

Revelation: Christ the Cosmic King

April 15, 2018

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Praying the Attributes of God

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship.)

Spend some time as a group praying through some of the attributes of God. Here is a list you can use: eternal, faithfulness, foreknows, good, holy, immutable, impartial, incomprehensible, infinite, jealous, justice, longsuffering, love mercy, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, righteous, self-existent, self-sufficient, sovereign, transcendent, truth, wise.

Icebreaker

What is a book that you have read that was turned into a movie and the movie turned out to be better than the book?

Text for Discussion: Revelation 1:9-20

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Last week, we began our study of Revelation by asking: What kind of book is this? Whom was it written for? Why should we study it? As we conclude our introduction, we will address three more questions.

Who wrote Revelation? The author, a pastor named John, is careful to note that while it was written by him, the words are not from him. This is God's word about Jesus through John. He was under arrest at the time, suffering as many of his readers were, sequestered by the Roman Empire for spreading the Gospel. John's words upset the status quo with a vision of a new world, imploring his readers to endure and not grow complacent in their faith. But again: this is God's message to us. And His words are absolutely reliable, so we can build our lives on His promises and the truths He reveals.

What time is Revelation primarily concerned with? The opening lines identify this letter as prophecy, so it is about what will happen someday. Indeed, the anchor of Christian hope is that one day Jesus our king will return. But Biblical prophecy isn't preparing us to escape the world; it's calling us to live faithfully here and now. The kingdom has come near because the King is near, so we must stay awake/vigilant in the present (Luke 21:36, 1 John 2:8). That's why this letter is written to all churches – those that were and are and are to come. Jesus yearns for us to no longer fret about our daily worries, for He is already “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5). As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, *“We live each day as if it were our last, and each day as if there was a great future because of Jesus Christ.”*

How should we read this letter? John is theologian, pastor and poet, and we must see him as each to properly appreciate Revelation. As theologian, John offers insight into God's character and who He has revealed Himself to be in Christ. As pastor, John wrote to particular people in a particular time with particular problems – applying the truths of the Gospel to the facts of their situation. Third, John is a poet. His letter is simply incomprehensible if not read as a poem. Poetry is not the language of objective explanation but that of imagination. Through its vivid images, Revelation seeks to jolt us, renewing and engaging our imaginations so we might receive a fresh vision of the world: a heavenly point of view.

Why is digging into Revelation worth the trouble? A vision of Jesus – that the Old Testament was building toward and the New Testament has revealed – concludes with an image-driven view more vivid and brilliant

than we've yet seen. Christ is the origin and creator of all things, but He's also the goal and destiny of creation. All things were made by and for Him. Meaning our lives won't make sense until we know Christ!

It makes sense why John is so concerned about compromise and why we're given a grander, fuller vision of Jesus here. For when we truly glimpse the glory of God, our entitlement vanishes as we come to grips with our unworthiness (Luke 5:8). But that's not how the vision ends. From our posture of weakness, Christ lays His hand on us with the comforting assurance that we need not be afraid. He has set us free, so that in Him, we might find hope and joy.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How can the book of Revelation help re-frame our life?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

Opening Questions/Digging In...

- The imagery in the vision of Jesus in vs. 12-18 is a powerful sensory experience. What aspect of Jesus in this vision most catches your attention? Why?
 - What do we learn about who Jesus is from this vision?
 - What aspect of Jesus in this passage do you think the Church most needs in our world today?
- Read Joshua 23:14. How do the promises given in this verse help you study the book of Revelation?
- What does it mean to bear witness for Jesus Christ? Explain how you currently bear witness?
- How does the vision of Jesus depicted in vs. 12-16 differ from how we often view Jesus?
 - Which one do you identify with and why?
- The vision of Jesus comes before his instruction to the churches. Why might that ordering be significant?
- Describe what it means that the Lord God is "the Alpha and the Omega...who is and was and who is to come" and "the First and the Last".
- Who is the "Son of Man" referenced in verse 13? (also look up Dan. 7:13, Zech. 12:10 and Matt 24:30)
- Looking at vs. 1. How are you living as if Jesus is returning soon? How are you living as Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes as "each day is our last and each day as if there was a great future because of Jesus Christ"?

Application Questions

- How will you view Jesus in light of this chapter? Does it give you new insights about your relationship to Him and to this Revelation of Jesus Christ?
- How does Rev 1:9-20 give us confidence and hope in the face of fear?
 - What is causing you fear right now?
 - How can we as a community group encourage each other not to fear?

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

- Joshua 23:14 states that in your heart and in your soul, that all the good things that Lord has promised concerning you have come to pass and will come to pass. Not one will fail. Where in your life are you needing to be reminded of those promises in God's word (anxiety, lonely, suffering, etc...)
 - Spend the week meditating on scripture that has to do with an area of life where you need encouragement. Journal about it and come to CG next week to share your experience