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Dear Fellow Follower of Jesus:

I am excited for you as you embark on relating with God more deeply through the study of the Book of Revelation. While it may seem daunting to wade through the pages of this book that has inspired so much controversy and conviction over the centuries, you join a great cloud of witnesses who seek to encounter God through His Word given to close the Canon of Scripture.

The format of this study will pace you through the entire book of Revelation on a weekly basis. The questions are formatted in such a way as to guide you from observation to interpretation and then to application. You may want to dwell on a passage longer or linger over a word by supplementing the study with your own investigation and meditation. A journal and a commentary might also aid your understanding and personal integration of the material that you will cover. While the questions are comprehensive, they are by no means exhaustive. Included towards the back of your booklet are materials that might be helpful as you study. If you would like to buy good commentaries, I would recommend Revelation: The NIV Application Commentary by Craig Keener and The Revelation of St. John by Leon Morris. Although these would be helpful, a Bible is the only other resource necessary to progress through the study questions.

Each time you open up this study and turn the pages of your Bible, I encourage you to open yourself up to the work of the Holy Spirit who inspired these Words long ago. He is the only One who can breathe life into your time spent together in Scripture. He is the true revealer of Revelation and He desires to disclose Himself to you. May the God of Revelation, in all of His glory and splendor, become more real to you as you allow Him to speak to you through the pages of His Word.

In His service,

Christy Hill

Christy Hill, Ph.D.

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Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week One: Read 1:1-8

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking:**

1. List the main people who are mentioned in this passage along with any adjectives or descriptions:
2. According to verse 3, what three conditions must be present for blessing to occur?
3. Who will see Jesus when He comes in the clouds? (v. 7)
4. In verse 8, how does John show that the Lord God is directly speaking? And how does He choose to describe Himself?

**Understanding**:

1. What does John’s description of the Author (in verses 4-6, 8) reveal to you about God’s nature?
2. Three titles are given to Jesus in verse 5. Describe how each of these titles is a fitting description of Jesus Christ:

* The Faithful Witness
* The Firstborn from the Dead
* The Ruler of the Kings of the Earth

1. What does John’s description of the Recipients, in verses 5b-6, reveal to you about the Christian’s true identity? (Notice the tense of the verbs)
2. Why do you think that “even those who pierced him” will see him and mourn?

**Applying the Main Concepts:**

1. Description of God—Who God Is:
   * Take one of the descriptions of God that is revealed in this passage and meditate on it. Write a response to God, thanking Him for who He is. Include what difference you want this to make in your perspective on a particular area of your life.
2. Description of God’s Church—Your identity as a Believer:

* Choose one of the truths about your identity as a Christian with which you struggle. Journal below about how your perspective needs to be altered or redefined. Ask God to renew your mind with the Truth of His Word.

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Two: Read 1:9-20

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking:**

1. Re-read 1:9-11. What does John say about his relationship to the churches, his identity with Christ, and the consequences he was now facing as a result of his connection to Christ?
2. Take a look at verses 12-18. What did John see and hear?
3. Summarize what Christ communicated to John in verses 19-20.

**Understanding**:

1. Describe John’s perspective on the events that caused his exile on Patmos. How did he view this negative set of circumstances?
2. What do you think John meant when he said that “he was in the Spirit”?
3. List what John saw and heard (vv. 12-16). The concrete image is symbolic of something intangible. Take a minute and see if you can come up with the significance of each symbol based on what you know of the concrete symbol from other verses in the Bible or from how that object would have been valued in John’s culture: (a couple have been done for you)

|  |
| --- |
| Concrete Symbol Significance or Meaning of Symbol |
| Seven golden lampstands According to verse 20, the lampstands represent churches  (churches are supposed to illuminate, Christians are the light of the world) |
| Someone “like a son of man” Jesus called Himself the “Son of Man,” this emphasizes that  He really was God in the flesh, not just a spirit being. The incarnation has implications for eternity, not just for the 30+ years Christ lived on the earth. He became like a son of man for my sake! |
|  |
|  |
|  |

(If you would like to continue, please insert another sheet of paper and continue)

1. What does Christ’s response to John’s corpse-like reaction reveal about the heart of God? (vv. 17-18)

**Applying the Main Concept:**

1. Description of Jesus:
   * Take the descriptions of Jesus that are revealed in this passage and meditate on them. Do any of them shock you, distress you, comfort you? How might one area of your life be different if you lived in light of this vision of the glorified Jesus?

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Three: Read 2:1-7

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking:**

1. For what things is the church in Ephesus commended? (vv. 2-3; 6)
2. What is held against them? (v. 4)
3. What are they to do about it? (v. 5)
4. What are the differing outcomes for inaction and repentance? (vv. 5b-7)

**Understanding**:

1. Write a character description of an average church member in Ephesus: (You may want to consider their historical context by reading Acts 19; 20:17-21:1; and Ephesians)
2. Why is it important to be “in love” with Jesus and not just perform loving acts out of mere duty for Him?
3. What did it mean to the church in Ephesus to have its lampstand removed from its place? (v. 5)

**Applying the Main Concepts:**

1. Personally: Take your own spiritual temperature. If Jesus came to you today, what parts of the affirmation and rebuke would be true for you? What can you learn from the strengths and weaknesses of the Ephesians?

1. Corporately: Look around you at your spiritual community. If Jesus came to your small group, your Adult Fellowship, to our church wide body, what parts of the affirmation and rebuke would be true of these groups? What role can you play in strengthening the intensity of the light in the lampstand?

Back to the Future

**A Study of the Book of Revelation**

Week Four: Read 2:8-11

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. What title did Jesus use to identify Himself as the author of the words in 2:8-11 (the letter to Smyrna)?
2. How does this title correspond to the rest of the letter to Smyrna?
3. What did Jesus know about their past, present and future?

**Understanding**:

1. How do you think it helped them to know that He knew these things?
2. Read Rev. 21:6-8. How does this passage enlighten your understanding of 2:8-11?
3. Write a summary statement of this church

Read 2:12-17:

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a few statements or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. What title did Jesus use to identify Himself as the author of the letter to Pergamum?
2. How is this title fitting for the message contained in the letter?
3. For what did Jesus commend and rebuke this church?

Commends: Rebukes:

1. What are the consequences and rewards listed in these verses?

Consequences for lack of repentance: Rewards for overcoming:

**Understanding**:

1. What value is there in naming one of the many martyrs? How might that have been important to this church?
2. Even though Jesus is pronouncing a sharp rebuke, what can you see of His heart in giving this church a warning, a second chance and a promise of reward?

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

Review the characteristics of both churches. Is there any part of their experience that you can identify with? What part of Jesus’ message to them encourages or challenges you?

Possible Characteristics:

* + Suffering, yet pronounced rich
  + Misunderstood, but bolstered by Jesus’ knowledge of the truth
  + Afraid of continually growing persecution
  + Faithful witness in the midst of pluralistic beliefs
  + Struggle with culturally acceptable lifestyle issues that are not part of a redeemed life
  + In need of repentance
  + Desirous of “hidden manna” (bread from heaven that nourishes your soul) or a “white stone” (reassurance that God knows you intimately and can reveal more of your true identity in Christ)

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Five: Read 2:18-29

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. How is Jesus described in verse 18?
2. What does He commend and rebuke?
3. List the problems and consequences associated with the woman Jezebel:
4. What is promised for those who overcome?

**Understanding**:

1. Why is it significant that Christ knows both the good and the bad parts of this church?
2. How might this knowledge have encouraged and challenged the two sides respectively?
3. How can you reconcile God’s loving nature with His warning to cause those connected with Jezebel to suffer?
4. What would it have meant to the church in Thyatira to “hold on to what you have until I come”? What do you think they had?

# Applying the Main Concepts

1. How does Christ’s all-knowing nature impact you? (v. 19, 23)
2. You may not be tempted to believe the lies the ancient Jezebel peddled to Thyatira, but we are all vulnerable to be misled by Satan’s so-called deep things. What present day lies do you buy into and struggle to overcome?

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Six: Read 3:1-6

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. How is the church in Sardis described? (vv. 1-2)
2. What are they supposed to do about their problems? (vv. 2-3)
3. How are the faithful followers described and commended?

**Understanding**:

1. What does it mean to have a reputation of being alive, but to actually be dead?
2. How might their deeds have been incomplete?
3. Christ equates spiritual death with sleeping and having soiled clothes. Those who are alive are associated with purity and eternal life. List some characteristics or vital signs of spiritual deadness and spiritual aliveness:

## Spiritual Deadness Spiritual Aliveness

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. What do your vital signs say about your spiritual health?
2. Describe one area of your life that has a reputation of being alive, but is actually pretty numb. How might you be more spiritually vigilant in this area?

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Seven: Read 3:7-13

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. What is the description of the person who gave John these words to write to the church in Philadelphia? (v. 7)
2. How is the church in Philadelphia described? (vv. 8-10)
3. What encouragement is given for those who overcome? (vv. 11-13)

**Understanding**:

1. What does it mean for Jesus to be “holy and true”?
2. What does it mean for Jesus to “hold the key of David—what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open”?
3. How might it have encouraged the Philadelphians to know that one day Jesus would right the mistreatment they were currently experiencing? (vv. 8-10).
4. What do Christ’s words to the Philadelphians reveal to you about the heart of God towards people who suffer for his sake?

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. In what areas of your life do you have little strength, but are keeping His word and acknowledging His name in the midst of your struggle?
2. Based on what you learned in this passage, write a letter from Jesus to yourself that speaks the truth of His heart toward you as you seek to “hold on to what you have.” (Please insert a blank piece of paper)

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A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Eight: Read 3:14-22

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. What is the description of the person who gave John these words to write to the church in Laodicea? (v. 14)
2. How is the church in Laodicea described? (vv. 15-18)
3. What was Christ’s motivation behind the rebuke and discipline? (vv. 19-20)
4. What encouragement is given for those who overcome? (vv. 21-22)

**Understanding**:

1. What does it look like for a person to be lukewarm?
2. What did Christ mean when he counseled them “to buy from me gold refined in the fire . . . white clothes to wear . . . and salve to put on your eyes”?
3. Why do you think Christ offered to come in and eat with them if He was speaking to the church in Laodicea? What does it mean to eat together and how does that fit with their status as church attenders?
4. What do Christ’s words to the Laodiceans reveal to you about the heart of God?

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. With what part of the Laodicean’s rebuke do you identify? What do you think God is telling you to do about it?

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Nine: Read Chapter 4

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. Who invited John to “come up” and see the reality of heaven?
2. In as much detail as possible, describe what John saw. (If you prefer to draw a picture, insert a blank sheet of paper)
3. What did John hear?

**Understanding**:

1. What is the significance of the fact that everything in this vision revolves around the throne?
2. Not only are the physical features of heaven a revelation of God’s nature, but also the spoken words in heaven reveal more of who He is. Think through the following list and put each characteristic or description into your own words:
   * Holy, holy, holy
   * Lord God Almighty
   * Who was, and is and is to come
   * Worthy to receive glory & honor & power
   * Lord & God
   * Creator of all things
   * Volitional (able to exercise His will to accomplish what He wants)

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. Take what John saw and heard in heaven and contrast that with what you see and hear on a daily basis here on earth. Follow the example below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Heaven’s Reality** | **My Experience/Perspective** |
| God is sovereign (everything revolves around Him) | I oftentimes live as if I am in control and everything revolves around me |
| God is worthy of praise | As I struggle with  I have a hard time praising God because |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

1. How do you want this view of heaven’s reality to change your perspective on the world as you experience it?

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Ten: Read Chapter 5

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. What was the problem that caused John to weep? (vv. 1-4)
2. How is Jesus described? (vv. 5-6)
3. What did Jesus do? (v. 7)
4. What was the response in heaven by the 4 living creatures & the 24 elders? (vv. 8-9)
5. Summarize the messages of the 3 songs that were sung as a result of the Lamb:
   * Song #1: (9-10)
   * Song #2: (12)
   * Song #3: (13)

**Understanding**:

1. Consider each description of Jesus as a symbol of His character. What is the meaning behind each symbol?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description of Jesus** | **Meaning of the Description** |
| Lion of the tribe of Judah |  |
| Root of David |  |
| Lamb, looking as if it had been slain |  |
| Stood in center of throne, encircled by others |  |
| Seven horns |  |
| Seven eyes—which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth |  |

1. Notice the progression of who is included in each of the three songs. What does this tell you about God’s worthiness to receive praise?
2. Where do you see those who know God in this scene? What role do “the saints” play in God’s glory? (vv. 8-10)

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. Write your own “song” of praise to the Lamb and to the One who sits on the throne. Praise Jesus for who He is and for what He’s done to purchase your soul for God. (You may want to write your song in poetic stanzas or in the form of a letter to God.)

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Eleven: Re-read Chapters 4-5

* Record key insights and thoughts below:
* Review your study guide from chapters 4-5. Are there any important truths you want to remember and share with the group?
* As you look back over the first 5 chapters of Revelation, how has your view of God, yourself, or reality been challenged, stretched or enlightened? What difference has this made in your daily life?

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Twelve: Read Chapter 6

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. List the 6 seals that are revealed in this chapter along with a description of each one based on the biblical text:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Seal** | **Reference** | **Description** |
| 1. |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |
| 6. |  |  |

1. What similarities do you see in the first four seals?

**Understanding**:

1. Looking at the chapter overall, what do the seals reveal about God’s judgment and wrath?
2. The fifth seal is the only one that has a “happy ending.” Contrast these people to the ones described in verses 15-17. What lessons do you think God is trying to communicate through this contrast?
3. How was the response of those hiding from God in verses 16-17 incongruent with the truth of God’s heart revealed in 5:9-10? How had they misinterpreted the heart of God?

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. If tomorrow the USA turned legally and violently anti-Christian, would your non-Christian co-workers, neighbors, and family members have enough evidence to turn you in? Why or why not?
2. This chapter paints a picture of a world spinning out of control. How does the idea of God’s sovereignty (the Lamb opens these seals) impact your affection, trust and obedience of “him who sits on the throne”?

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Thirteen: Read Chapter 7

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. List all the things John recorded that he saw:
2. List all the things John recorded that he heard:

**Understanding**:

1. What might be the significance of the angels holding back the winds in light of the wrath blown in by the previous chapter?
2. What does the sealing of the 144,000 reveal to you about God’s heart as He uses His sovereign power in the detailed care of his faithful followers?
3. Summarize the truths about God that are revealed in what John heard in the following verses:

7:10—

7:12—

7:15-17—

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. Like bookends to this chapter, God’s tender heart is revealed to his suffering followers. While it is demonstrated in this chapter and in our own experience that God may not alleviate the pain of persecution or traumatic circumstances here on earth, He does promise to so for eternity. How do the images of God presented in this chapter encourage you to keep trusting Him in the midst of your own particular struggles and painful circumstances?

**Back to the Future**

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Fourteen: Read Chapters 8-9

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. What was the heavenly response to the seventh seal?
2. List the trumpet judgments described in these chapters:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Trumpet** | **Reference** | **What was Released?** | **Devastating Results** |
| 1. |  |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |  |
| 6. |  |  |  |

**Understanding**:

1. Re-read 8:1-6. What do these verses tell you about the role of prayer in accomplishing God’s will?

\*The fact that judgment immediately follows this offering of prayers makes sense when we consider the prayers of saints offered in 6:10 (a cry for vindication). “Just as the full amount of proclamation and attendant suffering must be fulfilled (6:11), perhaps the prayers of the saints must also come to a particular level before intervention takes place. . . The suffering of God’s people invite his intervention, even if His time is not always our time”[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Re-read 8:7-13. How should these judgments have affected the inhabitants of the earth as they saw the destruction of nature around them?
2. Re-read chapter 9. What can you surmise about the heart of God, the nature of human beings and/or the supernatural realm in each of the following sections?

* 9:1-11
* 9:12-21

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. As you look at the hardness of hearts of those who were still left alive, what parts of their unrepentance do you identify with?

* Looking to false gods or idols to meet my needs
* Allowing sin to have sway over me

1. Write out a prayer that expresses your desire to have a soft and repentant heart toward God.

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Fifteen: Read Chp. 10 & 11

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking at Chapter 10**:

1. Who are the main characters in chp. 10?
2. What do their actions and descriptions tell you about them?

**Understanding Chapter 10**:

1. What meaning could you deduce from the fact that the angel “planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land?” (repeated 3 times)
2. Chp. 10-11 can be seen as an interlude between the fierce judgment that is meted out on mankind. Even though the mighty angel stops the action for a moment, he proclaims that there will be no more delay for the completion of God’s will. How is the angel’s declaration in 10:6-7 both good news and bad news depending on whose side you are on (those who are faithful and those who are rebellious)?
3. How does this bittersweet declaration in 10:6-7 parallel John’s eating of the scroll in verses 10:9-11?
4. Although John’s task is bittersweet, what does God’s intentional revelation and commissioning of John reveal to you about His heart for a lost and soon to be judged world?

**Looking at Chapter 11:**

1. Summarize the main details of the prophecies contained in the following sets of verses:
   1. 11:1-6
   2. 11:7-10
   3. 11:11-14
2. According to 11:15-19, what does the seventh trumpet announce?

**Understanding Chapter 11:**

1. Look back at your summary of 11:1-14. Identify how the opposing sides of Good and Evil would have felt in each of the three sections (assuming they did not know the final outcome).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Reference | Those on the Good side would feel: | Those on the Evil side would feel: |
| 11:1-6 |  |  |
| 11:7-10 |  |  |
| 11:11-14 |  |  |

1. How does this illustrate the need for an eternal perspective in the midst of the good and bad circumstances that take place in the war with Evil?
2. What do the two declarations contained in the following verses tell you about God, the future, and the results of a life lived for God and against God?
   1. 11:15
   2. 11:16-19

**Applying the Main Concepts:**

1. Identify one truth or insight you have gained from your study of chapters 10-11 and think about an implication that truth has for your daily life. Record your thoughts below or on a separate piece of paper.

* Example: Although circumstances may look grim at times, good will triumph over evil. This encourages me to keep pressing on in the battle and maintain my allegiance to the rightful King. When I am tempted to give up, I can remember that God will reward both great and small who reverence His name.

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Sixteen: Read Chp. 12

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. What do you learn about the following characters based on the biblical text:
   1. The Woman
   2. The Red Dragon
   3. The Child
   4. God
   5. Michael and his angels
   6. Satan’s angels
   7. The rest of the woman’s offspring

**Understanding**:

1. For each of the following sections, summarize the main event that takes place and identify a principle about God, the supernatural realm, Satan, human beings, etc. that you learn from those verses.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Main Event** | **Principle** |
| **12:1-6** |  |  |
| **12:7-9** |  |  |
| **12:10-12** |  |  |
| **12:13-17** |  |  |

1. Contrast God’s description and actions with Satan’s descriptions and actions. What type of traits does each one have? What does this contrast tell you about the God we serve and whose side you are on?

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. Satan is described as the one “who leads the whole world astray” and the “accuser.” The Lamb has dismantled Satan’s potential power in the lives of Christians by His sacrificial death and shed blood. But at times and in certain areas of our lives, we do not live as if this is true. How does Satan try to lead you astray and in what areas does he still accuse you? What truth from the Word of God can you use to disarm his lies?

**Back to the Future**

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Seventeen: Read Chp. 13

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking:**

1. List all of the details about the 1st beast and 2nd beast recorded in this chapter:
2. How did the world respond to these 2 beasts and ultimately the dragon? (vv. 4, 8, 12, 14, 16-17)
3. In what type of circumstances will the saints find themselves? (vv. 7, 8-10, 15, 17).
4. List all of the verbs and nouns in the following set of verses. Try to determine who is doing the action and who is receiving the action based on the text in the NIV translation:
   1. (2b) The dragon gave the beast his power and

his and his great .

* 1. (4) Men worshiped the dragon because he authority to the .
  2. (5) The beast a mouth.
  3. (7) He (the beast) power . . . and authority.
  4. (8) The Lamb that from the creation of the world.
  5. (12) He (the 2nd beast) all the authority of the 1st beast and the earth . . . worship the 1st beast.
  6. (13) He (the 2nd beast) miraculous signs.
  7. (14-15) Because of the signs he to do on behalf of the first beast, he the inhabitants of earth. He them . . . and power.
  8. (16) He also everyone to receive a mark.

**Understanding:**

1. What conclusions can you draw about the main characters, their sources of power and their use of power from the previous observations?
2. Describe how Satan’s use of power contrasts God’s use of power. Think about the motives, intentions, personal sacrifice and end results involved in each character’s use of power.
3. In what ways does this unholy “trinity” try to counterfeit the Holy Trinity?
4. How might the saints of the early church have been fortified by reading about the prediction of suffering in these end times?

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. It is hard for us to comprehend that God would allow Evil to have such a terrorizing reign on the earth. Tolkien wrote “Evil may yet be good to have been . . . and yet remain evil.” How do you integrate the hideous evil that is predicted in this chapter with the fact that God in His sovereignty orchestrates only what is best, perfect and good?
2. Another enlightening quote by Tolkien reminds us that Evil is not the end of the story: “No man can estimate what is really happening at the present . . . All we do know, and that to a large extent by direct experience, is that evil labors with vast power and perpetual success—in vain: preparing always only the soil for unexpected good to sprout in.” In what area of your own life does this speak comfort and hope?

Back to the Future

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Eighteen: Read Chp. 14

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking:**

1. Identify the key details from each section and then give your own title to the section which summarizes the main point:
   1. 1-5
   2. 6-13
   3. 14-16
   4. 17-20
2. How are the 144,000 identified and rewarded? (vv. 1-5)
3. Write out the 3 sayings of the angels in vv. 6-13
4. What does the voice from heaven say? (v. 13)
5. Where did each of the angels “come from”
   1. V. 15
   2. V. 17
   3. V. 18

**Understanding:**

1. How is the concept of eternal rest contrasted between the wicked and the righteous?
2. What do you think God was trying to communicate when He told John to write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on . . . they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them” (v. 13)?
3. What does it mean that the earth was harvested, the clusters of grapes are ripe and the grapes were trampled in the winepress?
4. While there is still death and destruction in this chapter, how would you describe this chapter in comparison to the previous chapter (13)?

**Applying the Main Concepts:**

1. Read verse 12 and the following commentary:

“This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus” (v. 12).

“A consideration of ultimate realities sustains the people of God. They must pass through troubles, but they know that their troubles are temporary whereas those of their tormentors will be eternal. This sense of values keeps them calm. . . . The saints are characterized by their keeping of the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Both ethical conduct and reliance on the Saviour are important”[[2]](#footnote-2)

What ultimate realities from this chapter might help sustain you as you pass through troubles here on earth?

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A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Nineteen: Read Chp. 15-16

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. What is the “great and marvelous sign” that John sees in 15:1-3?
2. For what important character traits and deeds is God praised? (15:3b-4)
3. Describe the details of the ceremony recorded in 15:5-8.
4. Fill in the chart below based on the information given in chapter 16

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Place of**  **bowl** | **Devastating Results** | **Any Responses (angels/people)** |
| 1.  Land |  |  |
| 2.  Sea |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |
| **Place of**  **bowl** | **Devastating Results** | **Any Responses (angels/people)** |
| 6. |  |  |
| 7. |  |  |

1. According to 16:15, who is “blessed”?

**Understanding**:

1. The idea that God is “just and true” is repeated several times in these two chapters. How does this emphasis provide an interpretive framework for the devastation of God’s judgments?
2. What does it mean to for a Christian to “stay awake, keep his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed”? (16:15)
3. Take a look at the different responses you recorded in the previous chart. How does one’s understanding of God influence the different type of responses to the same judgment?

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. What is your response to the judgments unleashed on the earth? Are there parts of you that question God’s goodness in the midst of such harsh judgment? Do you at times move closer than you ‘d like to admit to the anger expressed by the unrepentant? Is there a part of you that can respond with the “altar”: “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”(v. 7). Take a few moments and record your thoughts below or on a blank sheet of paper.

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A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Twenty: Read Chp. 17 & 18

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking at Chapter 17**:

1. According to the text, what do each of the following symbols represent:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Symbol** | **Represents** | **Further details in the text** |
| **Beast**  **(17:8,11)** |  |  |
| **7 Heads**  **(17:9-11)** |  |  |
| **10 Horns**  **(17:12-14)** |  |  |
| **Waters**  **(17:15)** |  |  |
| **Woman**  **(17:18)** |  |  |

**Understanding Chapter 17**:

1. John describes the woman with particular metaphorical details. What do you know about the following symbols that might help you interpret what this woman represents?

* v. 1: sits on many waters (v. 15)
* v. 2: committed adultery with kings
* v. 3: sits on scarlet beast
* v. 4: dressed in purple and scarlet
* v. 4: glittering with gold, precious stones & pearls
* v. 4: held a golden cup in her hand
* v. 6: drunk with blood of the saints

Summarize the previous list regarding the woman into a sentence or two that describes what she might represent:

1. Look again at 17:14. Describe the importance and surety conveyed in this verse in relationship to the rest of the concepts and images presented in this chapter.
2. What do you think the original audience would have understood the main point of chp. 17 to be?

**Looking at Chapter 18:**

1. Write a summary statement for each section below:

18:1-8

18:9-20

18:21-24

1. Re-read each summary statement above and integrate each main point into one statement that encapsulates the main idea of the entire chapter:

**Understanding Chapter 18:**

1. This chapter contains many descriptions of “Babylon the Great.” Record the descriptions in the following verses and tell what each would signify about this ominous world power. (Think in terms of attitudes, characteristics & values).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reference** | **Description** | **Signifies/Means** |
| **18:2-3** |  |  |
| **18:7** |  |  |
| **18:11-13** |  |  |
| **18:14-17** |  |  |
| **18:23-24** |  |  |

1. Summarize below what “Babylon the Great” signified and stood for:

**Applying the Main Concepts:**

1. If Christ’s victory against all of hell’s fury (chp. 17) and the world’s evil system (chp. 18) is so confidently won in the end times, what personal battle would you like Him to win in your own life? (Think in an area that you alone are responsible for, as opposed to an area that involves another person’s will that you cannot control). As you surrender that battle field to Him throughout the week, remind yourself of His victorious title: “Lord of lords and King of kings,” and ask Him to be true to His character in your struggle against evil. Journal about this topic below:

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A Study of the Book of Revelation

Weeks Twenty-One: Read Chp. 19

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. What words are repeated?
2. Record all exclamations:
3. What are the main ideas of each of the following sections of verses?

* 1-5
* 6-10
* 11-16
* 17-21

**Understanding**:

1. Why do you think there is such ecstatic celebration in heaven over the fall of the prostitute?
2. Of all the analogies God could have used for the relationship of Himself to the Church, why is it significant that He speaks in terms of a wedding, a bride and fine linen?
3. John uses great detail to describe the Rider on the white horse. How does each description contribute to your understanding of this war hero?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Symbol/Description** | **Meaning** |
| Rode white horse (11) |  |
| Name is Faithful & True (11) |  |
| Eyes like blazing fire (12) |  |
| Many crowns on head (12) |  |
| Unrevealed name (12) |  |
| Dressed in robe dipped in blood (13) |  |
| Name is Word of God (13) |  |
| Commands armies of heaven (14) |  |
| Sharp sword comes out of mouth (15) |  |
| Will rule with iron scepter (15) |  |
| Treads the winepress of the fury of God’s wrath (15) |  |
| Name “KING OF KINGS & LORD OF LORDS” written on robe & thigh |  |

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. Choose one description and meaning of Christ from the above list on which to meditate. Think about how the truth of this description corresponds to how you live on a daily basis. Record your thoughts below.

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Week Twenty-Two: Read Chp. 20

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking:**

1. Record significant details regarding each of the following topics revealed in this chapter:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Topic** | **Details** |
| **The Millennial Reign of Christ**  **(20:1-6)** |  |
| **Satan’s Final End**  **(20:7-10)** |  |
| **The Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)** |  |

**Understanding:**

1. Explain what John means by the 1st resurrection and the 2nd death (vv. 4-6, 11-15).
2. What does the fact that an all-powerful God holds Himself accountable to judging mankind in a fair process reveal to you about God Himself?
3. Describe the difference between the books that recorded mankind’s deeds and the book of life.

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. How does the biblical account of the Final Judgment impact your worldview and value system?
2. If you are trusting Christ’s work on the cross to cover your sin, write a prayer of thanksgiving that your name is written in the Lamb’s book of life.

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A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Twenty-Two: Read Chp. 21

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking:**

1. What will characterize the Holy City, the new Jerusalem according to each section:
   1. 1-4
   2. 5-8
   3. 9-14
   4. 15-21
   5. 22-27
2. While Revelation is inspired by God, John rarely attributes actual words to the One who is seated on the throne. Record God’s statements below (vv5-8):
3. The Holy City is characterized by a lack of certain things. Make a list of all the things John recorded that will not be a part of the new heaven and the new earth.

**Understanding:**

1. What is the significance that “the bride, the wife of the Lamb” is not identified as individual Christians, but as “the Holy City, Jerusalem”?
2. The detailed description of the Holy City, Jerusalem in vv. 9-21 should not be taken literally, but symbolically. See if you can take what you know of the following symbols to create a fuller understanding of the New Jerusalem:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Symbol** | **Meaning** |
| **Brilliance like a precious jewel** |  |
| **Great, high wall** |  |
| **12 Gates** |  |
| **12 Angels at gates** |  |
| **12 Foundations** |  |
| **Square shape** |  |
| **Walls of jasper** |  |
| **City of pure gold** |  |
| **Foundations decorated with precious stones** |  |

1. How do you integrate the fact that Christians are called the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17) and here John says that the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are its temple? What does this mean and why is it significant?

**Applying the Main Concepts:**

1. What part of the description of the New Jerusalem especially touches your heart and provides motivation to “overcome and inherit all this” (v. 7)?

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A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Twenty-Three: Read Chp. 22

**Personal Reflection**:

1. What initially stands out to you? Write a statement or two or record any key thoughts you have below:

**Looking**:

1. List the important details about the following symbols or characters that are stated in the biblical text:

* River of the water of life
* Tree of life
* Leaves of the tree of life
* The throne of God & of the Lamb
* Servants
* Source of light

1. Summarize the main idea from each of the following verses or pair of verses:

* 7
* 8-9
* 10-11
* 12-13
* 14-15
* 16
* 17
* 18-19
* 20-21

**Understanding**:

1. How are verses 1-6 a picture of Eden restored?
2. How does one “keep” the words of the prophecy of this book?
3. How is Jesus both the “Root” (source) and the “Offspring” (the result) of David? What does that say about His nature and character?

**Applying the Main Concepts**:

1. Now that you’ve read and studied the “words of the prophecy of this book,” how do you sense God wanting you to “keep” them? Is there a particular way you intend to respond to God’s Word in Revelation?
2. In what ways are you still thirsty, even though you are a follower of Christ? Speak to Him about your unmet desires and ask Him to use your thirst to deepen your reliance on Him.

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A Study of the Book of Revelation

Week Twenty-Four: Review your homework and answer the following questions

1. As you look back over the past months of walking through Revelation, what key concepts or insights stand out to you?
2. As you think about your image of God, how has your understanding of Him grown or been expanded? (You may want to develop a “Names of God in Revelation” sheet to review all the ways God is referred to in this book).
3. What is one way your daily life (behavior, thoughts, attitudes, values or feelings) has been impacted by your study of Revelation?

What to Expect in Apocalyptic/Visionary Literature:

From Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*

**Element of otherness**: transformation of the known world or the present state of things into a situation that at the time of writing is as yet only imagined. In one way or another, visionary literature takes us to a strange world where ordinary rules of reality no longer prevail.

**Reversal and Transformation**: futuristic picture of the changed fortunes of a person or group or nation. In the prophetic oracle of judgment, for example the currently powerful individual or group is pictured as defeated, contrary to all that is apparent at the time of writing (Isa. 32:9-10, 14). In the oracle of redemption, this pattern is reversed. Instead of coming woe . . . those to whom the oracle is addressed will receive a blessing opposite of anything they currently experience (Amos 9:13). Principle: be ready for reversal of ordinary reality.

**Unveiling of supernatural reality**: a portrayal of a transcendental realm, both heaven and hell. Visions of either type do not primarily take the reader forward in time but rather beyond the visible spatial world (Is. 6:1-5; Ez. 1). Principle: be prepared to use your imagination to picture a world that transcends earthly reality.

**Cosmic scope**: scene is not localized; involves whole nations, all of heaven, all of earth.

**Supernatural Agents and Strange creatures**: Filling this cosmic stage are actors that do not fit ordinary expectations. Mingling of the familiar with the unfamiliar.

**Subversive Form**: Visionary literature, with its arresting strangeness, breaks through our normal way of thinking and shocks us into seeing that things are not as they appear. Visionary literature attacks our ingrained patterns of deep-level thought in an effort to convince us of such things as that the world will not always continue as it now is, that there is something drastically wrong with the status quo, or that reality cannot be confined to the physical world that we perceive with our senses. It is not cozy fireside reading. It gives us the shock treatment.

**Kaleidoscopic Structure**: Brief units, always shifting and never in focus for very long. Similar to some modern films, that use diverse material and mingle realistic scenes with supernatural scenes. Principle: instead of looking for the smooth flow of narrative, be prepared for a disjointed series of diverse, self-contained units.

**Symbolism**: symbolic writing does not paint pictures. Ask: “What values and concepts does this symbol embody?”

Interpreting Revelation

From Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*

1. Look for the author’s original intent. The primary meaning of Revelation is what John intended it to mean and what would have been understood by the original recipients. (They, of course, had a different historical/cultural perspective and would have been more familiar with the apocalyptic forms of images.)
2. Because Revelation is prophetic, one must be open to the possibility of a secondary meaning, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and not necessarily understood by the author or his readers. This level of interpretation, though, must be informed by careful study of outside resources.
3. The interpretation of Revelation is based on an ability to understand imagery/symbolism:
   1. Consistent symbols: some images always mean the same thing. For example, the beast out of the sea seems to always symbolize a world empire.
   2. Fluid symbols: some images adopt different connotations depending on the contest. The woman in chapter 12 is positive, while the woman in chapter 17 is evil.
   3. Same reference, but different symbols: some objects or people have various symbols attached to them. Example: Jesus is referred to as both the Lion and the Lamb.
   4. Symbols that have been defined: some images refer to specific things that have been clarified by the author himself. Example: Lampstands=churches; dragon= Satan.
   5. When an image has been defined by John himself, the reader must use that interpretation as the starting point for further understanding.
4. Interpret the visions as a whole picture and do not try to make each detail mean something. Sometimes details are added to create a whole effect, not necessarily to be looked at individually. For example, the details of the sun turning black like sackcloth and the stars falling like late figs may not mean anything in particular. They are details that contribute to the intensity of the earthquake, which is the main point of that part of the vision.
5. As John records the visions of Revelation, he does not intend to present a systematic and chronological rendition of the future. The main point that John is trying to get across is the contrast between what appears to be out of control in the earthly realm and the sovereign control of God in all of it. The end result is that God is triumphant and leads His people into victory. Every part of Revelation must be read with this overarching theme in place.

Outline of the Book of Revelation from 1:19

*“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.” (Rev. 1:19)*

* 1. What you have seen (1:1-20)
  2. What is now (2:1—3:22)
  3. What will take place later (4:1—22:21)

Prologue

1. The Tribulation (6:1—19:21)
   1. Seal Judgments (6:1-17)
   2. Trumpet Judgments (8:1-9:21)
   3. Bowl Judgments (16:1-21)
2. The Millennium (20:1-15)
3. The Eternal State (21:1—22:21)

Adapted from Everyman’s Bible Commentary: Revelation, by Charles Caldwell Ryrie. 1968

1. Keener, C. (2000). Revelation: The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, p. 255-256. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Morris, Leon. (1983). The Revelation of St. John. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)