion at best. The central verses to most teaching on the rapture are found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Matthew 24:36-44.

In Matthew 24:36-44, Jesus is teaching on the necessity of being watchful because the time that the Son of Man comes will be unexpected. Jesus draws a parallel between this coming and the time of Noah, and this parallel is crucial in understanding the point of the text. In Noah's time, people were engaging in normal activities when judgment came in the form of the flood and swept them away. The important point here is that the ones swept away were the ones under judgment. It was not good to be taken away (by flood waters!) in Noah's day. Therefore, this does not seem to be suggesting a secret rapture of the faithful, because in this context the faithful would not be swept away. It may be helpful here to give a brief word about one of the threads of Old Testament prophecy that is important to keep in mind when considering the rapture. Many of the prophecies in Isaiah (such as in 65 and 66) deal with the renewal of creation and the faithfulness of God towards creation. This is what many of the earliest interpreters of Revelation had in mind in interpreting the events of the book in a future sense (see above). God's renewal of creation is crucial to the Judeo-Christian worldview. With this in mind, it is difficult to reconcile this powerful theme of Old Testament prophecy with the rapture, which suggests God's removal of the faithful from creation as well as a destruction of a great deal of creation. In fact, one contemporary dispensationalist suggested we should not be overly concerned with the destruction of the environment considering what God was going to do to it in the future. The message about the return of Christ found in the New Testament is in line with the prophetic voices of the Old Testament and they speak to the faithfulness of God and the ultimate victory of God in his goodness over the forces of evil that destroy and corrupt. This is why Paul in Romans 8 speaks of creation groaning in anticipation. It will be renewed and released from its bondage to decay. The return of Christ will be one of victory, joy, and renewal, as well as a final and complete defeat of evil. This picture does not match up with a clandestine snatching of those who are faithful to God's purposes away from a creation that is bound for destruction. It is towards that joy filled and triumphant return we will now shift our attention.

In 1 Thessalonians 4 and into the first part of chapter 5, Paul is exhorting the Christians in Thessalonica to live their lives in holiness, as children of the light. They are to do this, in part, because the Lord may be returning at any time in victory and judgment, and these Christians should not be caught off guard. The return of the Lord is described within these verses using

metaphors to paint a picture of a triumphant return. Bishop NT Wright cites three separate metaphors that Paul uses in describing Christ's return in 4:16-17[12]. First, there is the return of Moses from the mountain to the Israelites as he brought them the Torah. There is a trumpet sound and a loud voice is heard. The second metaphor is drawn from Daniel 7 and the vision where God's people are vindicated and are raised up and seated with God in glory. The final metaphor is drawn from a more contemporary scene for those in the first century. When an emperor visited a colony, the loyal subjects in the colony would go out of the city to greet him and process back into the city in a triumphant parade. If these metaphors are being drawn upon in order to provide an image for the Christians in Thessalonica, then that certainly must affect how we interpret the passage. Remember, the people were being encouraged to remain faithful and holy, in spite of the temptations to the contrary. Paul backs up his call for the Christians to be holy by reminding them of Christ's triumphant return. You can almost picture the scene in your mind. There will be a trumpet blast, such as those that announce the coming of a king. God's people will now at last be vindicated, their faith proven true, as their king comes in triumph over all that has held them back. Finally, as true subjects in the Kingdom of Heaven, the faithful will go out and meet our returning Lord. This picture assumes that we meet our Lord in order to process back into the city, or into the world as it were, triumphantly. Our King has now returned to rule.

While there are other passages that are drawn upon in order to prove a dispensational understanding of the rapture, 1 Thessalonians 4 and Matthew 24 are at the heart of rapture theology. It becomes clear that if these scriptures examined above do not teach the rapture, then the system falls apart. In regards to the return of Christ there are just a few things that Christians throughout history have been in basic and consistent agreement upon. No one knows the day nor hour. Christ will return as judge and as a conclusion to history as we know it. It may be helpful to simply cling to those creedal statements that the church has recited for centuries, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again," and "On the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead." With this agreed upon knowledge we can hear Paul's exhortation clearly. We must live holy lives as children of the light, so that we are not caught unprepared.

[12] Wright, *Farewell to the Rapture*. (2001)

Breakdown of Revelation

Introduction 1.1-8 (apocalyptic, prophecy, epistle)

Church – Imperfect in the world 1.9 – 3.22

Intensifies

Seven seals (1/4) 4.1 – 8.1
Throne room 4.5: "flashes of lightning, rumbling and peals of thunder"

Seven trumpets (1/3) 8.2 – 11.19
Throne room and altar 8.5: "peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake."

Conflict 12.1 – 14.20
Features rise of the dragon, land and sea beast, and Babylon

Seven bowls (all) 15.1 – 16.21
Throne room 16.18-21: "flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake…and huge hailstones…"

Final judgment 17.1 – 21.8
Fall of Babylon: 17.1 – 19.10
Defeat of land and sea beast: 19.11 – 19.21
Defeat of dragon (Satan): 20.1 – 20.10
Judgment of unbelievers: 20.11 – 20.15
Reward for conquerors: 21.1 – 21.8

Church – Perfect in glory 21.9 – 22.5

Conclusion 22.6-21 (apocalyptic, prophecy, epistle)

Chapter Titles

Give each chapter a brief title or description, to help you remember it. Also, we will fill in the groupings on the side to help us see the flow of the book.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____
21. _____
22. _____

Week 2: Introduction and chapter 1

The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ

Quotes to consider:
"…what the original author and audience could not possibly have understood the text to mean (e.g., the Beast is the European Common market, or the anti-Christ is the Pope, etc.) cannot be the meaning of the text today either, if one believes meaning is not in the eye of the beholder but rather resides in the text, encoded by the original author.
It is true that an author can say more than he or she realizes, and this may well be the case with John. However, the trajectory of meaning must be grounded in what John did understand he was talking about and must be consistent with it."
Witherington, *Revelation*. P.70

How is Jesus described in chapter 1:
vv. 5-6

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____

vv. 12-16

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____

7. _____ 8. _____

9. _____ 10. _____

11. _____

vv. 17-18

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

The structure of Revelation:

"Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this."
Revelation 1:19

How do we understand this in regards to the overall structure of the book?

Now write: a. What you have seen
b. What is
c. What is to take place after this

_____ **or** _____

Now write what you have seen:
a. What is
b. What is to take place after this

Notes:

Week 3: Chapters 2 & 3

Seven Letters to Seven Churches

For this session make see your handout on the letters to the 7 churches.

Quote to consider:
"The messages to the seven churches establish a context in which readers of Revelation can ponder the meaning of the visions that will unfold in the next chapters. We have seen that those who were first addressed by the book faced issues ranging from persecution, to assimilation, to the complacency that arises from prosperity. Now we will ask how the scenes of the heavenly throne room, the four horsemen, and other visions can help to awaken the complacent, to strengthen the persecuted, and to bring those tempted to assimilate to a renewed sense of faithfulness."
Koester p. 69

Q: How do these personal messages to the 7 churches set the stage for what is to follow? What themes do you think will carry through? What might these churches need to hear?

Notes:

Week 4: Chapters 4 & 5

The Throne Room

For this session make sure to see the handout on worship and the throne.

Quotes to consider:
"False worship, such as John portrays in the worship of the beast, is false precisely because its object is not the transcendent mystery, but only the mystification of something finite."
Bauckham, Theology p.45
“By giving readers a glimpse of God’s heavenly court, John presses Christians in the seven churches to see such popular displays of power as garish imitations of the true sovereignty that belongs to the Creator, who alone is truly worthy of being called “Lord and God”. Koester p. 75

What elements of Exodus 12, Isaiah 6, and Ezekiel 1 do you see in the throne room of Revelation 4 and 5?

Notes:

Week 5: Chapters 6 & 7
The First Six Seals

For this session make sure to see the handout on seals, trumpets, bowls.

Quotes to consider:
"In one of the great ironies of my life, I was working on this particular segment of Revelation when the disasters of 11 September 2001 happened at the World Trade Towers, the Pentagon, and the field in Pennsylvania. It seemed that life was imitating art as I watched the pieces of the Trade Towers fall from the sky, all the while reading "and its rider in the sky was permitted to take peace from the earth." The next thing I knew, I was watching price gouging at the gas pump, while reading about the rider with the scales in his hands speaking of exorbitant prices. These multivalent symbols can speak to major disasters in any age. But there is also a pointedness to some of this material. As Boesak has noted, "During the siege of Jerusalem, Titus gave explicit orders not to destroy the oil and wine because he wanted those luxuries to be enjoyed by the rich, who can afford them even in times of want. The black horse states the hard facts of the matter, that the harsh inequalities in distribution of the necessities of life are exacerbated in situations of dire need. God's judgment on this injustice follows in subsequent chapters. Injustice, war, and terror are our companions in any and every age of human history in this vale of tears."
Witherington, Revelation p. 139-40

"The martyrs suffered not because they were sinners but because they were faithful. One rightly asks: Does God care? Does genuine love turn a blind eye while the wicked shed the blood of the innocent? Or is mercy another name for indifference?" Koester p.87

How does Zechariah 1 play into an understanding of what is happening with the four horsemen of Revelation 6?

What might the horsemen represent?

- White
- Red
- Black
- Green

As to why 144,000 is the whole people of God

- *144,000 is clearly a symbolic number: 12 x 12 x 1000, or 12 tribes by 12 apostles*
- *"servants" used elsewhere in Revelation refers to all believers or witnesses (1.1; 2.20; 6.11; 10.7; 11.18; 19.2, 5, 10; 22.3, 6, 9)*
- *Using servant here in narrower sense leads to the conclusion that God only gives his special protection to only some in church based on their ethnicity, gender, marital status*
- *This sealing connects this group with others in 3.12; 22.4*
- *There is a tribe that has been replaced – see Gen. 35:22-26*

What does the language of the stars, sun, and moon being dark point to?

Notes:

Week 6: Chapters 8, 9, & 10
Six Trumpets and a Scroll

For this session make sure to see the handout on seals, trumpets, and bowls.

Quotes to consider:
"The point is not to predict a series of events. The point is to evoke the meaning of divine judgment which is impending on the sinful world"
Bauckham, Theology p.20

"Again the author is not describing what will happen but using images to create a sense of the horrible nature of undergoing God's wrath."
Witherington, Revelation p.156

"The judgment depicted here is not direct divine punishment, but a revelation of what it would mean for God to hand over the world to other powers."
Koester p.100

What is heard:	What is seen:
Lion of the Tribe of Judah Root of David Conquers Revelation 5:5	Lamb who has been slaughtered By his blood, saints had been purchased from every tribe and tongue He is worthy of praise Revelation 5:6-12
144,000 sealed 12,000 from each tribe of Israel Census = army Revelation 7:1-8	Great multitude no one could count From every nation, tribe, people, & language In white robes, waving Palm branches Revelation 7:9-14

What is heard vs. what is seen:
In chapters 5 and 7 we see a recurring theme of the contrast between seeing and hearing. In chapter 5 we first hear about Jesus as the Lion who conquers. There are Jewish terms used, as well as the term conquering. This is a warrior Messiah that is described. John sees something different, though. He sees a Lamb who has been slaughtered. Furthermore, the description is no longer a Jewish one, but rather includes all nations. The followers of Jesus are to be like Jesus - so we see the same hearing/seeing contrast. We hear about a group that is Jewish, but see people from every tribe and nation. They are counted, similar to a census measuring an army and they are seen as victorious. If this parallel is accurate, how are they victorious?

If we begin with the presentation of Jesus, noticing what we see compared to what is heard about him, how does that affect how we perceive the 144,000?

Notes:

Week 7: Chapters 11 & 12

Two Witnesses, a Trumpet, and a Dragon

For this session make sure to see the handout on worship and the throne, and the handout on seals, trumpets, and bowls.

Quotes to consider:
"It is St. John's Spirit-appointed task to supplement the work of St. Matthew and St. Luke so that the nativity cannot be sentimentalized into coziness, nor domesticated into drabness, nor commercialized into worldliness… It is St. John's genius to take Jesus in a manger attended by shepherds and wisemen and put him in the cosmos attacked by a dragon. The consequence to our faith is that we are fortified against intimidation. Our response to the Nativity cannot be reduced to shutting the door against a wintry world, drinking hot chocolate, and singing carols. Rather, we are to walk out the door with, as one psalmist put it, high praises of God in our throats and two-edged swords in our hands."
Eugene Peterson. Reversed Thunder. P.121-122

Tertullian famously stated that the blood of the martyrs were the seed of the church.

Descriptions of the people of God

11:1-2 described as –

11:3-13 described as –

12:13-17 described as –

Formulas equaling 3 ½ years or in one case 3 ½ days are used:
11:2 – 42 months gentiles trample the outer court
11:3 – 1,260 days witnesses testify
11:11 – 3 ½ days witnesses dead
12:6 – 1,260 days woman in wilderness cared for
12:14 – time, times, and a half a time woman nourished in wilderness
13:5 – 42 months beast exercised authority

Is it possible these visions could all be telling the same story?

Notes (for chapters 11 &12):

Week 8: Chapters 13 & 14
Beasts and Harvests

Quotes to consider:
"Every person belongs to someone. The only question is whether one bears the name of the true God or the name of the counterfeit god." Koester p.131

In what ways is evil a mockery or a twisting of good?

Contrast of good vs. evil:

Those who worship the Lamb	vs.	Those who worship the beast
Sealed by God	vs.	Sealed by beast
Wheat	vs.	Grapes
Prayers rising with incense	vs.	Smoke of their torment
Before the lamb in praise	vs.	Before the Lamb in torment
Suffering on earth	vs.	Suffering eternally
Protected by the Lamb	vs.	Protected by the beast

The rise of evil:
Dragon persecutes the church – Revelation 12:13-17
Rise of the beast and beast persecutes the church - Revelation 13:1-10
Rise of the 2nd beast – Revelation 13:11-18
Babylon – Revelation 17:1-6

Notes:

Week 9: Chapters 15 & 16
A Song and Seven Bowls

For this session make sure to see the handout on worship and the throne, and the handout on seals, trumpets, and bowls.

Quotes to consider:
"The visions are not simple descriptions of future events, but warnings that are designed to move the readers of Revelation to repentance and renewed commitment to the ways of God and the Lamb. Although the trumpet plagues warn of disasters that affect a third of the earth, and the bowl plagues portent more complete judgments on the worshippers of the beast, both series are designed to strip away the readers' sense of security by hemming them in with dangers in earth, sea, and sky. Each series, in its own way, focuses on the issue of whether people will repent or refuse to repent in the face of God's judgment (9:20-21, 16:9, 11, 21). When readers are moved to ask where their own deepest loyalties lie, the text has its proper effect." Koester p.148

Parallels to Exodus in chapter 15

- They stood by the sea
- Sing the song of Moses (Exodus 15)
- Victorious over their oppressor (Pharaoh/Beast)
- Tent of witnesses

Parallel to Exodus in chapter 16

- 16:2 sores – Exodus 9:8-11
- 16:3-4 sea & rivers to blood – Exodus 7:17-25
- 16:8-9 sun scorched with fire – Exodus 9:23-24 hail and fire from sky
- 16:10-11 darkness – Exodus 10:21-23
- 16:13 frogs – Exodus 8:2-14
- 16:17-18 lightning, thunder, hail – Exodus 19:16-19 Moses on Mt. Sanai and Exodus 9:23-24

Notes:

On Wrath and Chaos in Revelation

Introduction

One of the things that can be most disturbing about Revelation is the many pictures of God's wrath poured out on the inhabitants of the earth. The images of blood flowing at the height of the horses' bridle, or of the inhabitants of heaven rejoicing in the smoke of the torment of humans are the sorts of images that give us pause. Some people have taken images like these and concluded that God is petty and vindictive, and is out to cause pain to those who don't worship him. God seen in this way seems to be quite an egomaniac, insisting that people praise him or else he burns them. Is this what the wrath of God is about though? Does God so badly *need* our recognition that he is out to punish those who refuse? Revelation gives us not only a very graphic picture of the wrath of God, but also it gives us some clues in understanding how God's wrath functions in justice and judgment in a manner consistent with the purposes of a loving, creator God. In examining God's wrath in Revelation we will consider three areas. First, we will look at how Exodus lies in the background of Revelation, and how the creation theology of Exodus plays out in Revelation. Second we will consider how God's wrath is demonstrated by turning people over to evil. Finally, we will examine the justice of God's wrath in which the punishment is a direct consequence of the sin. My hope is that these things will help clarify the pictures of God's wrath we find in Revelation.

Exodus and a Theology of Creation

One of the Old Testament books that stands firmly in the background of the imagery used in Revelation is the book of Exodus. In Revelation, Jesus is described as the sacrificial lamb, whose blood redeems God's people. In Exodus, it is the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts of the Israelites that marked them for salvation. The imagery of the sea is used throughout Revelation, but it is very clearly a reference to Exodus in Revelation 15, where the faithful stand at the sea and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. This scene is meant to bring to mind Exodus 15 where Israel stands on the shore of the Red Sea after having seen the forces of Egypt destroyed by God. The recurring throne room scene in Revelation (4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18-21) contains elements of the plagues as well as from Israel's encounters with God at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19). Finally, the imagery used to describe the trumpet and bowl judgments in Revelation is clearly drawn from the plagues that God brought upon Egypt and the Pharaoh. What is the purpose of using so much Exodus imagery in Revelation? The story of the Exodus is one of the fundamental stories of the Judeo-Christian faith. By that I mean that we can understand a great deal about the character of God and the human situation through the Exodus narrative.

Viewing our human situation as presented in Revelation through the Exodus narrative gives us insight. Just like Israel, we were freed from bondage to the forces that oppose God. Israel was in slavery under Egypt, we were slaves to sin which leads to death (Romans 6:16-17). Our freedom involves the sacrificial Lamb of Jesus Christ. We are covered by his blood (Revelation 7:14), just as the Israelites, who were marked by the blood of the lamb were passed over (Exodus 12). Furthermore, in Exodus 12:23 we learn that it is the "destroyer" who executes the judgment of the death of the firstborn. We find the destroyer again in Revelation 9:11. In Revelation the destroyer leads the plague of demonic locusts, who are not allowed to harm those who are sealed by God. Just as God's people, Israel, were to follow Moses, their deliverer, we too follow our deliverer, Jesus Christ. Also, Exodus helps us to understand our present situation as God's people. We have been delivered, but are not yet in the Promised Land. Our promised land is shown in Revelation 21-22, the New Jerusalem and the new heaven and earth. We are not currently there. Instead we

are in the wilderness where we are to learn to trust God to lead and guide us to the Promised Land. These parallels are fairly straightforward, but what can we learn of God's wrath in Revelation from our understanding of Exodus?

God is shown to be the faithful creator in Exodus (and Genesis as well). Terence Fretheim, in his commentary on Exodus, stresses the necessity of a solid "creation theology" in understanding God in the book of Exodus. This means we have to understand God as the faithful creator of the earth, and we must look for God's continuing creational purposes in the Biblical story. God is about bigger things than saving a few individual souls. He is recreating, restoring, and redeeming. He is continuing to bring order out of chaos (as found in Genesis 1). This new creation is what Isaiah spoke of (eg Isaiah 65, 66). It is the New Heavens and Earth in Revelation. It is the Kingdom of God to which Paul was referring in 1 Corinthians 15. It is the reason that all creation groans in anticipation in Romans 8. God's salvation and redemption of persons is part of God's renewal and recreation of the cosmos. God's choosing Israel was not an end in and of itself. In Genesis 3 we find that the brokenness and corruption of creation comes as a result of the rebellion of humanity against the creator God. This is the result of humanity's special place in God's order. Because of this, it makes sense that God's bringing about a new creation which repairs and surpasses creation before the fall, would begin with the problem: fallen humanity. God chose Israel to be his people and this was a part of God's redeeming humanity. God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12, 15) was to bless him so that he would bless the nations. He was to be the first of a new nation, a new people. Jesus Christ came as the perfect Israel, the fulfillment of God's promises, and the first fruits of what is to come. We begin with the end in mind. God is taking history and the created order towards his end.

If it is the case that God is indeed directing history towards a new creation, then the forces of sin and evil that oppose God are working in an anti-creational and anti-human manner. In regards to Pharaoh and Egypt, Fretheim writes, "Pharaoh's oppressive, anti-life measures against Israel are anticreational, striking at the point where God was beginning to fulfill the creational promise of fruitfulness in Israel (Gen. 1:28; Exodus 1:7). Egypt is an embodiment of the forces of chaos, threatening a return of the entire cosmos to its precreation state." (p.106) In the Exodus, Egypt is a force in opposition to God. God is bringing forth a new creation, with Israel in the center of this work. When Egypt enslaves Israel it is in direct opposition to God and God's creative purposes. God's plan to set creation free from its bondage (Romans 8) began in Israel, but Egypt oppressed and put Israel in bondage (Exodus 1:11). Furthermore, the evil of Egypt's anticreational activity becomes even clearer in the edict to kill the sons of the Israelites in Exodus 1. If Egypt is an anticreational force, then that affects the way in which we understand the plagues. Fretheim writes, "The plagues may thus be viewed as the effect of Pharaoh's anticreational sins upon the cosmic order writ large" (p.106-7). He also calls plagues the "ecological signs of historical disaster" (p.108). In the plagues upon the Egyptians we see creation out of control. We see creation given back to chaos. Water was meant to be life giving and sustaining, but in the plague it not only brings death, but is a picture of death. Living things, such as locusts, gnats, and frogs are out of control. They swarm and overwhelm. The lights that God put placed in the sky fail to function as God created them to do. God's wrath against the Egyptians in Exodus is played out largely in these terms, as Fretheim calls them, "ecological signs of historical disaster." The plagues are concrete instances of the results of siding against God, against creation, against order. If you choose the forces of chaos and destruction, this is what it involves.

This should shape our understanding of the visions of God's plagues of judgment in Revelation in a powerful way. After all, God is again seen as the faithful creator in Revelation. In Revelation 4 God is praised as the one who created all things. It is from this understanding of God

as creator that our understanding of God's redemptive and judgmental acts must be understood. Therefore, in the trumpet and bowl judgments we again have plagues that demonstrate what happens to those who oppose God and his creational purposes. The trumpet and bowl judgments are the result of opposing God's good creational purposes. They are visions of creation out of control. They are visions of creation turned over to chaos. In regards to the plague of demonic locusts found in Revelation 9, Craig Koester writes, "The judgment depicted here is not direct divine punishment, but a revelation of what it would mean for God to hand over the world to other powers" (p.100). The idea of God turning people over to the forces of evil and chaos as a means of judgment leads us to our next section.

God's Wrath and the Forces of Chaos

What is the wrath of God? Joel Green and Mark Baker present a helpful understanding of the wrath of God in their book, "Recovering the Scandal of the Cross." They point out the ideas of the wrath of the gods in ancient and classical Greek literature, where the gods act in unpredictable ways, are prone to anger and hold grudges. This, of course, causes fear. How can you deal with divine anger that may be sudden, unpredictable, and vengeful? Humans can work hard to get on the good side of a god like this, but the results would be inconsistent. Many people today have a similar picture of God as compared to the unpredictable gods in Greek literature. We all sin and make mistakes, yet sometimes it seems God's wrath pours out, full of anger, and other times, for some reason, we get a free pass. Some see the hand of God in a tornado that strikes a church steeple of a denomination that took a certain stand on sexual issues. However, that then raises the question of where the wrath of God is for those who are in the sex trades industries (or at least with individuals who profit from such)? Furthermore, did other churches that suffered tornado, fire, or some other sort of disaster sin in worse ways than those whose church buildings were untouched? These are important questions, because they get to some issues about the character of God. These are the sorts of issues that can disturb us when reading about the wrath of God in Revelation. If we understand God as being "emotion laden" and ready to strike out arbitrarily at those who disobey him, then Revelation paints a disturbing picture. What if the wrath of God is not like an angry man, raging and striking out at someone who disobeyed?

Green and Baker point to Romans 1:18-32 as a crucial place for understanding the wrath of God. In verse 1 we read that the wrath of God is "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth." In order to see how it is revealed, we read on. First, we note that the root sin is worshipping the creature instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:25). As I have noted in the Revelation study, who or what you worship really matters. The wrath of God and consequence of sin comes as a result of giving your heart to idols. When we are in sin, we worship some part of the creation, instead of the Creator. The result of this is found in verses such as, "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity," and "For this reason God have them up to degrading passions." Romans 1:28-32 states, "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious towards parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless." It is important to note here, that this part of Romans is describing how God's wrath is played out, and that is by turning sinful people over to their own brokenness. Green and Baker write, "The wrath to come refers to the climactic, end time scene of judgment when those who prefer to worship idols rather than the living God receive the fruits of their own misplaced hopes and commitments" (p.54). The wrath of God is evident then in the brokenness of the world,

which is a result of the stance of rebellious humanity. In Romans 1, Paul gives specific instances of the results of humanity's having other gods before God. These include rebellion towards parents, boastfulness, and ruthlessness. These things are, according to Romans 1, also the presence of the wrath of God. When humanity rebels against God, it is turned over to its own sin. We live in a world where sin corrupts, steals, and destroys. Now we must ask what happens to creation when it is turned over to rebellion and brokenness?

Genesis tells of God's creation as an act of bringing things into being and of bringing order from chaos. As covered above, anticreation forces ultimately bring forth chaos and destruction (the opposite of God's creative acts). Richard Bauckham, in his commentary on the Theology of Revelation points out the relevance of the flood in Genesis in understanding the theology of Revelation. "The waters of the flood are understood as the primeval waters of chaos or the waters of the abyss, which God in creation had restrained and held at bay, but not abolished. They symbolize the power of nothingness to undo creation, a destructive potential which remains to threaten the created universe with reversion to chaos" (p.53). God's judgment upon the earth in Noah's day was to turn the earth over to these powers of nothingness. The power of nothingness to undo creation is an important concept. It ties in with our understanding of the Exodus plagues above. God's wrath is played out in turning a rebellious creation over to the forces of nothingness it has chosen. But, by the grace of God this does not happen entirely. In fact, God decides to do something amazing in Jesus Christ. He takes on the forces of nothingness, chaos, and death on the cross. The judgment of the ways of the world is found on the cross. The cross shows us our sin. The resurrection, however, reveals to us the power of God to erase the effects of our rebellion. God's creative work is not done yet, and the day is coming when God will destroy the destroyers of the earth (Rev. 11:18).

Wrath, Judgment, and Justice

God's wrath, whether as it is revealed now, or as it will come in the future, is full of God's justice. This is an important point, because the character of God is important. If we can only picture the wrath of God as coming from an emotional, vindictive, and easily angered God, then it becomes hard to understand how God is just, fair, and trustworthy. We turn now to God's justice as shown in punishment.

One theme that occurs throughout Revelation is the theme of the punishment fitting the sin, or directly resulting from the sin. As Referenced above, Revelation 11:18 speaks of "destroying those who destroy the earth." If you choose a reality of destruction, then God's judgment is that you receive destruction. In the letter to Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-28), a false teacher is mentioned that leads people to fornication (idolatry). The result is that she will be thrown on a bed and her children struck dead. Following this metaphor of fornication for adultery, the judgment makes sense. In Revelation 8:12, we learn those who choose to live apart from the light of the world will live in darkness. Revelation 16:6 states that those who shed the blood of the saints and prophets are given blood to drink. The prayers of the saints in Revelation 6 rise up as incense with the question of how long will God allow evil people to persecute them. The response to this is found in later chapters where the persecutors torment rises up as smoke (Revelation 14) and Babylon goes up in smoke (Revelation 18). This gives us the parallel images of the incense of prayer and smoke of torment, both rising up to God. These are just a few of the examples of God's justice playing out in judgment.

One vivid picture of the wrath of God, justice of God, and Gods' judgment is found in Revelation 14. In verses 9-11 we hear the announcement that those who worship the beast will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger. What an image! What

exactly is the wine of God's wrath? We find out a few verses later in the chapter, when the angel gathers the grapes or vintage of the earth (vv. 17-20). This image is one of judgment. Evil is being gathered and judged, and the image used is that of grapes being gathered into a winepress. In this metaphor, the winepress is the winepress of God's wrath, but the actual substance of the wrath, or more accurately, the raw material is supplied by the grapes. The grapes represent those who worship the beast, those who do evil, and those evil deeds. That is what is gathered, the wine press simply brings everything to a head. It brings evil to its conclusion. This is the wine that flows out. This is the wine of God's wrath. This is also consistent with what we read in Romans 1. Sinful humanity gets the fruit of their own rebellion. This is the justice of God.

At this point, the careful reader should be a bit concerned. After all, who among us has lived a life so faithfully, so perfectly, that we do not fall under condemnation by this justice? It's not a case of God venting his anger on us. It is the case that the seeds of our own destruction are in our own hearts. In fact, when we consider this destructive nature of evil, we can truly see why a faithful, creator God would hate sin and evil. This brings us to a crucial point as we consider God, humanity, and the gospel. Humanity has rebelled against God, breaking the relationship between us and our Creator. Something needs to change, and it is not God who needs to change for us. Furthermore, it is not a matter of God simply overlooking our issues. Even if God were to ignore our brokenness, sin still bears the fruits of death. We would still be condemned. Understanding God's wrath, judgment, and justice shows us that God's wrath plays out by allowing us to be turned over to our own evil. Evil is ultimately self-destructive. This is seen clearly in Revelation 17, when the 10 horns devour the Harlot, Babylon. In order for us to be saved, something within us must be changed. We need to be fixed. Our mess needs to be undone. The justice of God is shown in our receiving the fruits of our rebellion. The mercy of God is in Jesus Christ, who came to save us.

Conclusion

We have examined the theme of God's wrath as found in Revelation by considering the Exodus background with its creation theology. A solid creation theology leads us to a healthy understanding of God as creator, who is still at work with his creative purposes, bringing all of history to his ends of a new creation. This led us to consider how God's wrath is played out by turning people and creation over to the anticreation powers of evil, nothingness, and chaos that seek to destroy. These things are the fruits of our rebellion. Choosing to be outside of God's will means to choose these things, and God's wrath is revealed in our getting our own way. Finally, we examined how God's judgment comes from his justice. It is not arbitrary, nor is it a matter of God venting his anger on us. Judgment comes as a natural result of rebelling against a good God.

This may not make the scenes any less fearful and disturbing for us as we read John's visions in Revelation. The visions are describing a reality of the result of sin. We should still be convicted and disturbed, not because we fear a moody god who may strike those we love, but rather because we, and those whom we love, may some day receive the fruits of our own actions. Those who have denied God time after time, at some point will be allowed to have their way. The fearful part of Revelation is that the judgments described show what it means to live without a loving God who brings order, goodness, beauty, love, and life into reality. A life apart from God would indeed lead us to call out to the mountains to fall upon us. The purpose of the visions of judgment in Revelation is very clear. They are a call for us and for all people to turn back towards the God who created them, and to his Son who redeemed them. Fear is an appropriate response to these visions, but hope is as well.

Bibliography (Of books not already listed in packet)

Fretheim, Terence E. “Exodus” Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991.

Green, Joel B. and Baker, Mark D. “Recovering the Scandal of the Cross.” Downer’s Grove, Ill. InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Week 10: Chapters 17 & 18
Babylon Falls

Quotes to consider:
"John did not make such sharp contrasts because the distinction between good and evil was obvious to his readers. For many, the problem was precisely the opposite." P.155 Koester

"When the harlot's arrogance, violence, and obsession with luxury are described more fully in Revelation 18, modern readers will find themselves confronting forces that belong not to a forgotten age, but to the world that they know." P.159 Koester

"What are the gods of beauty, power, money, and achievement but these same things that have assumed mythic proportions in our individual lives and in our society? We may not physically kneel before the statue of Aphrodite, but many young women today are driven into depression and eating disorders by an obsessive concern over their body image. We may not actually burn incense to Artemis, but when money and career are raised to cosmic proportions, we perform a kind of child sacrifice, neglecting family and community to achieve a higher place in business and gain more wealth and prestige.
In ancient times, the deities were bloodthirsty and hard to appease. They still are."
Timothy Keller, "Counterfeit Gods" xii-xiii

The rise of evil:
Dragon persecutes the church – Revelation 12:13-17
Rise of the beast and beast persecutes the church - Revelation 13:1-10
Rise of the 2nd beast – Revelation 13:11-18
Babylon – Revelation 17:1-6

The fall of evil:
Fall of Babylon – Revelation 17:15 – 18:24
Fall of the beasts – Revelation 19:17-20
Defeat of the dragon – Revelation 20:1-10

Notes:

Week 11: Chapters 19 & 20
Jesus Wins

Notes:
The rise of evil:
Death and Hades set loose 6:7-8
Dragon persecutes the church – Revelation 12:13-17
Rise of the sea beast - Revelation 13:1-10
Rise of the land beast – Revelation 13:11-18
Babylon – Revelation 17:1-6

The fall of evil:
Fall of Babylon – Revelation 17:15 – 18:24
Fall of the beasts – Revelation 19:17-20
Defeat of the dragon – Revelation 20:1-10
Defeat of Death and Hades 20:14

DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST IN 19:11-16

- Faithful and true
- In righteousness he judges and makes war
- Eyes like a flame of fire
- Crowned with many diadems
- Name inscribed no one knows but himself
- Robe dipped in blood
- Word of God
- Sword from his mouth
- Rules with rod of iron
- Treads winepress of God's wrath
- King of Kings, Lord of Lords

Thoughts on Victory:
"…the martyrdom of Christians – is described both as the beast's victory over them and as their victory over the beast. In this way John poses the question: who are the real victors? The answer depends on whether one sees things from the earthly perspective of those who worship the beast or from the heavenly perspective which John's visions open up for his readers."
Richard Bauckham p.90
"The perspective of heaven must break into the earth bound delusion of the beast's propaganda to enable a different assessment of the same empirical fact: the beast's apparent victory is the martyr's – and therefore God's – real victory."
Richard Bauckham p.90-91

So this is not the slaughtered Lamb turned slaughterer, but it is the witness turned judge. The 'faithful and true witness' (3:14) is now 'called faithful and true' (19:11), but not witness.
Bauckham p.105

The Millennium 20:1-6
Pre Millennium – Christ comes prior to the 1,000 years
Post Millennium – Christ comes after the 1,000 year reign
Amillennial – The 1,000 years is not literal

"John expected the martyrs to be vindicated, but the millennium depicts the meaning, rather than predicting the manner of their vindication."
Bauckham p.108

As messengers of the Gospel – how do we have an agenda that includes "the perspective of heaven" breaking into the earth bound delusion of the beast's propaganda?

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
Philippians 4:8

Week 12: Chapters 21 & 22
The New Jerusalem

Creation renewed:

- Is it totally new, or renewed? Does it matter how we treat this creation?
- God is celebrated as creator in Revelation 4 – what stance does the faithful Creator have towards creation?
- Romans 8:18-23 – creation set free from bondage to decay
- Resurrection body of Jesus – these are the first fruits (eg 1 Corinthians 15:20)
    - How was it connected to his earthly body?
    - How was it different?
- "Revelation envisions the salvation of the whole creation, not only the redemption of individual souls" Koester p.191
- "The sea was no more" – usage of "sea"
    1. Origin of cosmic evil (& chaos) especially in light of OT Rev. 4:6; 12:18; 13:1; 15:2
    2. The unbelieving, rebellious nations who cause tribulation for God's people 12:18; 13:1; 17:2,6
    3. the place of the dead 20:13
    4. primary location of world's idolatrous trade activity 18:10-19
    5. literal body of water, sometimes mentioned with "the earth" – part of old creation 5:13; 7:1-3; 8:8-9; 10:2, 5-6, 8; 14:7; 16:3
- So, no more sea implies:
    1. No more Satan – he is judged
    2. No more rebellious nations
    3. No more death
    4. No more idolatrous trade practices
    5. No more murky and unruly part of God's creation
- The one on the throne speaks – only 2 times he speaks directly in Revelation (1:8) – and says, "Behold, I make all things new"

The tension of "new" where it is both connected to old creation yet very distinct from the old creation

People of God
City: New Jerusalem

- 12 foundations: 12 apostles 21:14
- 12 gates – 12 tribes 21:12
- Recall 3:12 – "pillar in the temple of my God"
- Revelation 21:19-20 – 12 different gems
    - Jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, carnelian, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, amethyst
- Exodus 28:17-20 and 39:8-14 – in breastplate for the high priest, the 12 gems represented the 12 tribes of Israel
    - Carnelian, chrysolite, emerald – turquoise, sapphire, moonstone – jacinth, agate, amethyst – beryl, onyx, jasper
- Gems representative of 12 tribes, therefore, of people, and they are part of the foundation

Tabernacle/Temple

- Rev. 21:3 – "The Tabernacle of God is among mortals"
- Rev. 21:16 – cubic shape of New Jerusalem; 1 Kings 6:20 we learn that the inner sanctuary is cubic in shape
    - Where God would dwell
    - Limited access
- In Exodus 28:36-38, the High priest, only one with access to holy of holies, wore a turban with "Holy to the Lord" on his forehead
- Rev 22:4 – God's people will be in his presence, see the face of God, and his name will be written on their foreheads
- Similar idea with the priests breastplate and gems – once limited access is now open to all God's people
- When God's glory came before, no one could take it (Ex. 40:34, 1 Kings 8:11) – but now the glory of God is the light of the city 21:23

The Rhetorical effect of Revelation (and its ending)

- Final warnings
- 21:8, 27; 22:3, 15 – Why exclusion
    - Another way of saying that the forces that oppose God have no place in the new creation
    - The new creation is distinct because there is an absence of the powers that oppose God and diminish life
    - Note the lists, see 21:8 specifically –To whom is this list catered?
- 22:18-19 – don't add or subtract from this book, or else…
    - Rooted in Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 12:32
    - Both warn that Israel should not add to or subtract from Law
    - Both sections connected to idolatry
    - You cannot teach that idolatry is consistent with faith, that is either adding to or subtracting from the commands

- "Do not seal up" 22:10 – for the time is near
    - Compare to Daniel 12:4 "keep the words secret and the book sealed" – because its not the end
    - Revelation is an open book, not a coded prediction whose true meaning will only be discovered and sensible for people in the final years of history
- What is your response to Revelation supposed to be?
    - "true prophecy moves people to serve the true God and false prophecy draws people away from God. Prophecy can have to do with the future, but it is not primarily prediction." Koester p.202
- "Revelation does not suggest that people receive blessing or "keep" the words of its prophecy by speculating about the date of the battle of Armageddon. Rather the "blessed" are those who "wash their robes" through faith in Christ and faithfulness to Christ (22:14), pursuing righteousness and holiness, and resisting evil, impurity, falsehood, and other forms of sin (22:11,15)" Koester p. 202

Week 13: It Is Finished

Quotes to consider:
"…what does it mean for contemporary people of God to be a countercultural alternative in such a world, just as John himself was, and was encouraging his readers to be?" Gordon Fee p.x

"How are we to be citizens of New Jerusalem in a fallen Babylon world?" -Dr. Robert Mulholland

"The world seen from this transcendent perspective, in apocalyptic vision, is a kind of new symbolic world into which John's readers are taken as his artistry creates it for them. But really it is not another world. It is John's reader's concrete, day-to-day world seen in heavenly and eschatological perspective."
-Richard Bauckham p.8

Notes:
How do you see your world differently?

What do you plan to do about it?

Initial Impressions of Revelation

Take a moment to write down what you know, have heard, or think about the book of Revelation. The purpose of this is to record where you began the study in order that you keep track of how you've grown in the study. As you do this, the following questions may be helpful:

1. What do you know about Revelation?
2. What have you heard about Revelation?
3. Do you think Revelation is relevant today? Why?
4. What does Revelation tell us? What is the main message?

Revelation Reflections

Now that we have made it to the end of an intense study of the book of Revelation, it will be helpful for you to take a moment and write down some of the main things you have gained from this study of scripture. To prepare for this, first take a moment and review what you wrote on the worksheet "Initial Impressions of Revelation," then use the following questions as a guide to record your learning.

About Revelation

- Did you go over your "Initial Impressions" worksheet? What did you notice?
- What did you learn from this study? What do you plan to do about it?
- What changed in your understanding of Revelation?
- What is the main message, or messages of Revelation? What are some of the most important themes?
- Is Revelation relevant for us today? How?
- If someone came to you with questions about Revelation, what sorts of things would you tell them or show them?

About the Study

- What were some of the most helpful parts of the study? What did you like? Where did it challenge you?
- What changes or additions would you suggest for the study?
- How do you view scripture or the study of scripture differently after this study?
- What did you learn that might help you study scripture differently?

Worship worksheet

προσκυνέω [*proskuneo* / pros·koo· **neh** ·o /]
Note the object of worship, how "worship" is used whether positive or negative with brief note.

*Revelation 3:9 (translated as "bow") -

Revelation 4:10 - Worship of the One on the throne by 24 elders.

Revelation 5:14

Revelation 7:11

*Revelation 7:15 (*λατρεύω*) "serve"*

Revelation 9:20

Revelation 11:1

Revelation 11:16

Revelation 13:4

Revelation 13:8

Revelation 13:12

Revelation 13:15

Revelation 14:7

Revelation 14:9

Revelation 14:11

Revelation 15:4

Revelation 16:2

Revelation 19:4

Revelation 19:10

Revelation 19:20

Revelation 20:4

Revelation 22:3 (λατρεύω) "serve"

Revelation 22:8

Revelation 22:9

Thrones and Theophany

Theophany means a manifestation of God. There are certain things that occur when God appears, or in the book of Revelation, there is a pattern of what John sees and hears in the throne room. For this worksheet, note how the throne room is described in these four areas, as well as what is going on at the time that John sees it. For background on this part, see Ezekiel 1 and Exodus 19:16-25

Revelation 4:5

Revelation 8:5

Revelation 11:19

Revelation 16:18-21

What do you notices about how "throne" is used in Revelation?