



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Week 1 - Small Group Study

Recap from Sunday:

- Who is writing,
- and when and from where?
- (Bonus bit: According to tradition, what rather nasty thing may have happened to the author according to 1st Century historian Tertullian?)
- (Bonus-bonus bit: where is our author supposedly buried?)

What is a noteworthy thing you have heard or seen about this particular book of the Bible?
(What is the strangest thing?)

Read Revelation chapter 1:1-11 out loud together.

- According to Verses 1&2, who did what? What does that mean?
- According to verses 4 & 11, who is the author writing to, i.e. the intended recipient and what is known of their context?
- How might this inform the author's use of language (idioms, metaphors, adjectives, similes etc) as they seek to convey what they are experiencing? E.g. Why say 'like a son of man' in verse 13, instead of 'like a human'?

According to 1:3 & 22:18, what is the stated genre?

- Why is it important to also know this is written as a letter to 7 churches in Asia? (look these places up on a map - are they where you think they are?)
- How might the stated genre be understood in terms of 'fore-telling' and 'forth-telling'?
- Discuss then, the implications of the word 'keep' in verse 3?

If this writing has elements which include:

- supernaturally imparted symbolism,
- a specifically mentioned intended audience in the ancient near-east,
- scripturally and pastorally informed choices of language which draw on ancient near-eastern cultures,
- chronology which seems to step both forward and backward in time (which we also see in John's writing style in his gospel in contrast to the 3 synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke),
- approximately 500 allusions to the Old Testament,
- some clear references to the end of the age and the ultimate unveiling (revelation / apokalupsis / parousia) of Jesus Christ,

Then, how might we honour the text and also exercise wisdom in our reading of this together?

Consider the following quotes as we begin the study of this book:

"And though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators."

- G.K. Chesterton

We should remember that Revelation's readers in the great cities of the province of Asia were constantly confronted with powerful images of the Roman vision of the world. Civic and religious architecture, iconography, statues, rituals, and festivals, even the visual wonder of cleverly engineered but fake 'miracles' in the temples – all provided visual impressions of Roman imperial power and of the splendour of pagan religion. In this context, Revelation provides a set of Christian counter-images which impress on its readers a different vision of the world: how it looks from the perspective of heaven which John is being shown and into which John is caught up. The visual power of the book EFFECTS A KIND OF PURGING OF THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION, refurbishing it with an alternative vision of how the world is and how the world will be.

- Richard Baukham

Prayer:

Lord God, we ask for wisdom.

We come to this text not to be in charge of it, or to decide it's meaning,
but to receive from You – Your revelation to us.

Please be revealed to us and in us and amongst us.

Let us be taught by You and give us understanding.

And Lord we pray that we would know what it means to be blessed as read these words aloud,

And as we hear these words,

And as we keep what is written in them – for the time is near.

Amen.