

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Week 4 – Small Group Study

Read: Revelation chapters 4 and 5.

Summary: Revelation chapters 4 and 5 go together like two sides of the same coin. Rev 4 is a visual summary of the Old Covenant, and Rev 5 is a visual description of the meaning of the New Covenant. Revelation 5 is a compelling and powerful depiction of the meaning of the good news of Jesus, the Gospel. The vision opens with a scroll in the right hand of God the Father. The scroll is God's plan for the world (His word and will) from the time of Creation through to eternity. Who is able to open the scroll and give understanding to the contents? Who is able to enact the will of God? There is no one that powerful or wise – no one can understand and enact the purposes of God: except one. "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Why would John be weeping that (initially) no one was found worthy to open the scroll? Where does this language of the "Lion of Judah" and the "root of David" come from?

What happens next is the central and most important moment in Revelation (and all human history!), and pivotal to our understanding of the rest of the book. John looks to see the Lion, and what does he see instead? He sees a Lamb – a lamb that looks as though it has been slain. This is the truth at the heart of the gospel. The Lion doesn't win by being a lion, but by being a lamb. The lion of Judah doesn't rule as a lion would, by using overwhelming power and brute strength, but rules as a lamb – he makes himself a servant, he is makes himself vulnerable and weak, all the way down into death.

The Jewish people were looking for a political Messiah to come in power and might to banish the Roman oppression and establish a new Jewish kingdom. Because they were expecting a different kind of deliverance, when the true Messiah came, they missed it. The world is still looking for power and might to bring the world under control. Once again, we are looking for a lion's way, and missing the Way of the Lamb.

Jesus reigns, not from a throne, but from a cross. The lamb does not inflict pain, but takes on the pain and suffering of others, of the whole world, even his enemies. From this point on in Revelation, the way of the world will be contrasted with the Way of the Lamb. And the paradox of Jesus as both Lion and Lamb will be explored many times over.

How do you understand these things?

What would have happened to the world if Jesus had come as a Lion instead of a Lamb?
In what way does Jesus come as a Lion – in glorious kingly power?

Questions:

The lamb is described as having seven horns and seven eyes. From the code given at the beginning of this study, what two characteristics are attributed to Christ?

The seven seals are not on the scroll to keep the contents hidden but as a sign of ownership. Jesus is the only one authorized to open them. Why is Jesus worthy to open the scrolls? What did he accomplish?

What place does worship have in this passage? Why is worship the context of what is happening around the throne of God?

How does vs 9-10 function as a summary of the Gospel?

In verse 12, there is a seven-fold praise – meaning perfect praise. What are the seven words attributed to Jesus? In verse 13 there are four words. What does the four represent here? What are the four creatures in Rev 4? Here we also see the joining of the heavens and the earth – ALL of creation is united in worship and praise.

Compare the closing section of Revelation 5 with Colossians 1:15-23. What are the similarities here between John's vision and the description of the gospel given by Paul?

In what way is worship so central to our discipleship, according to Revelation 5? How does this vision fuel our worship and sustain our faith?

Take some time to worship together.