

[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 Five – February 1, 2, 3

Revelation 8:1 – 11:19

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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

1. Chapters 4 – 18
 - a. Vision of eschatological woes that (in apocalyptic thought) must be prelude to victorious establishment of God's Kingdom at the End
 - b. All about vision from God/Christ given to John in order to give encouragement and information to 1st century Christians who are suffering persecution
2. Chapters 8 - 11
 - a. Within major section on John's vision of cosmic & heavenly matters
 - b. A new series of woes and plagues represented by the 7 trumpets
3. Structure
 - a. Begins with worship and praise of God
 - b. Continues with intensifying of destruction and judgment
4. Message
 - a. Christians will suffer—sometimes terribly—now, but...
 - b. in the future guaranteed by God, they will triumph and enjoy eternal blessedness

DETAILED NOTES

1. Chapter 8:1-5
 - a. Verse 1 – Opening of 7th Seal and there is silence
 - b. Day of the Lord is preceded by (dramatic, pensive) time of stillness
 - c. Angel with the golden censer
 - i. Glimpse of worship in heaven, meant to encourage those suffering evil on earth – another “interlude” of worship sprinkled throughout woes
 - ii. Incense rises to signify prayers of earthly saints rising to mingle with prayers of heavenly saints – earthly worship has cosmic dimensions
 - iii. God's final victory comes through – not in spite of – earthly suffering

2. Chapter 8:6-12

- a. Trumpets – signify call to assembly, battle, warning, victory, accession of a king, appearance of God (theophany), eschatological signs
- b. Eyes, spirits, stars, angels – all representing God and his power
- c. Terrors are coming, but Christians need not fear because they, too, serve God’s final purpose of redemption
- d. No final coherence in timing or numbers in Revelation, because John’s purpose is about communicating theological truth, not specific events
- e. Plagues – reminiscent of redemption stories of the Exodus

3. Chapter 9:1-12

- a. Demon Locusts – image drawn from mythology and religious tradition, also related to actual locust plagues that devastate and destroy
- b. Mention of fall of evil angels, standard idea relating to final battle between God and Devil
- c. Note: locusts “were given,” “were allowed,” signifying that God is “passive” agent here, but still in ultimate control
- d. Apollyon, pun on name Apollo, name Emperor Domitian used of himself, locust was symbol of Apollo

4. Chapter 9:13-21

- a. Demon Cavalry – hearkens back to Parthian military
- b. 200 Million – cosmic level, not real
- c. Repentance – like Pharaoh & Egyptians, humans do not repent but only go further in their rebellion against God
- d. Christians were asked to “repent” of their confession of Christ, but here we see irony of those who will not repent and turn back to true God

5. Chapter 10:1-11

- a. Chapters 10 & 11 form interlude between sixth and seventh trumpets
- b. As Chapter 7 showed Church triumphant & militant, 10 & 11 show Church as Prophets & Martyrs
- c. Upshot: Church is serving purpose of God, even in suffering
- d. Angel – rainbow of covenant, book, shining face – all familiar images of Divine
- e. This section informed by Daniel 12:1-10: John sees that the final terrible period of history is upon him and his fellow Christians
- f. 7 Thunders – John not allowed to reveal their meaning
 - i. Prophets know a lot, but not everything!
 - ii. Or, God is changing his mind (happens in OT some)
- g. John eats the scroll!

- i. Ezekiel 2:8 – 3:3
- ii. Prophet's role/message is bittersweet – speaking of both judgment/woes and salvation/glory

6. Chapter 11:1-13

- a. Two Witnesses – represent the whole church
- b. Major message: All Christians exercise what was formerly “special” role of prophet because all have the Spirit of God in and with them (Joel 2:28-29)
- c. Inner & Outer court of Temple – from last days of war in 66-70 when Romans had not yet penetrated inner court in their war against Zealots
- d. Measuring the Temple – marking out the People of God for protection
- e. Prophecy – to speak and act for God
- f. Note ancient meaning of *martyr, witness, testimony*
 - i. Greek – “martyres” = martyr = witness, testimony
 - ii. Corruption/watering down of their meaning today
 - iii. Revelation's connection to OT Prophets, Jesus, 1st century Christians
 - iv. Ministry of martyrdom – telling and showing truth of God
- g. OT tradition that true prophets suffer for their message
- h. Two olive trees & lampstands – Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel the king (Zechariah 4) – channels of God's power, now applied to Church
- i. Also Moses & Elijah – tradition that neither died but were taken straight to heaven – faithful church is like them
- j. Fire from the mouth: (Jeremiah 5:14) – word of God is powerful!
- k. Note: Power of the Church (as with Jesus/Lion/Lamb) is ultimately about witness to the Word & Truth of God, *not* destruction and vengeance upon enemies
- l. Three and a half (days or years) – traditional apocalyptic number – half of 7!

7. Chapter 11:14-19

- a. 7th Trumpet
- b. God has taken his power and is reigning -- God was and is...and HAS come
- c. Kingdom – an “active noun” here – God is ruling, reigning, acting as king
- d. Ark of the Covenant – appears here, lost at destruction of first temple by Babylon – another powerful image of presence of God and realization of Kingdom

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Revelation pictures the prayers of those on earth mingling with those in heaven. How does this image inform the nature of your prayers?
2. In classic Jewish and Christian tradition, Revelation shows that even the terrible things of life are somehow pressed into service to God's ultimate plan of redemption. Does this idea make sense to you? What might it be trying to say to your own suffering?

3. Evil (or the Devil) is pictured in various ways in Revelation. How do you understand them? How does the Devil affect our world?
4. Though great plagues affect the world, people will not change their ways—repent. This, too, serves God's purpose. How do you understand this spiritual and cosmic dynamic in your life and the lives of others?
5. A prophet's role is bittersweet. How does speaking the truth of God in your own context produce both bitterness and sweetness?
6. A major message of Revelation is that the Church (us!) are called on to be martyrs (witnesses) for God's sake. How does God's power work through martyrdom? Are you willing to go that far for your faith?
7. A major picture from all scripture – and one of Jesus' favorite images – was about the Kingdom of God. How do you see God's Kingdom in operation in your life?

¹ Primary Sources: Earl Palmer, *Communicator's Commentary*, and M. Eugene Boring, *Interpretation Commentary*