

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Village Church of Rancho Santa Fe

Winter 2010 – *La Costa Glen, Women’s Fellowship, Thursday Morning Men’s Study*

Lesson Four – January 26, 27, 28

Revelation 6:1 – 7:17

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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

1. Chapters 4 – 18 - Vision of eschatological woes that (in apocalyptic thought) must be prelude to victorious establishment of God’s Kingdom at the End
2. Chapters 6 & 7
 - a. Within major section on John’s vision of cosmic & heavenly matters
 - b. Beginning of what to some are “violent & disturbing” images
 - c. Beginning of loose structure of “sevens” of seals, trumpets, bowls
3. Structure
 - a. Portrayal of judgment on the evil world
 - b. Punctuated by portrayal of God’s (and Christians’) victory
4. Message
 - a. Christ stands at the end of history (things will turn out just fine)
 - b. Christ also stands in the midst of history (you can be just fine now)

DETAILED NOTES

1. Chapter 6:1-8
 - a. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse
 - b. This is about:
 - i. Eruption of war, plague, and death in the Roman world
 - ii. Judgment of God on human arrogance & rebellion
 - iii. Imagery generally from Zechariah & Ezekiel
 - c. White Horse & Archer
 - i. Parthian warriors (eastern edge of Empire)
 - ii. Never defeated by Rome!
 - iii. First image about Rome’s eventual judgment & defeat by God
 - d. Red Horse
 - i. End of “Pax Romana” – peace
 - e. Black Horse
 - i. End of Roman prosperity
 1. Food rationing (scales)
 2. Poor will suffer (inflation in price of staples)

- 3. Rich are ok (stable prices in luxuries)
 - f. Pale Green (sickly green!) Horse
 - i. Represents Death in its violent forms
 - ii. Represents Hell – the world of the dead
 - g. Alternate Interpretation of White Horse – Victorious Christ
 - i. Similar to 19:11-16
 - ii. Not Christ, however, but an agent of Death & Hades
 - iii. Death & Hades actually destroy & harm, and are permitted so by Christ, but only as prelude to final Consummation & Salvation by The Lamb
2. Chapter 6:9-11
- a. The Cry of the Martyrs
 - b. Picture of where the Christian martyrs are – with God
 - c. Under the altar – blood of sacrifice flows to base of altar, blood that is seen as the “life and soul” of the creature
 - d. Martyrdom is not meaningless tragedy but sacrifice on altar of God
 - e. No rapture here: Christians get to heaven as did Jesus – sacrificial death
 - f. “How long?” – not just personal revenge, but reign of God asked for
3. Chapter 6:12-17
- a. Cosmos Shakes when God Approaches
 - b. Apocalyptic Pattern – woes move from “this-world” to cosmic catastrophes
 - c. General breakdown of the universe – not literal, but theological
 - d. “Who can stand?” – humans are not God!
 - e. Note – wrath is that “of the Lamb” – all judgment in the hands of the one who has been slaughtered on our behalf!
4. Chapter 7:1-17
- a. The Church Militant & Triumphant
 - b. One would expect the End of all things, but instead John sees...the Church!
 - c. To 1st century Christians in tiny, persecuted church, question was...what is the Church, really?
 - i. Images from Ezekiel 9
 - ii. Those “sealed” by God himself – identified, kept, even in martyrdom
 - iii. Baptism – marking or sealing by God
 - iv. Mark of the Beast (shown later) is no match for Mark of God!
 - v. 144,000 (v 4) – The Church, ready for “battle”
 - 1. Thousand (not literal, just “a lot”)
 - 2. 12 x 12 – Israel times Church
 - 3. The Whole & Complete People of God
 - vi. Great Multitude (v 9) – The Church, Triumphant in Heaven

1. Robes are white from washing in blood (!)
2. Focus is in Christ's death, not that of martyrs
3. Palm Branches – Hosanna – “Save Us!”
- vii. “John lets us see the suffering love of the One who dies for others enthroned and ruling at the heart of the universe.” (Boring)

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

1. What do modern Christians make of Revelation's violent images?
2. Things to Remember:
 - Visions spring from actual suffering of real people John knew
 - John uses already known & accepted imagery
 - Ancient Near Eastern Combat Myth – battle between God and the Chaos Monster
 - Apocalyptic Scheme – terrible suffering is prelude to Good News
 - John uses scriptural images throughout
 - Point is about Righteous God dealing with Sin and establishing Justice
 - Theophany Language – all Creation is powerless before its Creator
 - Somebody Else's World – Creation/Creatures are dependent actors, not independent
 - John's use of Language
 - Visionary/Metaphorical, not literal
 - Confessional – not so much about “their” fate, but “our” trust in God
 - John's Theology & Purpose
 - Imagery takes seriously problem of universal human sinfulness
 - The Lion is also The Lamb
 - All must be seen in context of Chapters 4 & 5
 - Messiah/Lamb controls Death & Hades (1:18) and will destroy them (20:14)
 - All is about restoration of all Creation – hint of Salvation of All (21:24-26)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Every portion of Scripture must be understood within the light of the rest of Scripture. Why is this so important when studying Revelation? What is the essential message of Scripture within which Revelation must be interpreted?
2. The Four Horsemen represent a vision of troubles that result from human sin. What troubles do you see in your own life and our own day that result from human sin?
3. John pictures Christian martyrs in heaven. How does this image encourage your own faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ?
4. John is clear that real Christians will suffer real things on *this* side of God's final victory. How does this message differ from those sometimes preached today about prosperity and peace when a person follows Christ? Does John's view help you in your own suffering?

5. John shows us the Church as cosmically powerful and ultimately triumphant (through victory of Christ, we must always remember!). How does this view color and shape your view of your own church today?
6. John uses violent images and pictures the destruction of those who oppose God. How do these ideas help and/or hurt your picture of a loving God?
7. The Righteous God who judges Sin is also (and equally so) the Loving God who took the judgment upon himself in the Lamb. What does this mean to you when you think of God's judgment of our world today? Of you and your personal sin?

i Primary Sources: Earl Palmer, *Communicator's Commentary*, and M. Eugene Boring, *Interpretation Commentary*